



# AJR JOURNAL

The Association of Jewish Refugees

## 80 years after Liberation

On 27 January 1945, eighty years ago this month, Auschwitz was liberated by the Soviet Red Army. Since then, Auschwitz has become the most notorious symbol of the Holocaust.



80 years after its liberation Auschwitz receives around two million visitors a year

This was partly, of course, because of its size and the number of victims who were murdered there. Historians estimate that around 1.1 million people were murdered in Auschwitz. The majority, around 1 million people, were Jews. The second most numerous group, some 70,000, were Poles, and the third most numerous, about 21,000, were Roma and Sinti. About 15,000 POWs and some 12,000 prisoners of other ethnic backgrounds (including Czechs, Belorussians, Yugoslavians, French, Germans, and Austrians) also died there and another 10-15,000 were homosexuals, Jehova's witnesses and criminals. Many, of course, were gassed. But huge numbers also died from exhaustion from work, pseudo-scientific experiments and the harsh conditions of daily life, the freezing cold in winter, starvation, disease and epidemics.

But the numbers who died cannot be the only explanation for the notoriety of Auschwitz. After all, more than 900,000 were killed at Treblinka. Another explanation is that the gas chambers, crematoria and

railway at Auschwitz symbolised the prevailing idea that the Holocaust was particularly modern, technological and bureaucratic. For years after the war these images dominated the way historians and intellectuals thought about the Holocaust and only recently has the Shoah by Bullets taken its place in books like Jan T. Gross's *Golden Harvest* (2012), David Shneer's *Grief* (2020), Wendy Lower's *The Ravine* (2021) and Chris Heath's book on Ponar, where more than 70,000 Lithuanian Jews were shot dead, in *No Road Leading Back* (2024). These books introduced us to a very different geography. Instead of railways and gas chambers, their authors wrote about pits and massacres by Nazis and their Polish, Lithuanian and Ukrainian auxiliaries. The centre of gravity shifted from central Europe to the east, and it's no coincidence that these books appeared after the fall of the Soviet Union and the opening of new archives.

It is also important that Auschwitz sounds so German unlike Chelmno or Sobibor. It is *Continued on page 2*

### HAPPY NEW YEAR

2025 is another important year for the AJR, marking 80 years since the world finally began learning the truth about what the Nazis had done to the Jews. Since then the AJR has supported many thousands of Holocaust refugees and continues to help their descendants to stay connected.

Our service at Belsize Square on 20 January for Holocaust Memorial Day will reflect this important milestone and we would be delighted to welcome you there, whether in person or online.

We look forward to seeing you then and hope you enjoy reading this issue of the AJR Journal.

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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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## 80 years after Liberation (cont.)

rarely called by its Polish name, Oświęcim. When I visited Auschwitz in 1977, I went there by bus and witnessed a furious argument between two Poles. One called it "Auschwitz". The other angrily insisted it should be called "Oświęcim".

It wasn't just that Auschwitz became a symbol of modernity and was so associated with Germany. It also became a symbol of modern evil, of man's inhumanity to man, as in the famous sequence in *The Ascent of Man*, when Jacob Bronowski went to Auschwitz and said, "This is the concentration camp and crematorium at Auschwitz. This is where people were turned into numbers. Into this pond were flushed the ashes of some four million people. And that was not done by gas. It was done by arrogance. It was done by dogma. It was done by ignorance. When people believe that they have absolute knowledge, with no test in reality, this is how they behave."

Perhaps more important were the famous literary accounts of Auschwitz. So many died, of course, but many survived as well, among them, Primo Levi (a series of famous books published over forty years after the war), Elie Wiesel (*Night*, 1960), Tadeusz Borowski (*This Way for the Gas, Ladies and Gentlemen*, 1946) and the Nobel Prize winning author, Imre Kertész (*Fateless*, 1975, and *Kaddish for a Child Not Born*, 1990).

And then there are less well-known but very powerful personal accounts of Auschwitz such as *I Was a Doctor in Auschwitz* by Gisella Pearl (1948, republished in 2019), *Cold Crematorium* by József Debreczeni (1950), Eddie Jaku's *The Happiest Man on Earth* (2020), recently a one-man play, and best of all, Otto Dov Kulka's extraordinary Holocaust memoir, *Landscapes of the Metropolis of Death: Reflections on Memory and Imagination* (2013).

What is perhaps most striking about these books is how they shift our attention from gas chambers and crematoria to hard labour, disease and the experience of women. In *Cold Crematorium*, lice and body fluids are everywhere. "Our blankets are swarming with silvery

– glistening colonies of larvae." There is no sanitation. "Bouts of diarrhoea afflict some men twenty times a day." "Everyone has diarrhoea. Hence the horrid yellow streams along the rows of beds." In Gisella Perl's account of her experiences as a doctor in Auschwitz, she writes about typhus, dysentery and infections, but she also writes about women's distinctive experiences. Perl was a gynaecologist and an obstetrician before the war so she became the women's camp doctor. She writes about the terrible decisions she had to make: terminating pregnancies and committing infanticide to save the lives of women inmates. This is a very different world from that of young men like Jaku, Levi and Wiesel. At Jewish Book Week some years ago, the historian David Cesarani rightly drew our attention to the prevalence of rape and sexual violence in the camps.

Kulka's memoir is very different. It is closer to the novels and stories of WG Sebald or Lanzmann's masterpiece, *Shoah*. These are all dark, difficult works, exploring the distance between the remembered past and the remembering present. This is the tradition Kulka's book belongs to: circling around painful memories, the difficulty of remembering clearly, where objects are fragmentary, landscapes are full of ruins and images – whether photographs or drawings – are hard to decipher. Memory is far from straightforward.

*Shoah* (1985) probably did more than any other film to change the way we think about the Holocaust. There were, of course, interviews with survivors from Auschwitz. But the film introduced many of us to less well-known death camps. It begins with one of the very few survivors from Chelmno, barely known forty years ago, and ends with the Warsaw Ghetto. There are the famous

interviews with Polish bystanders and the train driver who took the Jews to Treblinka. Yes, there were the interviews with Raul Hilberg about the Nazi bureaucracy of death and the railways, but Lanzmann's film also focuses on small Polish villages, images of carts as much as railways, on the indifference of bystanders more than famous Nazis like Eichmann and Mengele.

Finally, of course, there are the refugees who survived Auschwitz and then came to Britain. Famous names like Hugo Gryn, Lily Ebert, the pianist Natalia Karp, HG Adler, later a prolific author and historian, who lost his wife and mother at Auschwitz, and Anita Lasker-Wallfisch, the cellist who famously played in the Women's Orchestra at Auschwitz. The orchestra played marches as the slave labourers left the camp for each day's work and when they returned. They also gave concerts for the SS. Far fewer survived from other Polish death camps such as Chelmno, Treblinka and Sobibor.

Much will be said and written about Auschwitz on the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its liberation later this month. Sadly, some of it will be pious and clichéd.

It might be best to listen out for the new wave of historians rather than the politicians or the celebrities.

David Herman

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# LEADING THE WAY AT IHRA



Michael Newman presented a tribute to Fritz Bauer at the IHRA plenary



Lord Pickles addressed plenary delegates at the evening reception at the Imperial War Museum

## The AJR made significant contributions to the content and output of last month's London plenary of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) under the UK Presidency and the chairmanship of Lord Pickles.

We launched two ground-breaking projects the AJR has led in partnership with the government: the Holocaust Testimony UK portal and the *80 Objects/80 Lives* digital Social Media exhibition.

The portal was conceived, developed and built by the AJR to allow academics, educators, and the general public to access easily the testimony of those who experienced Nazi oppression and who settled in the UK post-war. You can see – and compare – interviews given by the same person to different institutions, sometimes decades apart.

It is a collection of collections, an interactive and easy to use archive that brings together testimonies taken over many years by varied and leading institutions. As well as testimonies from our own Refugee Voices archive, for the first time it makes publicly accessible interviews taken by Natasha Kaplinsky for the UK Holocaust Memorial Foundation and all interviews with a UK connection collected by the USC Shoah Foundation. Also featured are interviews held by the

Wiener Holocaust Library, the Imperial War Museum and the British Library as well as from leading overseas institutions, including one of the first testimony collections, the Fortunoff Archive of Holocaust Testimonies at Yale University.

