



# AJR JOURNAL

The Association of Jewish Refugees

## My refugee family

This is my 100th article for *The AJR Journal*, writes David Herman. To celebrate, I thought I should explain why writing for *The Journal* is so important to me.



David Herman with his father's painting, *Refugees*, at the Ben Uri Gallery

Both my parents, my maternal grandmother, grandfather, uncle and great uncle were all refugees. Unfortunately, my father's entire family, two of my mother's relatives and her first husband's family were not so fortunate. They were all murdered by the Nazis.

My mother, Eleonore Herman (née Ettliger), was born in Berlin in 1925. Her mother, Ellen Ettliger, and her father Lionel Max Ettliger, lived on Fasanenstrasse, near Ku'damm, with my uncle, George, and my mother's uncle, Ernst Rathenau, an art publisher. They were all German Jews.

After the Nazis came to power in 1933 my maternal grandfather left Germany, first for Paris then America, and in 1938 my great-uncle Ernst emigrated to New York. They both spent the war in America. My grandmother, mother and uncle left

Berlin for Bavaria, close to the border. My grandmother thought it might be safer than Berlin. In May 1938 they emigrated to Britain, settling in Oxford, where my mother and uncle went to school. My uncle went on to study at Balliol College, Oxford, and had a distinguished career as a neuropsychologist. My mother studied medicine in Edinburgh, where she met her first husband, Peter Tarnowski, a Jewish medical student from Breslau, who left Germany at the end of August 1939. In March 1943 his parents were murdered at Auschwitz. My mother's immediate family were the lucky ones. Dr. Kurt Rathenau, a cousin of my grandmother's, and his wife, were both murdered in the Minsk Ghetto.

A number of interesting issues emerge from their experiences. First, my mother's father  
*Continued on page 2*

## HAPPY CHANUKAH

This month we pay tribute to six of AJR's longest-standing Trustees, whose terms will finish at our Annual Election Meeting on 11 December (p10-11).

We also discuss important work in the fields of tackling Holocaust distortion (p12) and bringing in the next generations (p4).

If you would like future generations of your own family to join us in this work and honour their heritage why not give them a truly meaningful gift this Chanukah? You'll find more details in the article on p3.

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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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## My Refugee family (cont.)

and uncle both returned to Germany after the war where they spent the rest of their lives. My mother, by contrast, never visited Germany again and was always reluctant to speak German. My uncle, however, later went on to teach at a German university. My grandmother's time in rural Bavaria exposed her to a very different world from Weimar Berlin and she became fascinated by traditional customs and beliefs. After the war she became a folklorist and - more surprisingly - a Christian. What I learned from them was that not many refugees made very different choices about their identity.

After my mother's first marriage ended in divorce she met my father. He could not have come from a more different background. He was born in Warsaw as Mosek Josek Herman, in 1911, the son of an illiterate cobbler, David, and his wife, Sarah, who was the youngest of five children born to Feigl and Herschel Kreikman. My father had a brother, Shmuel, and a sister, Zelda. He became a left-wing artist during the 1930s and left Poland, by now ruled by a right-wing antisemitic government, for Belgium. When the Germans invaded, he escaped to Paris and after the fall of France he escaped by boat from La Rochelle to Liverpool, ending up in Glasgow. Here he mixed in largely Jewish, east European, Yiddish-speaking circles and painted and drew images from the Jewish world of his childhood: musicians, organ grinders, rabbis. He illustrated from memory stories by Peretz and Sholem Aleichem, and poems and tales by Yiddish poets like Manoger and Avram Reisen. A few times the elegiac glow is disrupted by very different images, pictures of pogroms, burning buildings and refugees. One might call the subject-matter and tone, Chagallesque. The Jewish world he re-created is like something out of Vishniac's photos or *The Fiddler on the Roof*. But above all it is like Chagall. Josef's biographer, the art critic and historian Monica Bohm-Duchen, wrote, 'there is nothing remotely like them in the history of art in Britain.'

Towards the end of the war he moved to a small mining village in south Wales and discovered a completely different voice as an artist and a completely new subject-matter, coal miners and working men and women. No more Jews. What had happened to cause this change? During his time in Glasgow he learned that his

entire family were killed by the Nazis in Poland. Jews and Jewish Warsaw had become an impossible subject for him.

If it hadn't been for the war my father would have stayed in Belgium or perhaps France. Like so many central European refugees, Britain was not at the top of his list. Just like my maternal grandfather and great-uncle who chose America rather than Britain before they returned to Germany.

But he also made other choices which changed his life. Despite a brief period in north London, he chose a working-class mining community in South Wales rather than the *Finchleystrasse*. And that led him to a completely new subject as an artist, a world away from the drawings and paintings of Jewish life in Glasgow. This choice made his name (he later became an OBE and a Fellow of the Royal Academy). In 1951 he was chosen to paint a huge mural of Welsh coal miners for the Festival of Britain. His paintings and drawings of coal miners, fitted the current mood in post-war Britain.

My father made another choice. He was invited by the Communist government to return to Warsaw after the war. He refused and never went back. There was nothing to return to. His home, his entire neighbourhood, were completely destroyed. Today you can see the wasteland opposite the Polin Museum. The Jews who lived there were killed in the Holocaust.

But although he changed his style of painting, he never turned his back on his Jewish identity. He continued to read and speak Yiddish with his closest friends, central and east European refugees from Poland and Hungary, including the Polish artist Jankel Adler, the Yiddish poet Itzik Manger, the Hungarian photographer, Michael Peto, the Polish filmmaker Mira Hamermesh, the founding editor of *The Jewish Quarterly*, Jacob Sonntag, and many more. Two of his dealers were German Jewish refugees, Heinz Roland and Gustav Delbanco, of Roland, Browse and Delbanco on Cork Street. One of his later dealers was a Hungarian Jew, Agi Katz, who ran the Ben Uri Museum when it was in Soho and then the Boundary Gallery in St. John's Wood.

From my parents I learned that being a Jewish refugee was not straightforward. They had to deal with displacement and loss. They also had to find different ways of fitting in in post-war Britain, at a time when

a great silence about the Holocaust hung over British culture. And then, of course, there was luck. My mother left Germany and my father left Poland in 1938. They managed to get to England. My mother and uncle fitted in easily. They came to England as schoolchildren and learned to speak English almost without an accent. Both studied medicine, more welcoming to refugees, than art. And then there was bad luck. My father's family, my grandmother's cousin and his wife.

That's why I try and write about these choices, what it was like to be an insider or an outsider, as refugees in post-war Britain, and why Jewish refugees were such a forgotten subject for so long.

David Herman

## MUSICAL COMPETITION

If you know any musical composers who have Israeli or German citizenship why not suggest they submit an arrangement for a new project embracing Jewish musical culture?

The competition is based on the wonderful German-Jewish Songbook of 1912, and is being organised by the German Choral Association, in cooperation with the German-Israeli research project Project 2025 – Arche Musica and Schott Music. The deadline for submissions is 31 December and more information is available from [projektbuero@deutscher-chorverband.de](mailto:projektbuero@deutscher-chorverband.de)



## HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL DAY 2025

MONDAY 20 JANUARY 2025 at 2PM  
BELSIZE SQUARE SYNAGOGUE

You only need to book if you wish to attend in person.

There will be an online stream on the day via [www.synagogue.org.uk](http://www.synagogue.org.uk)



[susan@ajr.org.uk](mailto:susan@ajr.org.uk)

# HAND ON YOUR HERITAGE FOR CHANUKAH

**This Chanukah why not embrace the spirit of giving with a truly meaningful gift for your children and grandchildren - membership to the AJR?**

With antisemitism higher than it has been in decades, partly due to the aftermath of the atrocities of 7 October, you can help the AJR achieve our goal of driving forward Holocaust memorialisation and education by handing on your rich heritage and legacy to the next generations.

As you will know, the AJR is more than just an organisation; it is a family, a community that stands united in the face of challenges. Our members find comfort in being with others who have a shared history - a history marked by courage, resilience, and a commitment to preserving our cultural legacy.

Each year the lighting of the Chanukah menorah candles symbolises hope and resilience in the face of ancient adversity. Our own history, marked by more recent challenges and triumphs, is a testament to the strength of our community. We want to ensure that the flame of our heritage continues to burn brightly, not only in our own hearts but in the hearts of all our descendants.

The AJR provides a unique platform for younger generations to learn about their heritage, engage with their peers, and contribute to the preservation of our collective legacy. By gifting a membership to your children and grandchildren, you would



be fostering a sense of belonging, a connection to their roots, and a deep appreciation for our values.

Together, we will overcome the challenges that come our way, just as our parents and grandparents did. We will stand strong as a community, and we will continue to pass down the stories, and traditions that make our heritage unique. With your support, we can ensure that the flame of our legacy never flickers or fades.

This Chanukah, let us give the gift of community, family, and legacy.

**To purchase membership for your loved ones, simply visit our website or contact our membership secretary on [karin@ajr.org.uk](mailto:karin@ajr.org.uk) or 020 8385 3070. We are here to assist you every step of the way, and we will send both you and the new member a special gift as a thank-you.**

Let us come together this Chanukah and celebrate the past, present, and future of our vibrant community. And if you bought a membership last year, please renew it for the coming year!