Also launched at the IHRA plenary was the '80 Objects/80 Lives' digital Social Media exhibition, which presents 80 objects from filmed testimonies of Holocaust survivors and refugees, who settled in the UK.

The chosen objects – which include a teddy bear, a doll, a watch, a spoon, a passport with the letter J, a yellow star, and a bowl from Bergen-Belsen – are presented in eight sections, according to broader themes. They represent the very personal histories and experiences of the Jewish Holocaust survivors and refugees before, during, and at the end of WW2. 80 years after the liberation of Auschwitz and the end of WW2, *80 Objects/80 Lives* provides a unique pathway into learning more about the Holocaust, learning more about the experiences of displacement, exile, and the stories of survival.

It is a source of great pride that the AJR has led these two projects, delivering for the government (and the public) two outstanding resources that honour the memory of survivors and refugees. The content will introduce new audiences to this critical and compelling history and form part of the resources we are assembling that will combat Holocaust distortion and antisemitism. Culminating on Holocaust Memorial Day later this month, we will publish some of the 80 'object stories' on

the AJR's social media. Postings of these short videos will also bring viewers to the new UK Holocaust Testimony portal. We encourage you to share and re-post the object stories on your own social media.

Meanwhile, the AJR's CEO Michael Newman and Head of Education and Heritage, Alex Maws, participated in Working Group and Committee meetings of the IHRA plenary. Together with the CEO of the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust, Olivia Marks Woldman, Michael made a presentation about Holocaust museums and memorials in the UK, including referencing several AJR resources: the UK Holocaust Map, the portal and the AJR plaques and trees.

Alex and Michael also contributed to a discussion on strengthening commitments to the IHRA Working Definition of Antisemitism. The UK is proud to be the first IHRA member country to have adopted the Definition, which has subsequently been adopted by a wide range of civic organisations. Michael was honoured to read a eulogy for Professor Yehuda Bauer, the former IHRA Honorary Chair who passed away in October, and equally honoured to be appointed as the 2026 Chair of the IHRA's Committee on Antisemitism and Holocaust Denial.

In between meetings, delegates had the opportunity to meet representatives of a number of organisations working in the field of Holocaust education and remembrance in the UK, including from the AJR and from organisations that the AJR supports and sponsors.

# 100 DOWN UNDER

**Our Head of Volunteer Services, Fran Horwich, was delighted to take time out from her recent holiday in Australia to pay a special visit to one of the AJR's eldest and furthest flung members.**

Elfriede (Friede) Frohlich came to the UK from Vienna on the Kindertransport, and was fostered by an English family. At the age of 21 she moved to New York because some of her friends from Vienna had managed to get there. She worked there for over 30 years, but when she was made redundant, her British foster family, who were now living in Australia, asked her to come back to them. She lived with her foster mother until she

passed away, and has stayed down under ever since, based in Sydney.

In November Fran and husband Ed visited Australia for a family wedding. Knowing that Friede will be turning 100 this April, they took the opportunity to visit her and hand-deliver a very special birthday present and card from the AJR.

The visit was arranged through Andrew Clarke, the grandson of Friede's foster mother, who joined them for the occasion.

Apparently Fran loves receiving the *AJR Journal*, and had a pile of them next to her. She told Fran: "I have always enjoyed being part of the AJR despite being unable to participate in any of the organisation's events in person. So it made it extra special for me to have an AJR staff member with me in Sydney to celebrate my 100<sup>th</sup> year."



Fran and Friede

## A salty legacy

**In November AJR Chief Executive Michael Newman travelled to Munich to collect two silver salt bowls from the Munich City Museum which had traced ownership of the precious objects to the AJR and Liberal Judaism.**

In 1939 and 1940, the Munich Municipal History Museum (which was to become the Münchner Stadtmuseum in 1955) acquired hundreds of items of silverware which had been purloined from Munich's Jewish families.

One of those forced to declare their valuables was Heinrich Schonfeld, who was later deported to and murdered at Theresienstadt. Fortunately, his only son (Kurt) Arthur was able to flee Germany in 1939, emigrating to the UK where he anglicised his surname to Field. After his death, his widow Olga – with whom he had no children – left part of her estate to the AJR and Liberal Judaism when she passed away in 1998. The

Michael Newman with the pair of salt bowls



AJR was notified about the bowls by the Holocaust Claims Processing Office in New York.

The AJR would like to put on record our grateful thanks to Dr Regina Prinz from the Munich City Museum and Rebecca Friedman from the HCPO for enabling us to benefit from this restitution and in so doing to remember the Schonfeld/Field family. We are discussing with Liberal Judaism what to do with the bowls and where they will be kept.



HM Lord-Lieutenant for Renfrewshire, Peter McCarthy, attended the AJR's Pre-Chanukah lunch in Scotland and took the opportunity to present our much loved former social worker Myrna Bernard (right) with her British Empire Medal.

In his follow-up letter to Agnes Issacs (left), our Outreach co-ordinator for Scotland and Newcastle, he wrote: 'I also greatly valued the opportunity to find out more about the sensitive but hugely impressive outreach of the AJR and the life-changing interventions that you are able to make with Holocaust survivors and their families. It is wonderful work that you are all doing.'

PHOTO © STAN KAYE



Henrietta Franks, accompanied by a currently serving Jewish army officer

## HOORAY FOR HENNY

The AJR was very proud to see our member, 101 years young Henny Franks, laying a wreath at the Cenotaph during the recent AJEX Remembrance Parade and Ceremony.

Henny, who arrived here on the Kindertransport and served in the ATS during WW2, laid the wreath to remember Operation Market Garden, which took place in the Nazi-occupied Netherlands in September 1944.

Over 3,000 people marched in the 2024 AJEX Parade, with a further 3,000 kerbside supporters. The wreath laying was just one of many poignant and inspiring moments of the day.

## Wedding Bells



Harold and Rachel got married in Glasgow

Many people have made lifelong friendships through the AJR and our Outreach team works hard to bring people together from near and far. So we were delighted to learn of a marriage which last year took place between two of our second generation members.

Dr Harold Hammer and Rachel Sinclair were married on Lag B'Omer, 26 May 2024, in Giffnock Newton Mearns Synagogue, Glasgow. Harold is a retired consultant ophthalmologist, and Rachel is a retired administrator/PA.

Harold's father Julian was an officer in the Polish Army when he was taken prisoner in the early days of WW2, spending over five years in a German POW Camp before being liberated by the Russians. His mother Zelda was in the Kovno ghetto in Lithuania for the latter period of the war and survived a death march before her liberation. Julian and Zelda met in Munich before coming to Glasgow, where Zelda had family.

Rachel's father Yitzhak was born in Hungary and was incarcerated in Auschwitz before liberation. He made his way to Israel where he met his wife Sheila, who had made Aliyah from England. Rachel and her brother were born there, but the family returned to England when she was two years old.

Harold and Rachel met through mutual friends. They have homes in both Glasgow and Radlett and now divide their time between each location.

## FINALLY GREEK

The AJR sends hearty congratulations to our 2nd generation member Marcelle Black, who shares here her joy at acquiring Greek citizenship.

On 22 November, I took the oath at the Greek Embassy in London in order to become a Greek citizen. The process began around four years ago: my late mother, Lela, an AJR member, was Greek and came to the UK in 1946 as a refugee and as the only survivor of her entire family, all of whom had been deported from Thessaloniki and Athens to be murdered in Auschwitz.

Although I was born in London and am British, I have always felt Greek. My late father's parents were also born and lived for a while in what was then Salonica (Thessaloniki). I speak Greek, having spent all my childhood and teenage summers in Greece. I have also taken my husband and two daughters there over the years. In fact, my two daughters will also be taking up Greek citizenship in the near future.



Marcelle outside the Greek Embassy, Holland Park



Daughter Danielle (who flew in specially from New York), husband Jeff, daughter Jacqueline, Marcelle, and Mr Christos Goulas (the Consul at the Greek Embassy)

Having been named after my mother's six year old little girl, Marcelle, who was gassed in Auschwitz, I feel that it was important for me to embrace Greek citizenship in memory of my mother, Lela, and as a legacy for both my daughters and four grandsons.

# 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.

## MY UNCLE ABRAHAM

At 81 I did not expect to receive any news about my family who perished during the Holocaust. But I was recently contacted by Joke van Dijk from the Ermelo Historical Society in the Netherlands.