## MUSIC IN AUSCHWITZ

COMMEMORATING HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL DAY

In honour of the musicians who were forced to perform



Narration by Jason Isaacs 



**Thursday 23rd January 1pm**

**WIGMORE HALL**

**£25 tickets**

**on 020 7935 2141**





## AJR CHANUKAH PARTIES

All AJR members and their guests are invited to join us at one or more of the following events.



### LONDON

Thursday 12 December, 12pm – 2.30pm at a north London venue and including a delicious two-course lunch and exciting entertainment.



£25 per person.  
Contact [roshart@ajr.org.uk](mailto:roshart@ajr.org.uk)



### NORTH OF ENGLAND & SCOTLAND

All these events will include lunch and entertainment and/or a guest speaker. Venues and timings are available from the AJR coordinator for each meeting.

**NEWCASTLE – Wednesday 27 November**  
[agnes@ajr.org.uk](mailto:agnes@ajr.org.uk)

**EDINBURGH – Tuesday 3 December**  
[agnes@ajr.org.uk](mailto:agnes@ajr.org.uk)

**GLASGOW – Thursday 5 December**  
[agnes@ajr.org.uk](mailto:agnes@ajr.org.uk)

**LEEDS – Monday 16 December**  
[michalmocton@ajr.org.uk](mailto:michalmocton@ajr.org.uk)

**MANCHESTER – Tuesday 17 December**  
[michalmocton@ajr.org.uk](mailto:michalmocton@ajr.org.uk)

**LIVERPOOL – Wednesday 18 December**  
[michalmocton@ajr.org.uk](mailto:michalmocton@ajr.org.uk)



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

**THURSDAY 19 DECEMBER 2024**  
**11AM-12.30PM**

**£3 each or £5 per pair**  
**to cover Kosher refreshments**

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### JOSEPH PEREIRA

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# A call to action 60 years on!

**AJR Trustee Joel Hockman is a champion for our Next Generations activities. He feels that what goes around comes around.**

Recently I was thoroughly pleased to come across the September 1964 Journal article entitled *THE YOUNGER GENERATION AND THE AJR* and 60 years on here we are again. And still championing the great work the AJR does. It still holds relevant that...

It is undoubtedly realised and agreed on that the work of AJR must continue for a very long time to come, and in order for this to be possible, interest and support in the work of the organisation must be actively aroused and sustained in the age groups down to 30 years of age at present.

It's great to be part of such an important charity, which continues to support the 1st Generation. As a 3rd Generation myself I will never forget my Viennese grandparents' words that we 'must never forget' and the joy and support that they received from The AJR.

In my role as a trustee, continuing to help support the 1st Generation as well helping to grow the Next Generation membership, it was so interesting to read the following categories in the 1964 December Journal...

The Older Generation ... 69 years upwards  
The Middle Years ..... 46-68 years  
The Younger Generation 30-45 years  
The Next Generation .... under 25 years

I was quite pleased to see that I would still fit into 'The Younger Generation' category although this is now known as The Next Generations and I would up the age limit of the 'Older Generations'. But the fact of the matter is, it doesn't really matter which category we fall into as we all share a unique connection, whether we know it or not, and as we get further away in time from the atrocities of WW2 and Holocaust distortion, the need to 'keep the stories alive' and the need to connect has never been greater.

The AJR is a great way for the Next Generations, including the 3rd and 4th (and maybe even the 5th), the grandchildren and great-grandchildren, to connect with others with a shared background. This is the future and the continuing future of the AJR. The AJR provides a space for grandchildren of Holocaust and refugee survivors to connect.

This connection comes in a variety of different ways and there are no barriers. It's been great to see an increased take up of membership of those who not only grew up with a strong 'continental' (as my Oma would have said) background but also those who had little or no knowledge of their past and are only finding out about this now in their adult years.



Joel Hockman

PHOTO © MEL BROWN STUDIOS

Areas of interest continue to be citizenship, understanding one's identity, family research, and traditions at home, combined with thick 'continental' accents and of course some much loved food that has passed down the generations.

In my role as a trustee, it has been invaluable to see how the Next Generations have connected and continue to do so and to define and understand what it means to be a '3rd/4th Generation', whether of European or Middle Eastern background – many of our families will have gone through similar struggles to get to where we are all today.

In the world we live in today, it is evident that finding a community has never been more important. Whether people are simply interested in a social connection, gaining citizenship or learning more about their past, the AJR continues to offer a space for this. Holocaust and memorial exhibitions, opportunities to connect with other 3rd generation grandchildren from around the globe, family days out, and most recently a trip from the USA; there is something for everyone – an opportunity simply to meet others. But we need you. We need you to continue to spread the word among colleagues, friends, acquaintances. Tell them about the great work the AJR does and get in contact. Drop in to an event and see if it's for you. The AJR is here 82 years on and continues to meet the needs of Gen Alpha, Gen z, Millennials, Gen X and beyond!

# DOROTHEA SHEFER-VANSON'S LETTER FROM ISRAEL



## MENDING BROKEN SOLDIERS



The war that Israel has been waging for the past year, first in Gaza and now also in Lebanon, has

taken a heavy toll. Almost eight hundred Israeli soldiers have been killed and over ten thousand wounded, many of them seriously. The task of rehabilitating the injured soldiers falls on Israel's hospitals, many of which have specialised units allied to the Ministry of Defence which are devoted to repairing injured bodies, teaching amputees to cope with their new situation, and providing physical and psychological therapy to enable the soldiers to resume some semblance of normal life.

In several cases only the devoted ministrations of medics and comrades in the field, followed by rapid

evacuation by helicopter, has served to save the lives of soldiers who have been shot, injured by shrapnel or trapped under rubble when an explosive device causes a building to collapse on them. The resulting injuries require many long hours on the operating table, followed by extensive nurture and care to give the injured soldier a chance of recovery, however partial.

Many Israelis, whether as individuals in groups or associations, have taken it upon themselves to provide 'extra-curricular' support to the wounded soldiers, visiting them in hospital, bringing them food or special treats, and generally doing what they can to improve the lot of sturdy young men who suddenly find themselves in a situation of near-helplessness.

One such noble soul happens to be my granddaughter Shir who, after completing her university studies, now lives and works in digital advertising in Tel Aviv. In the last few months she has made a habit of baking Challot and delicious cakes every week, distributing them to friends



Shir with some of the Challot that she delivers each week to injured soldiers

and family, and also taking them to the Sheba Hospital in Tel Aviv, where she makes straight for the ward where the injured soldiers are situated.

Each cake is neatly wrapped in cellophane and decorated with flowers and ribbons, providing a combination of aesthetic pleasure and culinary delight to the recipients. Shir, who happens to be a beautiful young woman, also sits at the bedside of several soldiers, talking to them and encouraging them.

I'm sure she does a lot to raise their morale. Last week she told me with a sense of pride that two of the soldiers she has been visiting have been released from hospital, to continue their rehabilitation in a separate unit devoted to providing the treatment the young men require. She is sad to see them go, but glad that they are on their way to a full recovery.

The cost to Israel in the loss of life and the physical and mental damage is incalculable. I can only hope that sense will prevail and the war be brought to an end in the near future.

## PLAQUE AT GORDONSTOUN



On Sunday 26 January the AJR will unveil a plaque at the renowned public school Gordonstoun to honour the founding Headmaster, Kurt Hahn.

The event will also mark HMD and the school's own Day of Solidarity.

If you have a connection to the school and would like to attend this event please contact the AJR office asap.

[www.fishburnbooks.com](http://www.fishburnbooks.com)

**Jonathan Fishburn**

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

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# 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.

## HUNGARIAN EMIGRES

Your November issue featured an article about two eminent Hungarian Jewish émigrés, the composer Joseph Kozma and the Bauhaus artist László Moholy-Nagy. The article mentions that Moholy-Nagy moved to Vienna in 1919 and after a few months proceeded to Berlin, but it does not mention Moholy-Nagy's close friendship with the outstanding poet and writer, member of the Hungarian Avantgarde, Lajos Kassák (1887-1967), and Moholy-Nagy's first, joint publication with Kassák, *Buch Neuer Künstler* and its Hungarian version *Új művészek könyve* (Vienna, 1922).

This publication I would like to mention also for family reasons: it was issued in 500 copies by my paternal uncle, Gyula Gömöri, owner of the Vienna publishing house Julius Fischer Verlag. Uncle Gyula, a refugee from the Counterrevolution in Hungary, published a number of notable Hungarian writers in exile, but with the above mentioned book he made an important contribution to the popularisation of modern European art- with a preface by Kassák, the book contained reproductions by Arp, Boccioni, Braque, Chagall, Kandinsky and Picasso, also including examples of the de Stijl movement. The 1922 edition is now very rare indeed, and even its reprint in 1977 in Hungary is much sought after by booksellers.  
*George Gömöri, London*

## OTHER ART EXHIBITIONS

I would like to commend your readers to a new exhibition by award-winning textile artist Caren Garfen. Having established an international reputation for her accessible yet challenging issue-based art, Caren is now researching the Holocaust and examining the shattering rise in global antisemitism.

Caren's solo exhibition, *Fabricated?*, is currently showing at her home studio in North London until 31 January and readers can find out more or arrange a visit via [caren@carengarfen.com](mailto:caren@carengarfen.com).  
*Yvonne Saville, London NW7*

## ESSENTIAL READING

I found David Herman's piece in your December Journal most interesting. I had read and also rated many of the books he mentioned. I was a student at UEA in the 1970s, with both Werner Mosse and W G Sebald as a young lecturer before his literary career took off. Stimulating times.

I should like to draw your attention to two other books. One I can hardly call 'essential reading' as it's my own – *The Memory Keeper* (Canongate 2023) – a family memoir triggered by the chance discovery of my grandparents' Stolpersteine placed by a stranger.

Another book I do consider essential is Helen Epstein's *Children of the Holocaust* (1979). I know she is American, not British, but hers was the first significant publication to grapple with the effect of the Holocaust on the second generation. I can still remember the shock of recognising feelings I had not yet found words for. A real trailblazer.  
*Jackie Kohnstamm, London*

The pages of the AJR Journal frequently praise the contributions of a great many illustrious refugee artists.

It occurs to me that a number of your readers probably have art works of merit in their homes, as I have, that are by murdered victims of the Holocaust or by refugees who created art having come to live in this country. Maybe professionally or as keen amateurs, maybe representing some aspect of Jewish life, maybe not. Maybe known to the public, more likely not.

I wonder whether the owners of any such paintings might be interested in loaning them for some sort of exhibition?  
*Steven Dorner, London W1*

One of Caren Garfen's many textile works exploring the Holocaust



# LOOKING FOR?



## ANITA SACHS (née Lewy)

Amanda Esteban is looking for information on Anita Sachs (née Lewy). Anita placed an article in a 1959 edition of the AJR, looking for her grandmother 'Dorothea Rosenbaum'.

She asked that Dora contact her through K. Lewy, solicitors in Oxford. Sadly, Dora died young so the story has been lost but she would really like to know what their relationship was.  
[amandaesteban@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:amandaesteban@hotmail.co.uk)


## EMMY SACHS

Steve Anson is seeking the lady who gave him information on refugee painter Emmy Sachs while attending either AJR's trip to Harwich on Monday 13 May or the AJR's Kindertransport event on Tuesday 14 May.

Emmy was a friend of Steve's parents when Emmy lived in Glasgow and Steve has two of her paintings. He is keen to find more information about the artist.  
[steven.anson@abercairn.co.uk](mailto:steven.anson@abercairn.co.uk)

## KINDERTRANSPORT 18 MAY

Ulrich Kasparick is hoping to find more information about the Kindertransport that arrived on 18 May 1939 from Berlin, which included a child called Susanne Schaefer (aka Schäfer), born in Berlin in 1927. Susanne's father was the graphic artist Albert Schaefer-Ast (1890-1951) and her mother was Stephanie Nathan (1895-1972).  
[charity.microbanks@googlemail.com](mailto:charity.microbanks@googlemail.com)



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# THE SUN AND HER STARS

**Salka Viertel was an Austrian actress and Hollywood screenwriter, perhaps best known for her work with her close friend Greta Garbo. She was also a founding member of the European Film Fund, which helped many notable artists to escape the Nazis and find their footing in Hollywood. New Yorker music critic Alex Ross speculated that 'Weimar on the Pacific might never have existed without her'.**

Salka was a lucky child: every winter, the 'galitziener Jewess' celebrated Christmas twice. There was the traditional German way, starting on Christmas Eve. Two weeks later, Salomea Steuermann's family offered gifts to their Ukrainian servants, including Salka's nanny; they belonged to the Eastern Orthodox Church.

Though Salka grew up in turn-of-the-century Galicia, her family were not impoverished shtetl dwellers. They were secular Jews who had prospered and who inhabited a country house, Wychylowka, outside Sambor. That small garrison town was near Habsburgia's eastern frontier, dividing Hungary from Poland. The region became Polish after WW1, and Ukrainian after WW2: Sambor is Sambir today.

Salka's life was idyllic, reminiscent of a Chekov play. Large orchards, a forest and the Dniester River, the Carpathian Mountains in the distance, and peacocks that promenaded in the garden. Salka's father was a successful lawyer; he became Sambor's first - and last - Jewish mayor.

Salka wanted to act, so left home for the bright footlights of Central Europe: Pressburg (Bratislava today), Berlin, Vienna, Hamburg, Düsseldorf. She met a fellow thespian, Vienna-born Berthold Viertel, and married him in 1918. Ten years later, Salka followed Berthold to Hollywood, where he had a three-year contract; Salka switched from the stage to screen-writing. She became friendly with



Salka Viertel (at the time known as Salka Steuermann) with Greta Garbo

Greta Garbo, working on her film scripts; *Queen Christina* was one of their films.

Salka's marriage became an elastic relationship yet survived many years. She had a lengthy liaison with Gottfried Reinhardt, son of the Austrian-born theatre director Max Reinhardt, who was half her age. Berthold's close companions included Beatrix Lehmann, sister of Rosamund and John - all British literary figures.

The Viertels wisely decided to stay in California when Berthold's contract expired. As the émigrés started arriving on the West Coast after 1933 – including writers such as Thomas Mann and Bertolt Brecht, and musicians such as Otto Klemperer, Arnold Schoenberg and Franz Waxman (he composed many film scores) - Salka's Santa Monica house became a salon. There, she fed, sheltered and entertained them, and tried to assist them. She would put them in touch with studio bosses who might offer them a contract. She used her influence to help them get the many documents they needed to become U.S. residents. British writers living off the East European movie moguls also came to Casa Viertel, among them, Aldous Huxley and Christopher Isherwood.

Salka took part in the anti-Nazi activities that flourished in Hollywood. She supported the European Film Fund that helped refugee screenwriters and actors. With the advent of the Cold War, she was suspected of un-American activities, of sympathising with communists. Her phone was tapped, her mail opened. She became guilty by association with 'Red' screenwriters who had

been fired or even jailed.

The cautious studio bosses, without formally blacklisting her, stopped giving her work. Salka had to start taking paying guests; in 1947, she had to let her house. Berthold had gone back to Vienna.

In 1953, an embittered and disillusioned Salka, dependent on charity, emigrated to Klosters where, plagued by poverty, she lived for many more years and wrote her memoirs. *The Kindness of Strangers* was published in 1969, but then went out of print. After she died in 1978 she and her book were largely forgotten.

Her book was reissued in 2019, and people now recognise it as a classic of the genre, like Stefan Zweig's *The World of Yesterday*. Its sweeping Sambor-to-Santa Monica saga brilliantly evokes the destiny of so many refugees from Hitler. But not all, for some of Salka's family were also Holocaust victims, not survivors.

The American book critic Donna Rifkind has authored a fine biography that fills in the gaps and provides background to the turbulent events in Salka's epic life. A strong theme is the gender imbalance in that 'golden' Hollywood era: '...the lofty rewards for achievement' went mainly to men, Rifkind tartly notes.

**Martin Mauthner**

***The Sun and Her Stars: Salka Viertel and Hitler's Exiles in the Golden Age of Hollywood* by Donna Rifkind was published in 2020 by Other Press.**

# ART NOTES: by Gloria Tessler

**“I would like my pictures to look as if a human had passed between them, like a snail, leaving a trace of human presence and memory trace of past events as the snail leaves its slime.”**

This is how **Francis Bacon** aptly defined his portraiture. Lucien Freud may have come closer than many to creating warts-and-all images, but Bacon is exceptional in allowing emotions to wallow over his sitters' features like his metaphorical snail.

*Human Presence* at the **National Portrait Gallery** features more than 50 portraits from the 1940s onwards, in which Bacon emphatically and dramatically challenged the genre with his superimpositions on the face and shadow brushstrokes. In simplistic terms this distortion of the human face could be described as sudden mood changes, but perhaps in a deeper way the artist is conveying the fact that no subject is an island – that past life will always intervene. Bacon would just describe it as Realism.

The artist spent time in London, Berlin and Paris and was inspired by the *avant-garde* art of Picasso and Giacometti, and contemporary cinema and photography. He was profoundly influenced by the

Old Masters, particularly the paintings of Pope Innocent X by the 17<sup>th</sup> century artist, Diego Velazquez. He enclosed his screaming Pope within a glass box, and began using this technique with other subjects, who become transformed into an open, yelling mouth, sometimes accompanied by incongruous domestic details which give an unsettling effect. In another version, he envisions his Pope as a helpless child, trapped and impotent with terror.

Bacon found his moment in the wake of WW2 when younger artists rejected figurative painting for abstraction. But that primal scream resonates out of his work.

We are flattered if someone wants to paint our portrait – but might feel differently if the artist were Francis Bacon. Apart from self-portraits, he painted his friends, who include Lucian Freud and his lovers Peter Lacy, George Dyer and John Edwards. But he freely described their portraits as “deformations”. He found it less inhibiting to work from photos of his sitters than having them seated before him. And by the end of the 1950s he had virtually abandoned painting from life. Photographer John Deakin seemed to share Bacon's views of his sitters – describing them as “victims.”