On 10 April 2025 they are hoping to place a Stolperstein in front of the Heerens Loo Lozenoorde home from where 12 mentally handicapped Jews were deported on 13 April 1943 (two months after I was born, in hiding). These included my 28-year-old uncle, who was later murdered in Sobibor. Apparently he was only two years old when he was placed in the Ermelo home.

Depending on my health, I hope to attend the ceremony with other family members.  
*Hanneke Dye, Skipton, North Yorkshire*

## A NEGLECTED GROUP?

I have been an AJR member for about 15 years. As far as I can recall, the publication has only ever really addressed the lives and interests of those who are 100% Jewish.

My father was a Scottish Presbyterian. My mother was a Czech Roman Catholic. She just happened to have a Viennese Jewish father, but he probably never set foot in a synagogue after he left home and certainly not after he married my Roman Catholic grandmother. He married again after her premature death in 1917, to a Viennese Jewess, but they were both baptised in 1918, so my mother and her siblings were brought up as Roman Catholics. They were only deemed to be Jewish in consequence of the Nuremberg Laws – a minority of a minority. My mother never regarded herself as Jewish.

I suspect that the AJR might have a potential constituency of oddballs, who do not fit comfortably and are not currently acknowledged or catered for.  
*Cameron Woodrow, Birmingham*

**NOTE FROM EDITOR: Our contributing editor David Herman is currently researching this topic and an article will appear in the new year.**

## MEMORIES OF A KINDERTRANSPORT BOY

I read with sadness in the December *Journal* of the passing of Albert Lester. I also was one of the 24 or so boys at the hostel at Woodside, Loudwater, High Wycombe from 1939 to 1941, where Mr. and Mrs. Bolton gave us happy days. I think it was closed in 1943 and I was transferred to Mansfield Road, Nottingham. Of course, I did not know until after the war what fate had befallen my parents and younger brother in 1943 at Theresienstadt and Auschwitz.

Many years later I was invited twice with others for a reunion at the house outside Oxford of Stephen Moorbath (ex Moosbach) who died in 2016.

I read the *AJR Journal* always with great appreciation – keep up all your good doings!!  
*Werner Conn, Lytham St. Annes*

## LACK OF HUMILITY

For the last year I have sought in vain within the *Journal* for any sign of humanity expressed towards those suffering in Gaza. Perhaps I have missed it, for I have seen not a gram for the women and families left injured and homeless, or children left orphaned. Instead in Dorothea Shefer-Vanson's *Letter from Israel* (November 2024) we read that when the alarm sounds she retires 'to listen to the news on TV' in her basement '...which is also my private gym'. No such refuge is afforded to those who live in Gaza.

The AJR grew out of the post-war need to express the suffering of Jews caught up in the Holocaust, like my mother. Yet it fails to bear witness to the cruel, indefensible and disproportionate acts being perpetrated by the Israeli government; The consequences of this self-ghetto-isation will last long after this conflict has ended.

*Anthony Lipmann, Bridgwater, Somerset*

**NOTE FROM EDITOR: Readers should note that the views expressed throughout the *AJR Journal* are not necessarily the views of the AJR, which strives to remain apolitical. Note also that in this month's column Mrs Shefer-Vanson acknowledges the suffering within Israel's neighbouring communities.**

# LOOKING FOR?



## RETRIEVING LOOTED ART

Caroline Hearst writes: My grandfather owned some valuable art in Germany. We (his heirs my cousins and me) have been contacted by a couple of art retrieval firms about this. It seems like this is an area which is quite complex and there are a variety of organisations working in the field. I would be grateful to hear from anyone who has had experience, positive or negative trying to retrieve looted art.

[carolinehearst@gmail.com](mailto:carolinehearst@gmail.com)

## TOYS FOR ISRAEL

Kind Reni Birnbaum with some of the many toys that she collects for needy children in Israel through her charity, THE KINDER



Reni Birnbaum and her late sister, Steffi Schwarcz-Birnbaum, both came from Germany by Kindertransport and eventually made Aliyah. In their honour Steffi's daughter, Raya Mizrahi, has set up a charity, THE KINDER, which collects new and old toys and games and distributes them to needy children throughout Israel. She would be delighted to hear from any AJR members who would like to support her efforts.

[rayamiz67@gmail.com](mailto:rayamiz67@gmail.com)

## HELP WITH TRANSCRIBING

Is there anyone who is prepared to help Jane Mackenzie, granddaughter of Alan Overton – see p14-15 – with transcribing some taped memoirs from the legal historian Eric Muller, a member of Fellowships at Auschwitz for the Study of Professional Ethics.

[separatetables@gmail.com](mailto:separatetables@gmail.com)

## STAMP COLLECTION

AJR member Brian Stroh is hoping to sell his collection of King George VI and Queen Elizabeth II first day covers and other stamps and has promised to donate all proceeds to the AJR.

[brianreneestroh@aol.com](mailto:brianreneestroh@aol.com)



Eddie Summers and his brothers. From L to R: Sam, Alf (Abraham), Sid (Solomon), Henry (Hyman), Eddie (Israel) and Bernard

## "FINKELFEFFER, WHERE ARE YOU?"

**Thank you Eddie Summers for sharing this light-hearted view of the practice of changing our names.**

From the time those boats from Russia, Romania and Poland first off-loaded our bewildered mothers, fathers, grandparents, uncles and aunts onto English shores well over a century ago, the colourful Jewish/Yiddish identity has gradually faded.

The process of assimilation effectively diluted some of the more appealing characteristics of the Eastern European Jew. Second only to the sad decline of Yiddish, except (as far as London is concerned) in the Orthodox communities of Stamford Hill and Golders Green, is the shedding of our long, tongue-twisting, yet magnificent surnames.

How often these days do you hear of a Kaslofsky, Shneiderman, Shmaltzman or Smulevitch? Hardly ever! And more's the pity.

Before we go any further, I must confess to having changed my own name, which was quite unique, with a splendid sound. Israel Seratsky. Now there was a name. So why did it have to go?

Well, one reason was that all my older brothers changed theirs, so naturally, I followed suit. As for my parents, there

was really no point. Mum, (Golda) hardly ever moved away from the cooker in her over-populated kitchen; Dad, (Moishe) spent most of his life in an East End clothing factory, surrounded by people bearing even longer names than his.

Antisemitism and ridicule were further reasons for name changing. It was expedient when approaching English firms for employment or having to deal with them in other ways. There was more sensitivity about our names years ago, as compared to now. You only have to read the credits at the end of a TV programme or film, to arrive at this conclusion.

Of course, many Jewish people have retained their sometimes cumbersome surnames, but the proportion of those who did change, must be far greater.

The boys who sat near me at school (don't forget, I was Seratsky) were Maretsky, Karinsky, Silverman, Morgenstern, Rosenberg and Zuckerman.

My pals at the Oxford & St. George's Jewish Youth Club were Kalinsky, Kanovitch, Kelberman, Kirshenbaum, Krimgoltz, Macatonia, Marcovitch, Ogrodivitch, Padolsky, Pescovitch, Pomerance, Shadlofsky, Shinkerman and Sokolinsky. Sounds like a Premiership Football squad, doesn't it?

Incidentally, I never did come across a Hymie Finkelfeffer, but am assured that

one did exist. I heard that he changed his name – to Harry Finkelfeffer!

One of my own favourites was a school-chum of my brother Sam; this chap was named Bloomchick Vishnapolsky. Honest. A name was a name back then, and no mistake.

The following names are drawn from a list of Oxford & St. George's members who served in the Armed Forces during WW2. If you study these carefully, you may discover a relative!

Assenheim, Crashinsky, Gagendorf, Gooravitch, Gordonfelt, Kossansky, Plotzger, Schulsinger, Schwartzberg, Spitalnik, Strudlovitch, Supkovitch, Weitzensang, Zlotnicky.

What did I tell you? They don't make names like that anymore! Many a set of false teeth must have flown out while making introductions! I'm seriously considering changing back to Issy Seratsky. Who knows? I may start a trend!



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# ART NOTES: by Gloria Tessler

Into the rivalrous encounter between the two titans of the Renaissance, Leonardo da Vinci and Michelangelo over where to site the latter's *David* in Florence – enter the young Raphael.