Bacon's *Portrait of Lucian Freud* conflates

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**CONTEMPORARY  
PAINTING AND SCULPTURE**

Freud with an old photo of Franz Kafka, hinting at Bacon's future direction. His 1957 *Study for Portrait of van Gogh*, adopts the vibrant colours which the Dutch artist favoured, but shows him bowed down and burdened with artistic equipment.

After learning of Lacy's death, Bacon began work on the first of his small head triptych, featuring himself in the centre. His *Sleeping Figure of Lacy* exposes something primeval and animal in this work. Initially he chose muted tones to portray him, but by the end of the 1950s they became more colourful and emotive.

His famous *Triptych* May-June 1973, is a break from Bacon's rejection of the narrative form, but this graphic description of the last moments of George Dyer, who took his own life in Paris, shortly before Bacon's retrospective was due to open, is for me the most emotive of all the works seen here.

I had never found the painter to be emotional in this way before. But the suicide of Dyer clearly evokes on the canvas all the loss and guilt the artist felt at the loss of his lover.

*Human Presence* at the National Portrait Gallery runs until 19 January 2025.



The National Portrait Gallery is fronting its Frances Bacon exhibition with these three images

# The return of JAZZBAND

The AJR is grateful to John Staub for sharing this wonderful story about the restitution of a painting belonging to his German grandfather.

It all started a year ago, when my brother Hugh received an email purporting to be from a Berlin auction house, looking for descendants of Hugo Staub, our grandfather. The word 'scam' came to mind immediately.

After some checks, it turned out that the email was genuine.

The auction house was handling a transaction, in which a painting, *Jazzband* by Max Oppenheimer ("MOPP") painted in 1927, was likely to be purchased by an un-named gallery in Berlin. *Jazzband* is a portrayal of Weintraub's Syncopators, a popular 1920s Berlin group, who appeared in the Marlene Dietrich movie *The Blue Angel*. The auction house had discovered that the painting originally belonged to our grandfather in Berlin, Dr Hugo Staub, and wished to find the descendants, in terms of German law.

Hugo was a prominent Jewish lawyer and psychoanalyst in Berlin. He and his wife fled the city after being warned of impending arrest by the Nazis in March 1933, leaving his possessions in the care of my father, Peter. My father was working for the underground movement and also left Berlin in a hurry, taking only his briefcase. The various family members eventually landed up in South Africa and the US.

Hugo had five grandchildren, my two siblings in South Africa, two cousins in New York and myself in London. The



Members of the Staub family with their grandfather's painting



The full Staub delegation during their visit to Berlin

museum had done very extensive due diligence on the painting's provenance. None of us had any prior knowledge of the painting, nor of agreements signed between our parents and the West German authorities in 1964, offering very modest compensation for their losses before the War. We probably no longer had legal right to the painting, BUT the vendors and Museum wanted to 'do the right thing' and offered us a percentage of the sales funds. We came to an agreement for the sale of the painting to the Berlin Jewish Museum.

Despite in-depth investigation nothing is known about the fate of the painting between 1933 and 1962, when it appeared on the Berlin art market and was bought by a Canadian Jewish family. It hung in the family dining room and was later lent to the National Gallery in Ottawa.

The official unveiling of the painting was on 21 October this year in the Berlin Jewish Museum, in the presence of 17 'Staub' family members, the vendor family and the son of one of the band players. The museum handled the occasion superbly in every sense. It was an extraordinarily deeply moving experience for everyone. The evening ended with a lively jazz concert to celebrate 100 years of Weintraub's Syncopators, against a huge backdrop of the original painting.

From the time the painting disappeared until today it has remained in immaculate condition.

With all the association with pre-War Berlin Jewry, (Oppenheimer, Weintraub band members and Hugo) we feel that the painting has found its rightful home in the Berlin Jewish Museum.

## SWITCH ON ELECTRICS

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## 3G & 4G Solidarity Trip to Amsterdam 7 to 9 February 2025

Following the recent anti-Jewish riots in Amsterdam, the AJR is offering a weekend trip for our younger members to meet Dutch Holocaust descendants and visit the new Holocaust Museum, the Anne Frank House and other places of interest.

The cost for this 2 night, 3 day trip will include accommodation and activities but your travel to Amsterdam will need to be booked separately. Please email [nextgens@ajr.org.uk](mailto:nextgens@ajr.org.uk) for more information.

# THANK YOU TRUSTEES

**The AJR would like to pay tribute to six very special people – Eleanor Angel, Frank Harding, Gaby Glassman, Andrew Kaufman MBE, Anthony Spiro OBE and Philippa Strauss – whose respective terms as Trustees come to an end this month and who, collectively, have provided us with almost 200 years of invaluable support and guidance.**

As Trustees they have been responsible for the charitable company's overall strategy and financial policy, the disbursement of financial support, for managing funds to benefit the membership and for overseeing the priorities and programmes of the AJR.

We asked each of them to answer some questions about their time with the AJR and we hope you enjoy reading their insights.

## WHAT WAS YOUR PERSONAL CONNECTION TO THE JEWISH REFUGEE COMMUNITY?

**ELEANOR:** My parents were both refugees with my father coming from Frankfurt and my mother from Nuremberg. From an early age my siblings and I regularly visited the refugee homes in Bishop's Avenue. My father became Chairman of the AJR and, after my working for several years at the Day Centre, he invited me to join the Management Committee.

**GABY:** My parents fled Germany to Holland and I grew up in the survivors' community in Amsterdam. Professionally, my psychology thesis focused on the transgenerational transmission of trauma, now referred to as inherited trauma, and in my practice I am seeing increasing numbers of second generation. I am proud to have been a founder member of both the Holocaust Survivor Centre and the Second Generation Network, the instigator of the annual Yom Hashoah commemorations in Pinner and the originator of the *Leave the lights on* campaign, in memory of Kristallnacht. I also advocated for the introduction of the 'Friends' category of membership at the AJR.

**FRANK:** My parents and grandparents were all refugees from Germany, my parents arriving in the UK in 1936. My maternal grandparents were founding members of the New Liberal Jewish Congregation, now Belsize Square Synagogue, and my family have been active members of that community ever since.

**ANDREW:** Both my parents (and indeed Susie's) were refugees from Germany so AJR was literally in our blood, so much so that our 16 year old granddaughter Ella has recently become a member.

**ANTHONY:** My father was Hon Treasurer of the AJR Charitable Trust and was later appointed Life President of the AJR, in recognition of his outstanding contribution.

**PHILIPPA:** My first real connection was when I married Jimmy, both of whose parents were refugees, as were their friends, and I became a member of Belsize Square Synagogue. My awareness of the characteristics of this special group developed further when I worked for World Jewish Relief, becoming responsible for the running of the Jewish Refugees Committee, and also joining the B'nai Brith Leo Baeck Lodge. After retiring from WJR I was invited to become a Trustee of the AJR.

## DURING YOUR TENURE AS A TRUSTEE DID YOU LEARN ANYTHING THAT SURPRISED YOU ABOUT THE AJR AND/OR ITS COMMUNITY?

**ELEANOR:** I have always been amazed at this extraordinary community who, despite having gone through such terrible times and learning to settle in a new land, had the commitment to give something to Great Britain; it continually surprises me and I am still learning about individuals who have done some incredibly things.

**GABY:** The warm family atmosphere, which includes the staff.

**FRANK:** I was surprised and remain delighted at the longevity of so many of the first generation survivors and refugees; the support given by the community which in turn helps to support the first generation members; and the fact that the AJR is the largest funder in the UK of Holocaust education.

**ANDREW:** I have been a Trustee in one form or another for nearly 40 years so nothing surprises me any more. Thinking back to the beginning, I guess that I was amazed that such a relatively small organisation had such a broad ambit. The biggest surprise was that the members managed to fill the Royal Festival Hall for the Annual Concert. I remember the Amadeus Quartet performing. A bigger surprise was that I was one of those responsible for selling programmes!

**ANTHONY:** When I became Chair of the Wiener Library in 2004 I was surprised that it did not seem to have a close relationship with the AJR and I worked with Andrew to rectify this. I am confident this relationship will become even closer in the years ahead.

**PHILIPPA:** I was (and am) fascinated by the AJR's history and breadth of activities. I wasn't aware of the extent of support offered to members, both from the Claims Conference but also from the AJR's own funds. I have been fascinated by the My Story project and find people's stories eye-opening.

## WHAT IS LIKELY TO BE YOUR MOST ABIDING MEMORY FROM YOUR TIME AS A TRUSTEE OF THE AJR?

**ELEANOR:** I have always been in awe of the AJR's wonderful staff. The care and commitment they give to our members is incredible and is often over and above what is necessary.

**GABY:** How the AJR fast became a Second and Next Generation organisation. The number of 2G members is now almost double that of the first generation.

**FRANK:** The leadership of the AJR, particularly the contribution of Michael Newman, and the genuine concern of those involved – trustees, staff, volunteers – for the care and comfort of the first generation and the continuing relationships among their descendants with the AJR and its work.

**ANDREW:** My most abiding memory is easy. The then Prince Charles meeting with the Kinder on several occasions and ensuring he chatted to each and every Kind and vastly overrunning the scheduled time. He so loved meeting them that he invited them again



Frank Harding with one of the now many AJR blue plaques that he has helped to install

and again. He even came late to the concert at the Roundhouse on Remembrance Sunday after his family lunch, again spending ages with the Kinder.