It is 1504 and Florence is facing a time of creative and political challenge. Both Leonardo and Michelangelo have been commissioned to paint monumental battle murals on adjacent walls in the new council hall. To Michelangelo goes the *Battle of Cascino*, and to Leonardo, the *Battle of Anghiari*. Both have other projects to complete, and now Raphael, eager to learn from these distinguished artists, joins them in competing for the attention of the city's most influential patrons.

As for the battle murals; none was ever finished. Only sketches have survived.

**Michelangelo Leonardo Raphael** at the **Royal Academy**, until 16 February 2025, promises an exciting narrative. It is such a huge subject, but the show is disappointing, too miniscule in scope.

Many of the preparatory sketches are



Lancelot Ribeiro's *Uncrowned King*

indecipherable. In place of the awesome *David*, is a sketch by Raphael and the only sculpture by Michelangelo is his *Taddei Tondo*, a bas relief showing the Virgin with the baby Christ clinging to her in fear as the infant John the Baptist foretells his fate. The *Taddei Tondo* clearly influenced Raphael in his unfinished *Virgin and Child with the infant St John the Baptist*, but his gentle portrayal of the Virgin's features also betrays hints of Leonardo, as does his sketch of *Leda and the Swan*. But Raphael's art clearly offers a purity and sense of freedom which is all his own.

Michelangelo's *The Bathers*, in preparation for his unfinished *Battle of Cascino*, is an intricate mass of soldiers bathing in the River Arno before battle. The artist is unchallenged in his gift for portraying the musculature of the male body.

In complete contrast, the recent exhibition at the **Ben Uri** by the Indian artist, **Lancelot Ribeiro**, features paintings that are vivid, dramatic, colourful, even cartoonish. But their power cannot fail to astound you.

His *Uncrowned King*, fiercely depicted in black and orange, is an eye in a distorted head with dagger-teeth, suggestive of anguished power. Then there is *King Lear*, another tormented subject, wearing a broken cityscape for a crown. "Uneasy lies the head that wears the crown", says Shakespeare's Henry 1V. Ribeiro's work is a perfect example. His subjects seem violated, diminished.

*Paranoid* divides a distracted face into two sharp black lines which never meet.



Michelangelo's *The Bathers*

*The Artist's Torment*, thought to be a self-portrait, brings together similar spiky feathered edges and broken teeth, referenced in other portraits created during his experimental period with heads and townscapes in the 1960s. Contrast this with the fragility of his *Mother and Child*, again all in orange, a nod to the iconography of the Renaissance. In *The Abundance of Nothing*, the head is defined by rough white outlines but the paper missiles of life are hurled around it. It all suggests an explosion of humans and townscapes in a displacement of both.

Lancelot Ribeiro was born into a Catholic family from Goa in Mumbai and moved to the UK in 1950. He studied life drawing at St Martin's School of Art, but following National Service in the RAF he returned to India and became a full time artist. He held his first solo exhibition in Mumbai in 1961, after which he was commissioned to paint a 12 ft mural for Tata Iron and Steel. His work is in the British Museum and Leicester Museum and Art Gallery.

## Annely Juda Fine Art

23 Dering Street  
(off New Bond Street)  
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CONTEMPORARY  
PAINTING AND SCULPTURE

# The sad story of Eva Mosbacher

**David Dobson, AJR member and a Quaker, has been deeply moved by the tragic fate of Kindertransport refugee Eva Mosbacher; here he recounts the tragic circumstances which led to her untimely death.**

Eva Elizabeth Berta Mosbacher was born in the apartment of her parents Otto and Hedwig at 4 Emilen Street, Nuremberg on 22 October 1926, shortly after Hitler wrote *Mein Kampf*. Eva could not have been born at a worse moment in history.

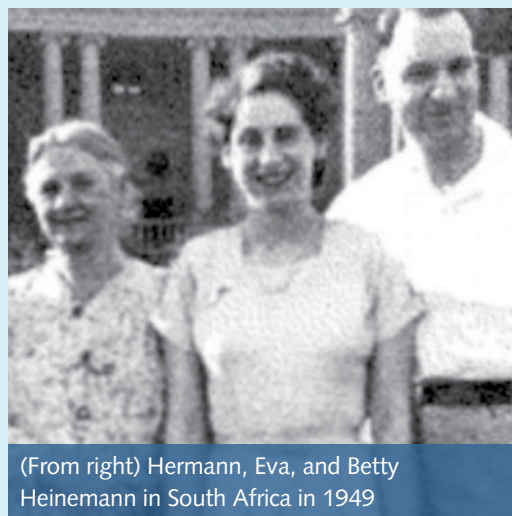
As restrictions governing Jews tightened, in 1937 Eva transferred to a Jewish secondary school while Otto, the owner of a factory making raw materials, was forced to sell his business to an Aryan for a fraction of its value.

Some of Eva's relatives had already fled to the UK. Her cousin Herta Daube, who had settled in Cambridge, contacted the Cambridge Refugee Children Committee who found foster parents for Eva in the form of Mrs. Signe Laven, head of an orthopaedic institute and Dr Ethel Lindgren, a professor of anthropology. Despite both sponsors being Aryan, Eva's parents were confident that Eva would live in good conditions. They wrote to thank the women: 'We feel it is tremendously soothing to know there are still good living and helpful people in the world who are understanding and have the courage to make that understanding, love and self-sacrifice known.'

On 6 May 1939 Otto and Hedwig took Eva to Nuremberg station where she boarded a Kindertransport with two boys and one other girl and began writing a letter to her parents, using her pet names. Her opening words were: 'Dear Viechle (her mother) and Molly (her father). The worst is over, and I think you two were very brave. I was not without tears even though I tried hard. Hopefully you have slept a bit so



Eva Mosbacher in 1943



(From right) Hermann, Eva, and Betty Heinemann in South Africa in 1949

that you aren't exhausted; it is enough as it is.'

In Frankfurt-am-Main the children changed trains and were joined by others. 'We saw a few goodbyes which were awful,' wrote Eva. 'The girl chaperones were very nice, very determined and energetic.' From Hook they boarded a ship to Harwich, then train to Liverpool Street where she was met by her aunt, Nelly Mosbacher, and Mrs. Hutton from the Cambridge Refugee Association. At 7.15 pm they arrived at Cambridge to be met by other family members and her two new foster parents, Dr Lindgren and Mrs. Laven, who took her by car to Harston. On the way they picked up Dr Lindgren's son John, who is still alive today.

The foster parents sent a telegram to Eva's parents, 'Eva arrived safely delighted to have her.' Eva was thrilled with her new home, a detached house in a huge garden in a village near Cambridge. Mrs Laven gave her a book, *The Swiss Family Robinson*.

On 19 May 1939, Eva enrolled at the private Perse School for Girls. She was delighted with her fellow students, writing: 'You've never seen anyone as nice as they were.' There were 14 Jewish refugees and instead of Christian prayers they recited a Jewish devotion. In June the number increased from 20 to 25. Staff were very kind.

In 1943 Eva became a Scout, writing to her parents: 'I have never been so

excited. It's a pity you can't see your Eva when I can experience so much that is new and wonderful. At school I exercise daily and am very agile. I have bought a diary for you to read later.'

On 27 June 1947, Eva received English citizenship and in 1949 her uncles arranged a surprise visit to her grandmother Betty in South Africa on her 70th birthday. Eva then began nursing training at Addenbrookes Hospital, Cambridge. After qualification she moved to Wimbledon, staying with a distant relative, Phillip Cromwell, a solicitor. In July 1956 she received confirmation from the Nuremberg District Court that both her parents had died. The uniform date of death given was the last day of the war. There is no record of Eva's response.

In 1963, Eva stayed in the Grosvenor Hotel, Westminster, and on 10 November she took her own life. The death certificate states she took an overdose of Nembutal 'whilst suffering from depression'. She was 37.

## Postscript

After a lengthy search I discovered Eva was cremated at Golders Green Crematorium. There is no surviving record of the Coroner's Inquest. I am hoping to place a memorial plaque to Eva in a suitable place in Cambridge, accompanied by Jewish prayers. My thanks to Chrisopher Gann for quotes from his *The Fate of Eva Mosbacher and her Parents*.

# THREE VIEWS



In November 2024 the AJR organised a Heritage Trip to Vienna exclusively for 3rd and 4th generation descendants of Austrian Holocaust survivors and refugees. The trip, which was organised in partnership with the Jewish Welcome Service in Vienna, was led by the AJR's Head of Education and Heritage Alex Maws, who invited some of the participants to share their own personal reflections.

## "Just what I needed"

The most emotional I felt in Vienna came unexpectedly at the Shoah Wall of Names memorial. We were in the latter half of our trip and I thought that I was managing my feelings well. But 2024 was a particularly difficult year for me, beginning with my mother's death in February after a long illness.

In the days before the trip, I'd received photos of my mother's gravestone in preparation for her stone setting. The Wall of Names, which includes the names of four of my great

grandparents and that of my great-great grandmother, looked too much like gravestones for me to be able to retain my composure. Our hosts, the wonderful Jewish Welcome Service, literally and figuratively held me in my grief in that moment, as I felt the loss of my mother alongside my maternal grandparents and their murdered families.

While all this is very personal to me, I have thought more recently about how the experiences of my grandparents are part of a significant moment in history. I was reminded of this when we visited an exhibition about the Kindertransport and I spotted a photograph of my grandmother that I didn't know would be included.

I am glad to have shared this trip with a group who were so open to sharing their own stories and listening to each other as we grappled with the issues around memorialising the Holocaust and antisemitism. We also had lots of moments of fun as a group about which I think my grandparents would have been pleased. I ticked many delicious things off my to eat/drink list and brought *Mozartkugeln* home as gifts, just like my grandparents used to do. This is a trip I would never have done on my own. It came about just when I needed it and I'm grateful that the AJR made it possible.

**Corinne Harrison**

## "A life affirming adventure"

A massive thank you to AJR and the city of Vienna for what was truly an unforgettable and life affirming adventure. The chance to explore history and identity as a third generation Viennese with a diverse group of nine other third gens always seemed like a once in lifetime opportunity. In reality it was far more than I could have imagined. Exploring my own family's history was fascinating and emotional in equal measure, but being able to do so whilst sharing in my fellow third gen's own stories and exploration and being able to bring this together to view into a window on the Viennese Jewish community and indeed the city as a whole, both then and now, the good and unavoidably also the bad, would never have been possible without this unique trip.

The experience was aided greatly by the surprising diversity of our band of amateur genealogists. With an age range 18 and 52, drawn from across England including London, Manchester, Kidderminster, Devon, Leeds and Portsmouth and with a spectrum of experience and takes on politics and what being Jewish means in 2024. For me it was this difference that allowed the dialogue and learning to take on new depths. That we were also treated like VIPs throughout was deeply humbling.

# OF VIENNA



Three amazing guides – the local and charismatic and knowledgeable Walter, the force of nature and Jewish Welcome Service community leader that is Millie, and AJR's own Holocaust education expert, the ever thought-provoking Alex Maws, led us through multiple visits to sites and museums across the city. Highlights included the Jewish Museum, the new(ish) Vienna Museum and the incredibly well designed and affective new Holocaust memorial. A packed schedule never felt too much and only served to increase my own desire to learn more.

During the trip we were hosted by directors or heads of education of museums, leaders (both young and old) of the current Jewish community, and by the very impressive and genial UK Ambassador Lindsay Skoll (and her dog Dave!). All of their generous time, honesty and effort to help us explore the dark history and the repercussions for today for Vienna and the world aided us to navigate the emotions and complexity of our individual and community stories. That this was all also fuelled by plenty of schnitzel, goulash, sachertorte, holiday markets, the backdrop of the beautiful architecture and perhaps a little glühwein was also welcome.

It has now been a few weeks since the trip and whilst I am still processing many of the often conflicting emotions, I undoubtedly feel a little bit closer to my Austrian Jewish roots, and my

Jewish identity generally, and eager to learn more, not least to ensure the story of my family and other's survival can be passed onto my own children, the 4<sup>th</sup> Gen. I also feel extremely privileged to have made a new group of friends who I hope agree that it was our misfit nature that allowed us to experience something that positively grew and united us, regardless of difference, as Jews and humans. And for me it is this unity – and the fact I am sure we will stay connected – that is the best comeback to those who sought to wipe us off the planet and those who might continue to try.

**Mervyn Kaye**

## “Strengthened my commitment”

My incentive to join the trip was that my grandfather came to the UK from Vienna in the late 1930s with his parents and his grandmother.

Unfortunately, I never met my grandfather or any of my other Austrian ancestors. Growing up, this family history was not widely discussed, so my information was limited. I had always wanted to further connect with this part of my family history and so the AJR Heritage Trip felt like the perfect opportunity.

It's hard to pick standout moments, but there are two that immediately spring to mind. The first was during the walking tour of the Jewish district, when our guide Walter asked me if I knew the address of any of my ancestors and I told him the address that my grandfather lived at. A little later on, as we were heading in that direction, he asked another group member the same question. It turned out that our grandparents were quite literally next-door neighbours. It was a deeply personal reminder of how intertwined our histories are.

The second was our visit to the Shoah Wall of Names Memorial. The memorial has the name of every Jew from Austria who was murdered in the Holocaust on it – over 60,000 people. This included the names of several of my grandfather's relatives who did not make it out of Austria. The scale of loss was overwhelming, yet it also underscored the importance of remembering.

Overall though, the most special element was the people. Even though we were mostly strangers, everyone was connected through shared history which clearly transcended into a present-day connection.

I am deeply grateful to the AJR and Jewish Welcome Service for organising a trip filled with moments that will stay with me forever. It brought me closer to my family history and strengthened my commitment to remembrance.

**Josh Reynolds**

# INSPIRED BY MARGRIT

**Leslie Michaels has been researching the life of his late mother-in-law, Margrit Hochschild Stern 1921-1998, and her family who all hailed from the Frankfurt area. He was surprised by some of the things he discovered.**

My research began after some of our family visited Frankfurt for a Stolperstein ceremony for Margrit, her parents Hugo and Erna Hochschild and her grandmother Jeanette Hirsch. The Stolpersteine organisers had already undertaken considerable research which started us on a hunt to understand better the story of our family, and how they lived and prospered in very small Jewish communities amongst their Christian neighbours.

We visited some of the small towns and villages where members of the family had lived: Wehrheim, Biblis, Seligenstadt and Alsbach. In each place we met Germans who were knowledgeable about their local Jewish history and determined to keep alive the memory of their Jewish neighbours who were treated so abominably.

We discovered that each village had only had a very small Jewish population. This made finding a spouse a challenge, often leading to marriage with a relative or someone from a neighbouring village. It was no surprise therefore to learn that Margrit's own parents were second cousins, while three of her great grandparents were Bendheim and two were Hirsch.

At 12 years old Margrit was forced to leave Viktoria Schule (now Bettina Schule) in 1933 and move to a Jewish school, Philantropin. Bettine Schule has created a memorial wall in memory of those Jewish girls removed from the school, and some girls attended the Stolpersteine ceremony.

As anti-Jewish legislation increased Hugo's business collapsed and the family was forced to move into a small apartment. Erna's four siblings had already emigrated, leaving Erna responsible for her infirm mother, Jeanette. In early 1938 Margrit, then 16, was sent unaccompanied to England to live with Philipp Hochschild, her father's cousin. Philipp was a lawyer who had worked in the

family's mining businesses in Bolivia, America and Germany. He had moved to Bolivia with his young wife Germaine, working with the wealthy tin baron Moritz Hochschild, who helped to save the lives of up to 20,000 European Jews by creating employment for them in Bolivia. Sadly for Philipp, Germaine and Moritz fell in love. Philipp returned alone to Germany, moving to England when Nazi pressure became intolerable. Margrit lived with Philipp until she met and married Jack Stern, the love of her life.

Meanwhile Hugo Hochschild had been arrested on Kristallnacht and incarcerated in Buchenwald. His release was conditional upon his immediate departure from Germany, and he and Erna fled to Chile. Hugo never saw Margrit again. 81-year-old Jeanette was placed in a 'hospital' before being deported to Theresienstadt, where she died a few days later.

Margrit was the matriarch of our family: strong, determined and adored. No one in her later life could have guessed that German was her mother tongue. She worked as an agent for a German zip manufacturer and then became marketing director of a subsidiary of Imperial Metal Industries.