**ANTHONY:** The genuine interest shown by King Charles in the work of the AJR. Over the years he has formed a close bond with our community in general, and Kinder in particular, and attended a number of functions. One cannot fail to be heartened and impressed by this.

**PHILIPPA:** I will think back on some of the people I have met, particularly in my work for the Self Aid Committee. I have visited many members in their homes to understand their needs better and I have found their stories compelling. I also enjoyed and will miss working with the professional staff.

**WHAT CHALLENGES DO YOU PERCEIVE AND/OR HOPES DO YOU HAVE FOR THE AJR GOING FORWARD?**

**ELEANOR:** Financially the future may be difficult, but I hope the AJR can continue to help the first generation as well as continue with educating others about the Holocaust. It is heartwarming that so many new members want to know more about their backgrounds and socially interact.

**GABY:** Catering for the second generation, who are genuinely in need of support. The first generation had their children to help them, members of the second generation may not have any relative to care for them.

**FRANK:** Funding will be a challenge within the next few years but I believe that the financial needs, certainly to support the first generation, will be met. Holocaust education must continue and AJR's support will be essential. It may be that the AJR will have to become more directly involved with those providing the education and coordinate their activities.



Philippa Strauss is especially proud of being part of the AJR's Self Aid committee

**ANDREW:** The greatest challenge is of course the generation change from the first to their descendants. But with our new strategic plan about to be approved and with the organisation now in the safe hands of Mike Karp and so capably led by Michael Newman, I have no doubt that the future is secured. Perhaps the biggest challenge will be the future funding when the Claims Conference monies run out and we will have to turn to fund raising but planning for this has already begun. My hope is that our education efforts will help to stem the flow of antisemitism. Only time will tell.

**ANTHONY:** The AJR has redefined its role a number of times since its formation. That need for change arises again, and will be a major challenge, as the first generation inevitably declines and the financial resources of the AJR shrink. The AJR will have to evolve again to provide programmes that retain the interest of subsequent generations.

**PHILIPPA:** The AJR is at a difficult junction. As the first generation passes the focus of the organisation will necessarily change. The work to define what that will look like is well underway underway and I look forward to seeing how the AJR emerges.

**WHAT BENEFITS HAVE YOU PERSONALLY EXPERIENCED FROM BEING A TRUSTEE OF THE AJR?**

**ELEANOR:** I have enjoyed being part of this amazing organisation and feel privileged that I have been able to learn as well as contribute to the care as well as the growth of the AJR.

**GABY:** I joined to offer my services as a specialist but gained much from my contact with members, the staff and, of course, with my fellow Trustees.

**FRANK:** I have appreciated how my wife



Eleanor Angel with the JVN Lifetime Achievement award that she received in 2021



Anthony Spiro receiving his OBE for services to Holocaust remembrance



Andrew Kaufman & Gaby Glassman with King Charles at an AJR reception for Kinder

and children have learned more about the Holocaust and its effect on us and so many of our friends. I have learned how, in relative terms, we were so lucky compared to others, including some other AJR members and staff.

**ANDREW:** The AJR has been my whole life and has helped me grow as a person and as a leader. I feel huge pride and was deeply honoured to have led the charity from the 20th into the 21st century now in rude health and a truly national organisation. No longer do I hear the question "AJR who?".

**ANTHONY:** Working with committed and like minded colleagues.

**PHILIPPA:** I have found my time as a Trustee very interesting and satisfying and I have been excited to watch the organisation professionalise itself. I have loved the challenges and I shall miss the work immensely.

**The AJR is delighted that one of these retiring Trustees - Andrew Kaufman MBE - is now our Honorary Life President, while two new Trustees – Anthony Hellman and Janet Lew – will be officially nominated on 11 December at our Annual Election Meeting.**

# Tackling Holocaust distortion

**Holocaust distortion is offensive to Jews and to survivors in particular. It also fuels anti-Jewish racism. But, asks Judith Heymann, what can be done to combat it?**

This question was addressed at an International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance, IHRA-UNESCO training programme at the New North London Synagogue before Succot. The conference, 'Protecting the Facts, Protecting the Future: Strengthening Actions to Counter Holocaust Distortion' was open to Holocaust educators including Generation 2 Generation, G2G, and Northern Holocaust Education Group, NHEG, speakers

According to UNESCO's Heather Mann, a shocking 49% of references to the Holocaust on the social media platform *Telegram* involved Holocaust denial or distortion. On *TikTok* the figure was 19% – almost one in five. Heather said: 'This is a big problem as young people find most of their information online'.

This point echoed the opening remarks of the Rt Hon Lord Eric Pickles PC, chair of IHRA. He noted: 'Newspaper readership has plummeted. The majority of adults get their news from social media'. He said we now live in a world where 'influencers have the same credibility as a *Times* leader writer'. He believed this was how distortion spread. He warned: 'In an age of alternative facts we have to stand for one thing only – the truth.'

He said it was imperative that future generations should not forget the Holocaust but they should also remember 'the Holocaust is with us today'.

Explaining the difference between Holocaust denial and distortion Oana Nestian-Sandu of the Olga Lengyel Institute explained: 'Distortion of the facts is more subtle and dangerous than denial.' She spoke of the dangers of groups using the Holocaust for a different issue. Examples of this included anti-



Michael Newman speaking at the IHRA Capacity Building Training Program in October

lockdown protestors wearing yellow stars. Other examples included the use of Holocaust of animals or climate Holocaust. She warned: 'Holocaust distortion is a gateway to denial. If you don't address distortion then there is a danger of the Holocaust repeating itself.'

Michael Newman, CEO of The AJR, highlighted the inverted star of David and swastika symbol which was a way of accusing Jews of being Nazis. He gave examples of incidents in Poland and Hungary where collaboration with the Nazis was whitewashed. He reported that some Stolpersteine had been removed in a German town on October 7. Although some distortion might arise through ignorance, it all reinforces antisemitism related biases.

The Community Security Trust's Dave Rich observed how the tragedy of October 7 triggered collective memories for Jews in Israel and the diaspora. He noted how so many of the recent anti-Israel protests have been worded in terms of the Holocaust. He cited an article in the 'London Review of Books' which argued that Israel had lost its moral high ground due to 'Nazi-like behaviour'. He also spoke of the dangers of AI making it easy to create fake images and context.

The IHRA-UNESCO partnership aims

to look at conspiracy theories on social media and the c.50 percent of social media posts that distort or deny the Holocaust. Heather Mann said hatreds such as misogyny, homophobia and antisemitism exist together within the eco-sphere. The partnership has produced lessons on Holocaust distortion to show students how to respond safely to harmful posts. See [training.againstholocaustdistortion.org](https://training.againstholocaustdistortion.org)

Jurmet Huitema-de-Waal of the Anne Frank House revealed: 'In the Netherlands there is less and less knowledge about the Holocaust.' She asked: 'If you don't know what happened, how can you stop denial or distortion?'

She recognised that AI was 'here to stay' and ways of using it in a positive way should be found.

Dave Rich reported that here in the UK antisemitism and Holocaust denial and distortion is largely happening in areas where the CST and Jewish organisations have no reach. There are no geographical boundaries to online hate. Teaching about hatred of Jews or Holocaust distortion is difficult where the students have never met a Jewish person. It was noted that the antisemitic stereotypes in India, where there are very few Jews, were identical to those found in the UK.

## EDUCATIONAL GRANTS

The AJR is the UK's largest dedicated funder of programmes and projects which promote teaching and learning about the Holocaust.

It is delighted to announce a number of new grants, of amounts ranging from £300 to upwards of £20,000, to the following:

**BOLTON SCHOOLS LINKING NETWORK** for an art-based educational programme.

**BRUNDIBAR ARTS FESTIVAL** for a festival in Newcastle dedicated to performing music and arts created by victims of the Holocaust

**CORE FOUNDATION** for 'Echo Eternal', a live performance and education programme inspired by and in tribute to Holocaust survivor testimony.

**ROYAL BIRMINGHAM CONSERVATOIRE** for 'Postscript - A Musical Exhibition for Holocaust Memorial Day'.

**THE AMELIA SCOTT** for a series of HMD events and an exhibition centring on a local Kindertransport story in Tunbridge Wells.

**UCL CENTRE FOR HOLOCAUST EDUCATION** for a teacher CPD residential course in Berlin.

**UNIVERSITY OF SUSSEX** for its annual HMD half-day event.

**WELLS MALTINGS TRUST** for a series of HMD events and educational workshops in North Norfolk.

None of the above would be possible without the continued support of the AJR members and donors. For more information about our Educational Grants programme please contact [alex@ajr.org.uk](mailto:alex@ajr.org.uk)

Wells Maltings, where a series of HMD events and educational workshops will be held thanks to a grant from the AJR



## FACILITATED SECOND GENERATION GROUP ON ZOOM

Tuesday evenings,  
7 January – 25 March 2025  
8.00 - 9.30pm  
(12 weekly sessions)

The purpose of the group is to explore, with others of similar background, the impact that the Holocaust and our parents' experiences had on our lives as we grew up and continue to have on us today.

Potential attendees will be invited to a preliminary individual meeting for which there will be no charge. There will be a fee for the group sessions, but no-one will be turned away because they are unable to pay.