A German researcher alerted me to the existence of a cache of 20 letters written between Margrit's relatives between 1844 and 1847. These had been brought to London in 1939 and subsequently distributed between family in USA and in Israel. Most were between Koppel Hochschild in Biblis and his fiancée Gustine Bendheim in Auerbach/Bensheim, and their respective fathers. The letters are written in excellent German in either Gothic or Hebrew script and refer to family matters or commercial business. The letters are now being re-united at the Leo Baeck Institute, New York.

If you are intending to research your own family I suggest you talk to as many people as possible. It's surprising how helpful most are in sharing their knowledge. The internet is also a wonderful resource.

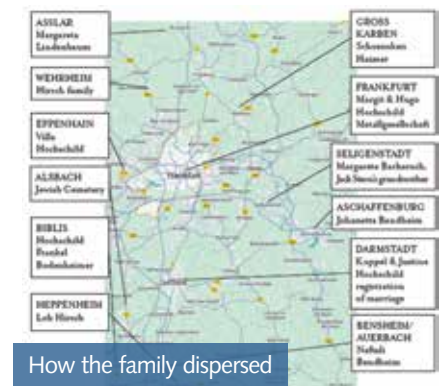
**Leslie has just privately published a book about Margrit and her family, following the same format and using the same designer, Berenice Howard-Smith, as the AJR's My**



Margrit Hochschild Stern



Stolpersteine for the Stern family



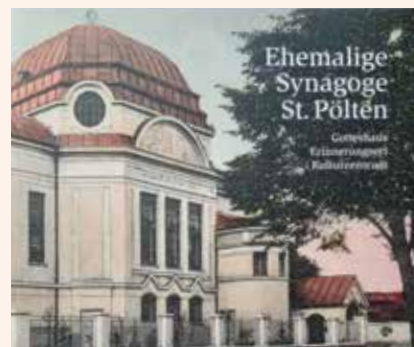
How the family dispersed

**Story series. He is happy to supply a copy in return for a small donation to the Wiener Holocaust Library, who were very helpful in his research. Please contact [leslie@michaelsfamily.co.uk](mailto:leslie@michaelsfamily.co.uk).**

**At 7pm on Tuesday 28 January, for HMD, Leslie will be giving a talk about Margrit Hochschild Stern and her family at Alyth Gardens Synagogue, NW11, in partnership with Toby Simpson, Director of the Wiener Holocaust Library. Book via <https://shulcloud.alyth.org.uk/form/HMDbook25.html>**

# PRESERVING ST. PÖLTEN

**The synagogue in St. Pölten, with its magnificent wall ornamentation, was once one of the most significant Jewish sacral buildings in the Habsburg monarchy. Destroyed by the Nazis in 1938, its Jewish community driven out and annihilated, it has recently been reinaugurated and now stands as a place of remembrance, historical education and engagement with contemporary issues. Cantor Dr. Paul Heller reports.**



A book on the former synagogue was handed over by the government of Lower Austria to the descendants

In the heart of Lower Austria, Sankt Pölten, a family reunion took place last year that was more than just a meeting of descendants – it was a journey back in time, tracing roots and honouring the memory of those who came before. The descendants gathered to visit the cemeteries where their grand-parents families were laid to rest, a solemn and powerful reminder of their shared history. These burial grounds, once abandoned or desecrated, held not just the remains of their ancestors but the echoes of a once-thriving Jewish community.

The reinauguration of the synagogue and memorial sites in St. Pölten in 2024 holds a profound significance for the entire Jewish community, and especially for the descendants of those who once worshipped in this historic building.

This landmark, which had been devastated during the Holocaust, now stands restored as a symbol of resilience, remembrance, and continuity. For many in the Jewish community and the broader local population, the synagogue's reopening rekindles deep connections to their shared heritage, prompting reflection on the profound historical and cultural legacy embedded within its walls.

To foster this renewed appreciation, local and national organisations have collaborated to introduce diverse programmes aimed at helping younger generations understand and honour the synagogue's significance. These programmes prioritise not only the restoration of the physical space but also the cultural and spiritual essence of the synagogue, encompassing exhibitions, lectures, and cultural events that celebrate and explore Jewish traditions both ancient and contemporary. The goal is to cultivate a dynamic, pluralistic environment where varied traditions come alive, engaging

both historical and modern perspectives. Through thoughtfully curated exhibits and interactive events, the synagogue aspires to offer visitors a deep, multi-dimensional experience that resonates with the values of Beit Haknesset (House of Assembly) and Beit Hamidrash (House of Study), emphasizing the synagogue's dual roles as a space for community gathering and learning.

Despite the passage of time, the spirit of the once-flourishing Jewish community could still be felt in the preserved synagogue and while we prayed together we felt the weight of its former stature in Austrian Jewish life and its significance for all of us.

The revitalised synagogue is committed to inclusivity, integrating traditional and modern elements to maintain the timeless spirit of the site while ensuring it feels welcoming and relevant for today's visitors. This approach seeks to honour the building's original charm and historical power, creating a bridge between the past and present. Additionally, outreach initiatives, educational programs, and audience development activities aim to draw individuals and groups from diverse backgrounds into the synagogue's new chapter, nurturing a sense of inclusion and familiarity even among those previously unacquainted with its legacy.

In addition to visiting the synagogue, we descendants

explored the cities in which our ancestors lived. Each landmark told a story – of families, culture, loss, and through the cemeteries and historical sites was a meaningful tribute to the past, a way of keeping the stories alive and sharing them with future generations, it was not just about visiting graves; it was about reconnecting with a lost world, understanding the hardships and triumphs of their ancestors, and ensuring that their legacy will never be forgotten.

The Institute for Jewish History in Austria, under the leadership of Dr. Martha Keil, has ensured that the restored synagogue serves not only as a place of worship but also as a vibrant centre for historical education and cultural engagement, honouring the resilience and contributions of the Jewish community in St. Pölten.

[www.ehemalige-synagoge.at/en](http://www.ehemalige-synagoge.at/en)



Cantor Paul Heller in front of the magnificently restored ark at the synagogue



The cemetery – where no stones remain following the Nazi vandalism in 1938 – has been re-inaugurated and now features glass panels inscribed with names of those interred



# Overton's List

Sir Nicholas Winton once told Jane Mackenzie how her Christadelphian grandfather, Alan Overton, had saved many more lives than he had. Jane proudly shares his story.

Growing up, I have clear memories of my maternal grandfather, Alan Overton. He was a patriarchal figure, who commanded respect and was a powerful presence within our family. We loved him and were also rather in awe of him. He was a great practical joker, with a terrific sense of fun and I remember the exciting family parties he loved to organise. My mother, his eldest child, was immensely proud of him, and my brothers and sisters and I loved her stories about the amazing things he'd achieved.

My favourite story was always about the Kindertransport, and how Grandpa had saved so many Jewish children from certain death. Mum would happily recount these memories to us, but we knew these events were not to be repeated outside the family. It wasn't until I was older that I realised that grandpa's story had never been published, or his work recognised. Because I was particularly interested in Grandpa's work, I became our family's expert on the subject, and I began writing down everything I knew.

Descendants of the children he had saved were starting to get in touch with our family, with questions about their past, and I increasingly felt that I had a duty towards them to share what we knew. Besides, why not let the world know about how one man was so moved with compassion by the suffering of others, that he took decisive action which saved so many lives?

Since then I've been collecting stories, talking to witnesses and gathering evidence so that I can finally write a complete account and share his extraordinary work. Because the Christadelphian community do not believe in drawing attention to their good deeds, hardly anything was ever recorded about his work, and it was not talked about.

It's felt rather like searching for individual

jigsaw pieces gradually to form a whole picture. This article is a brief introduction to his story and I hope it sparks your interest.

So where shall I begin?

Perhaps the following story sums up the impact he was already having before the Kindertransport started. In the latter months of 1938, letters began arriving at Royal Mail sorting offices across the country from Europe, addressed simply 'Overton, Rugby, England'. In fact, so many desperate Jewish families in Nazi-occupied Europe wrote to this address that the post office had no problem in finding the recipient – Alan Overton, my grandfather, a 40 year-old shop owner in Rugby and a devout Christian with a growing family of four children.

My mother told me that the volume of letters increased dramatically after Kristallnacht in November 1938, and their tone became fraught with terror.

So how had this man gained such an international profile, and why was his name known so widely in Europe as someone who could save Jewish families?

I'm still not certain of the answer, except that when I interviewed Sir Nicholas Winton in 2003, he told me that Alan Overton's influence had started years before the war and continued well after the war ended.