The facilitator will be Gaby Glassman, a psychologist and psychotherapist who has facilitated these groups over many years and is herself a member of the second generation.

For further information, please contact Gaby on [020 8421 1609](tel:02084211609) / [07811 353 423](tel:07811353423) or at [gaby@glassman.com](mailto:gaby@glassman.com)

## WELCOME BUDGET

The AJR welcomes the government's pledge of an additional £2 million towards Holocaust education announced in the budget.

In her Autumn statement, Chancellor Rachel Reeves paid tribute to Lily Ebert, the Holocaust survivor

and educator and AJR member who passed away aged 100 in October. The Chancellor told MPs that it was important to "remember those who experienced the Nazi atrocities first hand."

She continued: "I am today committing a further £2 million for Holocaust education next year, so that charities can continue their work to ensure that these

vital testimonies are not lost and are preserved for the future."

Commenting on the announcement AJR chief executive, Michael Newman, said: "As the survivor generation dwindles and antisemitism in this country and around the world soars, it is critical now, more than ever before, that we spread and perpetuate memory of the Holocaust."



Jenny Stolzenberg at work



# In their footsteps...

A powerful new exhibition and educational resource enables a daughter's love to sit beside the story her father could never share. **Antony Lishak, CEO of Learning from the Righteous, explains.**

Bill Powell died in 1990; a loving husband, proud father and doting grandfather. He had arrived in the UK fifty years earlier as Wilhelm Pollak, a Jewish refugee from Vienna, having spent 10 months in concentration camps. He rarely spoke about his wartime experiences.

His daughter, the ceramicist Jenny Stolzenberg, was born just after the war; the light that helped him emerge from the darkness. Driven to understand her father's silence, she created an exhibition of ceramic footwear, depicting the uniqueness of each victim of The Holocaust.

Jenny herself died in 2016, knowing that the shoes she had created had been exhibited worldwide to high acclaim, including in the museum at Buchenwald, one of the camps where her father was imprisoned.

## THE SHOES

In response to her father's lifelong silence about his concentration camp experiences, Jenny created a display of ceramic shoes, designed to honour the uniqueness of each victim of the Holocaust. She described the process of making them as the conversation they were never able to have.

Shoes have long been an iconic symbol of Holocaust commemoration. As universal, everyday objects, they evoke an instant connection. The vast piles of abandoned shoes displayed in the Auschwitz Museum and the shoes that line the bank of the Danube, where Hungarian Jews were murdered by the fascist Arrow Cross Party, silently scream of unimaginable loss.

Jenny's shoes are painstakingly detailed. In total she produced almost a thousand, each the result of meticulous research and remarkable talent. They are objects of breathtaking beauty that reflect the individuality of their owners. After Jenny's death her husband Lawrence presented the remaining shoes to Finchley Reform Synagogue and my charity, Learning from the Righteous, to use in an educational capacity. The result is our new project and exhibition, **In their footsteps.**

## THE PROJECT

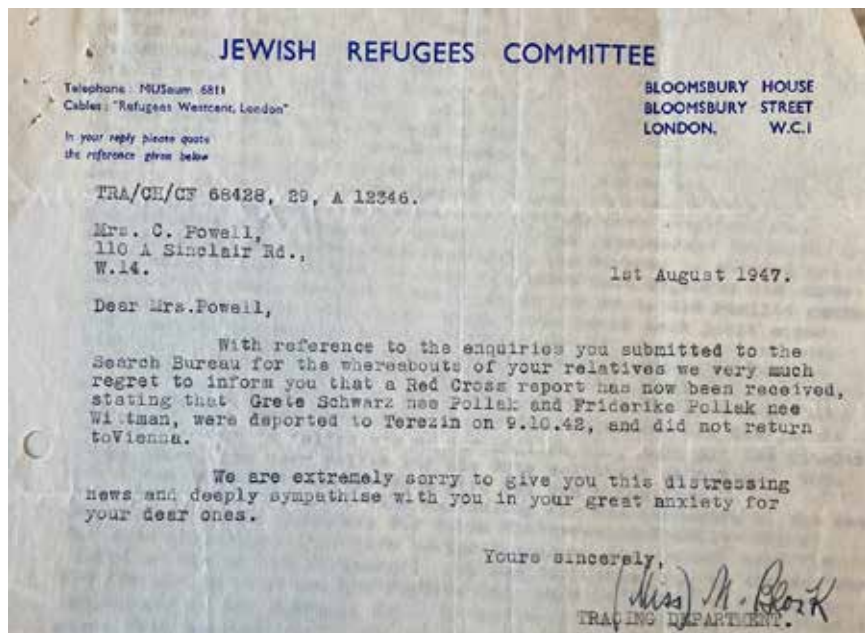
**In their footsteps** revives the impact of these powerful artefacts. The shoes are exhibited alongside original documents and correspondence that Jenny's father secretly archived. They were held at The Wiener Library; Jenny never knew they existed. This remarkable discovery enables us to tell the story of how her father survived Dachau and Buchenwald after being arrested in Vienna



Wilhelm with his wife



Students looking at some of the shoes created by Jenny



Letter written in 1947 confirming the fate of the family



3D printer making the shoes



The poignant Shoes memorial by the Danube

just after the annexation of Austria. It details how he arrived in the UK in May 1939, how he tried and failed to gain entry visas for his loved ones and the year he spent in a Canadian Internment Camp. Heartbreakingly, it also confirms the tragic fate of the family he left behind. His parents and sister were murdered in Auschwitz in January 1943. The letter arrived in August 1947, just months before Jenny was born.

Over the last year **In their footsteps** has been used to initiate a conversation about the contemporary relevance of the Holocaust in numerous schools. Students are then invited to create their own shoe exhibitions, in honour of the countless footsteps that were stolen during the Holocaust, and are encouraged to consider how they can contribute to a world where no child's life is blighted by hatred, intolerance and extremism. What will their footprint-of-change be?

The power of these shoes to speak directly to students is evident every time they are shown in schools. Recently a boy who had

only just been introduced to the subject approached me and said "...that red shoe is just like my little sister's... they killed seven year olds too..."

In order to support more schools, we are digitising the **In their footsteps** exhibition and producing 3D printed hand-painted replicas of the shoes. We aim to create six robust travelling exhibitions to reach a hundred schools each year, engaging many thousands of children in this vital work. For more information about **In their footsteps** and how you could support our work, contact [antony@learningfromtherighteous.org](mailto:antony@learningfromtherighteous.org)



One of the shoes created by the 3D printer

**CHAOS CONQUEROR**

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Impeccable references provided

# REVIEWS

## EINSTEIN IN OXFORD

Andrew Robinson  
Bodleian Library Publishing

Two of the greatest thinkers of the 20<sup>th</sup> century were Jewish refugees. Freud escaped from Vienna to Britain in 1939. Einstein left Germany in 1933, just after Hitler came to power, and came briefly to England and then moved to America for the rest of his life.

Andrew Robinson has already written two books on Einstein, including *Einstein on the Run: How Britain Saved the World's Greatest Scientist* (2019). He now returns to Einstein's fascinating relationship with Oxford, a city he visited several times in the 1930s, including his last visit in 1933, when he was already a refugee.

Einstein had a warm relationship with a number of British scientists, including the physicist Lord Lindemann, and particularly admired Newton, Faraday and James Clerk Maxwell. It was in England, he wrote, 'where my work has received greater recognition than anywhere else in the world.' He visited Oxford four times, first in 1921, then he lectured at Oxford in 1931, 1932 and 1933. After his final lectures in Oxford in the Summer of 1933 his last public speech in Britain was at the Royal Albert Hall in October which raised money for Jewish academic refugees from Germany. Afterwards, he told a journalist that he was 'a wanderer on the face of the earth.'

So why did Einstein resist Oxford's attempts to lure him there when he was forced to flee from Nazi Germany? Why did he settle for Princeton, where he lived from 1933 until his death in 1955? First, Oxford science was primarily experimental rather than theoretical and according to Robinson 'included hardly any theoreticians capable of discussing physics and mathematics at Einstein's level.'

Secondly, Oxford academic life could be very insular. In 1931 Christ Church elected Einstein a research student but one Fellow wrote in protest, 'it is unfortunate that an Oxford college should send money out of the country in the present financial situation.' And, finally, Einstein didn't warm

to the formality of Oxford life, 'symbolised by the dreaded dinner-jacket.'

Perhaps the best chapter in Robinson's book is about Einstein's times as a refugee from Nazism in 1933. It is full of interesting information. Einstein offered to give a third of his salary that year to Oxford to help threatened German-Jewish colleagues. He wrote to his fellow-refugee, the physicist Max Born, 'the degree of their [the Nazis'] brutality and cowardice came as something of a surprise to me.' Despite his affection for Oxford, where he lectured several times during the early 1930s, he never returned once he moved to America.

*Einstein in Oxford* is beautifully illustrated and offers a fascinating account of a neglected chapter of Einstein's life, with interesting insights into 1930s Oxford and the strengths and weaknesses of British intellectual life. At the end, it is clear why Einstein found Princeton so much more convivial and, crucially, (a point Robinson fails to make) much more safe.

David Herman

## WHY I BECAME AN X TROOP COMMANDO: A LIFE OF COLIN ANSON, THE GERMAN WHO FOUGHT FOR CHURCHILL

Helen Fry  
Yale University Press

Nobody was braver than Colin Anson, a refugee from Germany who joined the British army and ended up fighting against Nazism while himself sustaining near fatal injuries. Colin had voluntarily signed up for dangerous missions, becoming a Royal Marine Commando, in his determination to allow future generations their freedom in his adopted home.

Born in 1922, Colin had a happy childhood until Hitler came to power in 1933. His mother Mathilde was Protestant, his father Curt was Jewish. The boy was soon caught up in the trials of the political regime and forced to change schools. Curt was a First World War veteran, but before long his business was badly affected and he became a political activist supporting Jews. His safety was ever more precarious and one grim 1937 day he was arrested and sent to Dachau concentration camp. Soon afterwards he died, and his ashes were returned to the family.

Life became ever harder after Kristallnacht with the race to get out of the country intensifying. Thanks to the Quakers Colin boarded a Kindertransport train on 6 February 1939, arriving in Britain days before his 17<sup>th</sup> birthday when he would have been liable for German military service. Over here he was assigned to agricultural work which was not his forte but made good friends. Despite avoiding internment – farmhands were after all badly needed – his loyalties were questioned.

Once old enough, he volunteered for the Pioneer Corps being one of 10,000 ex-German and ex-Austrians who joined the British army. Like other refugees, he changed his name to an English one with the same initials – from Claus Ascher to Colin Anson – to give more protection. In 1942 he was recruited for the elite Commando unit X Troop. At first it was frustrating as he was not allowed to fight until the following year, when he saw service in the theatres of European war. Unfortunately, he sustained a near-fatal head injury off the coast of Sicily and only survived thanks to life-saving brain surgery in a field hospital. But nine months later, he returned to duty. He fought in the Yugoslav islands, became the first Allied soldier to liberate Corfu, and was stationed in post-war Frankfurt.

In Germany he did not want revenge or to know what happened to his father. Mathilde had survived great hardship in Frankfurt and eventually joined him in England. On being demobbed as a Sergeant, he tried various jobs. They included working for travel companies, selling copies of the Encyclopaedia Britannica and running a business manufacturing paper-shredding machines before finding more prosperous work in a successful motor accessory group. In 1951 he married Alice Gross who had also fled Nazi oppression in Vienna and whose parents escaped via Czechoslovakia. They couple became inseparable for 64 years and the proud parents of three children.

Historian Helen Fry has written a masterful account of Colin's life and distinguished war service, drawing on extensive interviews over several years before he died in 2016. They have a very authentic feel and his considered,

thoughtful, kind and unjudgmental personality shines through. Touchingly the book is dedicated to Colin's father Curt Ascher, "who spoke out against Nazism in Germany and paid with his life on 15 October 1937".

Janet Weston

### THE TWINS OF AUSCHWITZ

By Eva Mozes Kor with Lisa Rojany-Bucciari Monoray

For some reason this book recently appeared on my 'new arrivals' list on Amazon, despite having been published in 2020. Having never read it, I decided to download it, although with a degree of scepticism that it was yet another publisher hopping onto the '...of Auschwitz' bandwagon, given the success of the tattooist, midwife, daughter, last boy, stable boy, saboteur, girl who escaped, etc etc.

This book centres on the story of Romanian Eva Mozes Kor who, along with her identical twin sister Miriam, was subjected to Dr Mengele's infamous human experimentation programme at Auschwitz. Eva lost both of her parents and two older sisters on arrival at the camp; only she and Miriam survived. After the war Eva founded the organisation CANDLES (Children of Auschwitz Nazi Deadly Lab Experiments Survivors) through which she connected with 122 other surviving twins. In 1984 she founded the CANDLES Holocaust Museum and Education Center in Indiana to educate the public about eugenics, the Holocaust, and the power of forgiveness.

The book is written in the first-person narrative, in a simple and very accessible style as befits Eva's own experiences during the war (she and Miriam were only 10 when they entered Auschwitz). This book tells us what it was like to be one of 'Mengele's twins' and how she managed to get her and her sister through the horrific experience of life in a concentration camp.

While twins at Auschwitz were granted the 'privileges' of keeping their own clothes and hair, they were forced to fight daily for their survival and many died as a result of the experiments, or from the disease and hunger rife in the concentration camp.

Eva and Miriam survived by sheer will and determination, with Eva in particular

defying orders and taking enormous risks to 'organise' food and other much needed supplies. Life after liberation was not much easier: the twins spent time in three different refugee camps over nine months before returning to Romania to live for five years with their aunt, who provided them with little comfort. In 1950, they immigrated to Israel where at last they felt free and no longer feared persecution for their Jewish identity. Eva eventually met and married a man from Indiana where she settled and spent the rest of her life teaching others about the Holocaust.

Eva is a fascinating and impressive character and I found the story of her life after the war, which appears as an epilogue in the book, just as gripping as the story of her fight for survival in Auschwitz. She made the decision to publicly forgive the Nazis for what they did to her which led to significant controversy in her life. Many survivors disagreed with her decision and perhaps slightly misinterpreted it in a way I can completely understand. It is a difficult thing to comprehend in many ways but I really appreciated her courage in sticking to her beliefs and being truly herself for her entire life – no matter what. This book is an intriguing insight to a brave, tenacious and memorable woman and I would highly recommend it to both adults and children alike.

What touched me most was Eva's explanation of forgiveness. She describes it as a "power" which she can use to heal the decades of pain she suffered from the Holocaust. In a public statement, Eva said: "Many people hold onto pain and anger. Unfortunately, this does not help the survivors, and this is my only focus. My forgiveness has nothing to do with the perpetrators. It is an act of self-healing, self-liberation, and self-empowerment. It's free, it has no side effects, and it works. I highly recommend that everyone try it".

Eva Mozes Kor died in July 2019. She had been giving lectures, doing guided tours, accepting awards, and working away in the office in her museum until just days before she passed. In the words of one of her biographers, Peggy Tierney: "if ever there was someone who could survive by sheer determination, it was Eva Kor." *Jo Briggs*

### TRANSLATIONS FROM GERMAN

Experienced, professional translator specialising in letters, diaries and memoirs with a Jewish connection and/or written in old German script (Sütterlin).

I have translated numerous documents for AJR members and would love to help unlock your family history, too.

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# OBITUARIES

## Sonja STERNBERG MBE

Born: 18 June 1926, Berlin

Died: 17 April 2024, Manchester



**The youngest daughter of Chaja and Leo Knepel. Sonja and her elder sister Gisela had a happy early childhood in Berlin, but when Hitler came to power, everything changed.**

On 28 October 1938 Sonja's father, who was of Polish origin, was taken away and deported to Poland. After Kristallnacht Sonja was forced to move to a Jewish school and their family were ordered to leave their apartment.

As the situation worsened, at great expense their mother organised the necessary paperwork and obtained visas to get to Cuba on the *SS St Louis*. Sonja, Gisela, and Chaya set sail from Hamburg on 13 May 1939.

However, when the ship arrived in Cuba, they discovered that the visas had been declared invalid and the passengers were refused entry. For seven days the ship remained in Havana harbour, where Sonja celebrated her 13<sup>th</sup> birthday. The courageous captain, Gustav Schroeder, decided to take a chance and cruise towards America whilst attempting to persuade the US authorities to allow entry, only to face gun boats near Florida. The *St Louis* was forced to turn back towards Europe. Eventually Holland, France, Belgium and Britain each agreed to give the passengers safe haven. The two sisters and their mother were fortunate to be granted visas for Britain, and on arrival in Antwerp they were transferred to a cargo ship which sailed to Southampton.

Meanwhile, Sonja's father had received his papers and sailed on the *Orinoco* from Hamburg, but on learning that the *St Louis* passengers had been refused entry into Cuba, the *Orinoco* turned back to Hamburg. Sonja never saw her father again.

Arriving in London, with assistance from the Jewish Refugee Committee, Sonja and her family found temporary accommodation, eventually moving with her mother to a room in a house near Finsbury Park in London, whilst Gisela was sent to work as a domestic in Broadstairs. Sonja went to school in Finsbury Park only to be evacuated to St Ives in September 1939. Returning to London, Sonja enrolled on a dressmaking course, and by 1942 was working at a dressmaking factory in London. A very talented pattern cutter and tailor, Sonja eventually ran her own successful dressmaking business.

In 1955 she met Ad (a refugee from Limburg-an-der Lahn). They married in 1957 and had two children, Jeremy and Susan.

Sonja was an active member of the AJR, participating in meetings and outings, talking to school children about the Holocaust, and writing to this Journal on a number of occasions. She also took part in numerous commemorative events at home and overseas, often with other surviving *St Louis* passengers. In 2018 she and Gisela were guests of honour at the Hamburg premier of a film, *Captain Schroeder: die Irrfahrt der St. Louis*, about the bravery and humanity of the captain of the *SS St Louis*.

Sonja and Ad enjoyed a happy retirement, travelling widely, hiking in the Alps, and taking every opportunity to go walking in the Peak District. Ad died in 2012, and Sonja moved to Morris Feinmann Village in Didsbury, where she immersed herself in the community and activities. She was surprised and delighted to receive the British Empire Medal in 2020, alongside Gisela, for her work in Holocaust education.