It's hard to describe how charismatic my grandfather was. A mesmerising orator, in the 1930s he was already recognised as a leader within the Christadelphian community, and always in demand as a speaker.

An avid bible student and tireless campaigner, he had made it his business to read *Mein Kampf* and realised that once

Hitler came to power, he was intent on dealing harshly with the Jewish people.

He became part of a network of activists in Great Britain and Europe, who were alarmed about the increasingly desperate plight of Jewish people in Germany. Working together, they attempted to persuade the British Government to take a stand against the extreme policies of Nazi Germany, without success.

Even though it was frowned on by the Christadelphian community, my grandfather attended every parliamentary debate on Palestine and was present in the House of Commons for the important debate on refugees on 21 November 1938. Shortly after this, when the Government launched their appeal to the British public to offer homes to unaccompanied refugee children, Alan Overton sprang into action.

In her PhD study, Dr Chana Kotzin <sup>(1)</sup> demonstrates how Alan Overton tirelessly engaged the whole Christadelphian movement around Britain, estimated at around 25,000 people, to support Jewish refugees. The Christadelphians made a substantial contribution to the Baldwin Fund, equivalent to £64,000 today.

He volunteered his services to the Movement for the Care of Children from Germany, personally driving down from Rugby to Liverpool Street station to meet every child whose escape he had arranged. If no place was immediately available for them, he'd take them home and look after them until a place was found.

My mother and her brother, Bruce, often accompanied their father on these trips and recalled "Heartrending scenes which even brought hardened London bobbies to tears. Very young children, as young as two years

<sup>(1)</sup> Chana Revell Kotzin, *Christian Responses in Britain to Jewish Refugees from Europe 1933-1939*, University of Southampton 2000  
www.chanakotzin.org



old, crying for their mothers, were herded together until separated, some to England, some to Wales and Scotland."

According to Bruce: "My parents' home became a virtual transit house for children arriving from Nazi Europe. He would often arrive home with a car full of frightened children unable to communicate their most basic needs or fears. With their own growing family of four children, my parents worked ceaselessly to provide for their new wards until they could be picked up by the Christadelphian families taking them in. If the host families could not make arrangements to transport the children, my grandfather would drive them himself to their new homes."

## The Christadelphians

The Christadelphians are a worldwide Christian community who base their beliefs on a literal understanding of the Old and New Testaments. Their name derives from the Greek for brethren in Christ.

Non-Trinitarian in theology and apolitical in civil life, they see their aim as following the teachings of Jesus. They are pacifist and in wartime, refuse to fight. They study bible prophecy and believe that Jesus Christ will return to earth to set up a kingdom and bring peace to the world.

Christadelphians feel a special affinity with the Jews and, since their foundation in the 1840s, have stayed true to their conviction that the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine was part of a divine purpose. For this reason, they have always been interested in the fate of the Jewish people, and in the establishment of the state of Israel.

Faced with such a huge challenge, Grandpa set about raising funds from his local Christadelphian community, his fellow shopkeepers and the many readers who saw his letters and articles in journals and newspapers. He toured the British Isles seeking sponsors willing to take a child in, urging others to offer homes to the refugee children, referring to himself in a 1939 report on the workings of the Rugby hostel, as one who 'felt compelled, whenever he could make opportunity, and at every ecclesia he visited, to spread the news of their unhappy plight and urge all who heard his appeal to offer hospitality and loving care to these little ones whose sorrow was so poignant'.

With a small group of helpers he vetted applications from potential foster parents and did his utmost to keep siblings together. In a letter to one foster mother, who had already taken in a Jewish girl from Germany, he urged her to take the girl's brother too: 'They have enough parting to suffer without that and a little extra sacrifice will not kill us – when we work for Him that gave his life for us'.

One former refugee child, Ingrid Wuga (née Wolf) remembered being met by him at Liverpool Street station: "Mr. Overton was very kind, and he took me to Lyons Corner House, and he said, 'You might want something to eat', and I was very shy... He said, 'Just eat whatever you think.' He made me very welcome, and I had tea."

I had the pleasure of meeting Ingrid's daughter, Hilary, earlier this year, and she told me that whenever her mother gave talks about her wartime experiences, she always made a point of mentioning my grandfather by name, so deep was the impression he made on her.

When it became clear that it was especially difficult to find homes for teenage refugee boys, my grandfather again took action

and leased a large house, named Little Thorn, in Rugby, where they could live. It opened in Rugby in July 1939, initially for nine boys although it became a temporary transit home for many others. My grandfather ran it together with Mrs Sperber, a Czechoslovakian Jewish refugee, who Alan Overton had personally sponsored and helped to escape after she had been imprisoned in a German transit camp.

A former resident of the hostel recalled many years later: 'It was a good atmosphere of course, we were about a dozen boys, most of them were Czech, some were German, and Alan Overton was very much involved, we were a close-knit community.'

Hans Schnabl was another resident who I interviewed twenty years ago, and he told me with tears running down his face "He was like a father to us, we loved him"

My grandfather died in 1974, aged 74. Vera Gissing, in her memoir *Pearls of Childhood*, described him as a remarkable man who had 'striven tirelessly, even prior to the occupation of Czechoslovakia, to convince the British government that Jews in occupied territories were in great danger and that something must be done to save the children.'

She recalled the story of one of her friends, who visited him many years after the war. Overton brought down from his loft his 'proudest possession' – a cardboard box with over 200 labels. These were name tags that the children had worn around their necks when they arrived in England and came into his care. Each tag represented a life that he had saved.

**Dear reader, I hope you've found this interesting, and please don't hesitate to contact me if you have any information about Alan Overton**  
[separatetables@gmail.com](mailto:separatetables@gmail.com) or  
 07973 702 772

# SPOTLIGHTING...

# ANNELY JUDA

**The Ben Uri Research Unit is recording the émigré contribution to British visual arts and culture since 1900. It has already published some 800 profiles, with hundreds more under research. Here we share their profile of the influential art dealer Annelly Juda.**

Anneliese Emily Brauer was born in 1914 to a Jewish family in Kassel, Germany. Following her father's arrest in 1933, the family fled to Palestine; three years later, she arrived in London with only £1 in her pocket.

She found employment at a lodging house for German refugees in Hampstead, in return for her keep. There she met Paul Juda, whom she married in 1939 and whose family financed her studies in dress design at the Reimann School of Art and Design. She arranged for her own family to join them in London.

During the war Juda volunteered to work for the Women's Royal Voluntary Service, delivering food to people who had been bombed out during the Blitz. The couple returned to Germany after the war but separated in 1955 and she returned to London with her son and two daughters.

She began work in the art business in 1956 and founded the Molton Gallery in 1960. The Hamilton Gallery followed, where

from 1963–67 she exhibited American art, including work by Jackson Pollock and British artists such as William Turnbull, Robyn Denny and Gillian Ayres. In 1968, she opened Annelly Juda Fine Art with her son David.



Annelly Juda

To arrive in a strange land and to set about presenting non-figurative art to what was then an almost totally unresponsive audience was a daunting task. To have made such a resounding success of it, as Annelly did, required persistence, stoicism and a total commitment. She was a woman of few words who preferred art to speak for itself.

She was known for her dignified and quiet presence, being both elegantly dressed and self-possessed. Collectors came to her not for salesmanship but because they trusted her judgment.

Notable artists represented by Juda have included Anthony Caro, David Hockney and Leon Kossoff. She also introduced several Japanese artists to the gallery's roster and it now represents Katsura Funakoshi and Yuko Shiraishi among other contemporary British, European and International artists.

Annelly Juda was appointed a CBE in 1998 and died in London in 2006.

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# GUIDES TO THE HOLOCAUST

Two books recently arrived in the AJR office, both titled as guides to Holocaust sites. While both are worthy of individual reviews, we thought it would be interesting to compare the two.

Martin Winstone's *The Holocaust Sites of Europe: An Historical Guide* is a third edition, its original acknowledged as an essential reference tool for any academic working in this field. Martin Winstone has done a truly admirable job of updating it for Bloomsbury, reflecting developments which have affected sites in the 2010s and 2020s, ranging from the establishment of new museums and memorials to the ever-growing threats from climate change and state-sponsored distortion of history. The result is an indispensable and sensitive guide to both the history and the modern reality of the most traumatic sites in European history.