She is survived by her sister Gisela, children Jeremy and Susan, and their children Jonathan, Benjamin and Jacob.

**Jeremy & Susan Sternberg**

## Albert LESTER

Born: 23 October 1927, Germany

Died: 29 September 2024, London

**Albert Lester was born Albrecht Levi in Buchen (Odenwald, Germany) in 1927. He was the second child of Herbert Levi and Susi née Wolf. His parents owned a shop on the high street selling clothes and shoes.**

Buchen had about 15 Jewish families and a synagogue where Cantor Wertheimer taught the children Hebrew on Sundays.

Albert's family was fully integrated. Albert's mother wrote poems in the Buchen vernacular and his father – a WW1 veteran - was a member of the Red Cross. Albert remembers playing with children in the street until he was sent to the Jewish school in Esslingen as a boarder. He describes how the school was attacked by a mob on Kristallnacht and he hid with other children in the woods. His father had been sent to Dachau concentration camp from which his mother secured his release after having arranged a visa for Rhodesia.

Albert left Germany on a Kindertransport on 21 March 1939. His mother Susie was able to follow his father to Rhodesia. Albert travelled from Hamburg to England on the *SS Manhattan*. The Refugee Children's Movement organised for him to be taken to Woodside in High Wycombe where he stayed with other refugee boys until moving to live with a lady in Stokenchurch and attending the technical school in High Wycombe. After finishing school, he started training as a draughtsman with a design office in Swiss Cottage while also waiting to get a passage to Rhodesia to be reunited with his parents.

Albert lived in Rhodesia for six years and secured a South African engineering diploma. He then returned to England



in 1952 to obtain a higher engineering qualification.

His career highlights included managing large projects for Tarmac, Sim Chem (Simon Engineering), Senior Engineering and Foster Wheeler Power Products. Albert was also a member of the British Standards Institution and International Organization for Standardization, developing new project management standards, and acting as an adjudicator and expert witness in industrial and construction disputes. He became an Honorary Fellow of the Association of Project Management (APM) in 2007, accrediting many project management courses, as well as setting and marking APM exams. Before he passed, Albert was in the middle of writing the 9th edition of his established project management handbook, *Project Management, Planning and Control*.

Albert met his German wife Barbara who taught German literature at UCL and Royal Holloway. They had two sons. When one of them studied medicine in Heidelberg, he by chance made the acquaintance of the son of the mayor of Buchen who was organising an exhibition of paintings by Ludwig Schwerin. By coincidence one of these paintings, *Boy with a harmonica*, featured the young Albert. Albert went to the opening of the exhibition in Buchen and then returned to speak at a school about his experiences.

Albert was guest speaker at the AJR's annual Kristallnacht service in 2023.

**Jo Briggs**

## Eli ABT

Born: 23 May 1929, Breslau

Died: 4 September 2024, London

**Just five years ago, at the age of 90, the architect and chazan Eli Abt surprised everyone by embarking on a sponsored skydive, marking the 80th anniversary of his rescue by Kindertransport.**

Eli was just nine years old on Kristallnacht, when he witnessed horrors that no child should ever see, including the unbearable image of the Torah scrolls lying on the synagogue floor after being urinated on.

Eli was the eldest of three children of Rabbi Harry Abt, headmaster of a Jewish high school in Breslau, and Friedel Abt. He was 10 when he was sent on a Kindertransport, not knowing whether he would see his family again.

In Britain he was sent to a boarding school in Brighton. Miraculously, although other family members were less fortunate, he was reunited with his immediate family, who were given safe haven in South Africa, settling in Johannesburg.

He volunteered for military service in Israel during the 1948 War of Independence and spent two years there before returning to Cape Town to study architecture, qualifying at Witwatersrand University. He also had a fine tenor voice and in 1952, he succeeded Rev Simcha Kusevitsky as Reader at the Greenside Congregation in Johannesburg, remaining there until 1955.

After completing his studies, Abt moved to the UK in 1957 where he gained employment both as an architect and as a chazan at the Yeshurun Synagogue in Edgware. He was a gifted cantor and even performed as a concert soloist. Later, he led Rosh Hashana services at Stanmore Synagogue. He sang in many chazanut concerts, often appearing as the guest cantor at Selichot services.

One admirer, David Olivestone, who lives in Israel, paid this tribute: "He was the chazan

of my shul, the Yeshurun, when I grew up in Edgware. Although he never wanted a career as a chazan, he was a marvelously talented vocal musician, with a great tenor voice and a master of nusach, making him outstanding as a chazan. He also wrote many delightful articles for the JC, which he would send me. Altogether a Renaissance man."

Eli met Muriel Beer, who was born into an assimilated German-Jewish family and had started going to synagogue regularly on Shabbat. He took employment as an entertainer on a kosher cruise with her and when they docked in Haifa they announced their engagement.

They married in Israel in March 1959, returned to London and settled in Edgware. Eventually Eli set up his own practice in St Albans, Hertfordshire.

The couple enjoyed a very cultured life and took their two sons to many Sunday afternoon concerts at the Royal Festival Hall. They were also noted for their hospitality and regularly hosted friends in their home in Stanmore, where they moved in 1971.

When he retired, Eli re-focused his energies on contributing a regular column on Jewish art in the JC. He became something of an expert in this field and would give presentations on his new passion. But he refused to discuss his early life until he was in his eighties because, as he said, he did not want it to overshadow the rest of his life.

The last two years of his life, after Muriel died, proved very difficult for him, however. He missed her deeply. Nevertheless, he remained determinedly independent until he suffered a stroke in February of this year.

Eli is survived by his two sons and five grandchildren.

**Gloria Tessler**

*Based on an obituary which appeared in The JC on 4 October.*

## IN PERSON EVENTS

DATE	TIME	GROUP	CO-ORDINATOR
Monday 2 December	12.30pm	Bournemouth	Ros Hart
Monday 2 December	12.30pm	Leeds Pre-Chanukah Party	Michal Mocton
Tuesday 3 December	12.30pm	Muswell Hill	Ros Hart
Tuesday 3 December	12.30pm	Edinburgh Chanukah party	Agnes Isaacs
Wednesday 4 December	1pm	Wanstead – Stanislaw Brunstein exhibition	Karen Diamond
Thursday 5 December	2pm	Pinner Chanukah Party	Karen Diamond
Thursday 5 December	12.30pm	Glasgow Chanukah Party	Agnes Isaacs
Monday 9 December	12.30pm	Edgware	Ros Hart
Thursday 12 December	12 noon	Chanukah Lunch, London Area (see advert on p3)	Ros Hart/ Karen Diamond
Monday 16 December	12.30pm	Brighton	Ros Hart
Monday 16 December	12.30pm	Leeds Chanukah Party	Michal Mocton
Wednesday 18 December	12.30pm	Liverpool Chanukah Party	Michal Mocton
Wednesday 18 December	12.30pm	North London	Ros Hart

### 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 2 December @ 4pm	<b>Kay Silver, author - <i>The Last Pogrom</i></b> <a href="https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/89974480662">https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/89974480662</a>	Meeting ID: 899 7448 0662
Tuesday 10 December @ 11am	<b>Book Discussion (no speaker) – Some of our favourite books</b> <a href="https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/87484201377">https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/87484201377</a>	Meeting ID: 874 8420 1377
Monday 16 December @ 4pm	<b>David Neville: writer, director and producer - Ideas and Inspiration</b> <a href="https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/81354274926">https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/81354274926</a>	Meeting ID: 813 5427 4926
Tuesday 17 December @ 4pm	<b>Judy Karbritz - Doris Day: Beyond the Sunshine</b> <a href="https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/85211799376">https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/85211799376</a>	Meeting ID: 852 1179 9376
Thursday 19 December @ 3pm	<b>Kinder Contact Project</b> <a href="https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/86821343707">https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/86821343707</a>	Meeting ID: 868 2134 3707
Monday 23 December @ 4pm	<b>Our last online quiz of the year</b> <a href="https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/82044068175">https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/82044068175</a>	Meeting ID: 820 4406 8175

## 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 Mon @ 10.30am **Get Fit where you Sit (seated yoga)**  
<https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/85246889439>  
Meeting ID: 8524 688 9439

Every Tues @ 11.00am **Shelley's Exercise class**  
<https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/88466945622>  
Meeting ID: 884 6694 5622

**AJR** The Association of Jewish Refugees  
**MANNA** UK Branch of Mizrachi

**IN MEMORY OF SIR ERICH REICH CHARITY WALK Through the East End**

Exact date still tbc. Please contact AJR office for details.

Join Manna Mizrachi's guided 10km walk in conjunction with the Association of Jewish Refugees, through the historical Jewish East End of London. The tour will be led by John Steel of Tour de Force.

Sign up for £25 and raise as much sponsorship as you can. All the event proceeds will go to assist Holocaust survivors living in poverty in Israel.

To register please contact us at:  
Web: [www.mannauk.org](http://www.mannauk.org)  
Email: [gaby@mannauk.org](mailto:gaby@mannauk.org)  
Phone: 0798551475

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