Rosie Whitehouse's *The Holocaust: a guide to Europe's sites, memorials and museums* is published by Bradt Guides, whose strapline is 'travel taken seriously'. It appears considerably smaller and thinner than the Winstone book, although it still has almost 350 pages. It is also much glossier, incorporating colour photographs, and is very much pitched as a travel guide rather than an academic reference tool.

One of the strongest themes that emerges from Winstone's introduction is how the political landscape has changed in recent decades. The first edition was published when the collapse of communism was still a recent memory, hence the creation of many new Holocaust memorials and museums during the 1990s and 2000s. Today's narrative is very different due to lack of funding, the resurgence of populist nationalism and the controversy that has surrounded certain memorials, especially some of the more abstract ones such as that in Berlin. New challenges posed by the cost and practicalities of ongoing

maintenance, together with vandalism and – in some cases – over-tourism, gave cause for the IHRA Charter for Safeguarding Sites, launched last January.

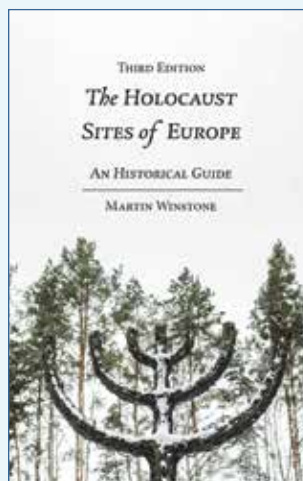
Winstone's chapters are arranged geographically from west to east. He begins with France, whose Holocaust history he describes as being more controversial and paradoxical than almost any other country. He comprehensively explains how the Vichy government assisted the Nazis, even pressing for the inclusion of children in the deportation of foreign Jews from France.

In contrast, although Whitehouse disputes the myth that Pétain protected the Jews, she pays little attention to the details of French culpability. For example, she omits to mention that Drancy was administered by French authorities until mid-1943, something Winstone describes as 'an embarrassing fact which French governments for decades were reluctant to confront'.

What Whitehouse lacks in historical detail she arguably compensates for in human backstories, e.g. the postcards that Drancy deportees were forced to send from Poland, stating 'I am in a labour camp and well'.

Another contrast is in their coverage of Riversaltes in south west France, which Winstone describes as 'perhaps the most extraordinary Holocaust site in Europe', portrayed by the Nazis as a family camp (a ruse to persuade Jewish parents not to send their children into hiding) and used subsequently during the 1950s as a refugee camp for 30,000 Algerian families. Whitehouse skates over this but tells us 'there is a café on site and a picnic area.'

Moving east to Slovakia, which became independent for the first time in March 1939 as a result of Hitler's final dismemberment of Czechoslovakia,



Winstone describes how the new one-party state was the first to hand over its Jews willingly, even paying the Germans a fee for every Jew they deported on condition that they never return. Of the 89,000 Jews in Slovakia at least 70,000 were murdered. He writes that even after the fall of communism Slovakia was slower than its neighbours to establish Holocaust memorials. In contrast Whitehouse gives very little coverage of Slovakia's history, although she does list things to see in Sered, the most infamous Slovak camp.

I was fascinated by one story in Whitehouse's book that is barely referenced in Winstone's, about the holiday resort in Poprad-Tatry, from where the first Slovak transport to Auschwitz was made on 25 March 1942. According to Whitehouse, the transport was unique in that it was made up of 999 unmarried Jewish women aged between 16-36. They had all volunteered for government service and left home dressed in their best clothes. Only a handful survived.

Finally, to compare the books' geographical spread: Winstone's book goes further east, to Greece, but he gives just half a page to the UK. Whitehouse devotes 12 pages to the British Isles, four of them to Channel Islands, even listing the AJR's [www.ukholocaustmap.com](http://www.ukholocaustmap.com) as a useful source of information.

The Whitehouse book will undoubtedly appeal to a layman traveller planning to explore this dark period of Europe's history. But for the academic and the educator it is no substitute for Winstone.

Jo Briggs

# REVIEW

## NO ROAD LEADING BACK: AN IMPROBABLE ESCAPE FROM THE NAZIS – AND THE TANGLED WAY WE TELL THE STORY OF THE HOLOCAUST

By Chris Heath

The Bridge Street Press

Little has been known about the story of Ponar, where more than 70,000 Jews perished, or of their 12 incredibly brave compatriots who escaped the same fate by digging a tunnel. This dozen had been facing every inconceivable horror when forced to work dealing with the bodies of those killed near Vilnius, Lithuania. Using their bare hands and spoons they broke free from what was believed to be an impregnable camp. The site deep in the forest – a few miles from the capital – was originally planned as a Soviet aviation fuel storage facility. But after the Nazi invasion in June 1941 the pits were used for a much more sinister purpose concealing the corpses of innocent men, women and children who had been shot.

The escapees had been forced to work destroying evidence of the killings and in dire desperation decided to try and get

out before they too met the same terrible fate. One, Abraham Blazer, had already escaped before and after the first time everyone wanted to hear his story but not all were prepared to believe what he said.

Ponar has been neglected in history and author Chris Heath finds every scrap of information about what happened. The men made their escape on April 15, 1944, the last day of Passover, when they knew the night would be the darkest. Incredibly they dug a tunnel 32 metres long avoiding German checks 10 times daily. Only the first few in the line made it to freedom. Their remarkable story is examined in an investigation which starts from before imprisonment, as life became increasingly tougher, including ghetto searches and hiding. Then the aftermath includes discovering what happened to everyone and how their testimony and the Holocaust is portrayed.

Extremely distressing details, especially about the gruesome work and fate of prisoners' close families, make the book difficult to read in parts. But it is impossible to put down this amazing account. It includes journeys in Lithuania, Israel and USA over many years, exploring expert testimony and consulting newspaper archives and museums. The writer

explores the role of survivors in Claude Lanzmann's epic but sometimes controversial film *Shoah* and keeps searching as further information comes to light. This includes trawling copious records, repeatedly returning to the subject.

With phenomenal energy and determination Heath met as many of the escapees as he could, as well as their families who also explain what they have been told, producing old documents and artefacts. He explores the site's museum and tunnel's location including archaeological theories. It is intriguing how he makes sense of such a wide and disparate mass of information and every twist and turn the discoveries take. Even some of those involved gave several versions of the same story and accounts varied from person to person over time.

This was a book I had to slow myself down while reading in order to leave something for another day. Even after about 600 pages one still wants to know more. As Heath's prologue explains: "I will hope to convince you that what you've learned so far was never nearly enough after all".

Janet Weston

## DONATING YOUR ARCHIVE

Many of us have inherited family archives – letters, photographs, diaries, objects – precious, fragile items that have somehow survived the Nazis, the Holocaust and WW2 and found their way to us, the second and third generations.

On **Tuesday 4 February at 6.30pm** the Second Generation Network will explore whether these archives should be retained within the family or donated somewhere because of their historical significance?

In this online event Naomi Levy, Julia Donat, Marilyn Moos and



Marian Liebman – who have taken the momentous step of donating their archives, to the Wiener Holocaust Library, the Imperial War Museum, Senate House and Fotohof Salzburg – will share their dilemmas and experiences, what they donated, when, why, how they came to make the decision about the recipient archive and country, how they feel about it now, the impact on the

wider family. We will also hear a Third Generation perspective.

This event is open to all generations and after the presentations there will be time for your questions and comments.

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/donating-your-archive-a-2g-3g-experience-tickets-1086958695719>

# DOROTHEA SHEFER-VANSON'S LETTER FROM ISRAEL



## EVERYTHING, EVERYWHERE, ALL AT ONCE



Our minds and hearts are still reeling from the events of the last year, starting with the vile attack

on kibbutzim and towns in the south by Hamas, the subsequent war in Gaza, political division in Israel and the impending trial for corruption of Prime Minister Netanyahu, when we find our northern neighbour and enemy, Syria, in turmoil as a result of the rebel groups' overthrow of Assad's murderous regime.

Hamas' assault on the peaceful communities on the border unleashed a response from Israel that has led to untold suffering for the residents of the Gaza Strip, in the IDF's attempt to eradicate the ability of Hamas to try to repeat that attack, as is its stated aim. It goes without saying that no normal citizen of Israel rejoices in the suffering of innocent people on any side, but a repeat of the events of last

October cannot be allowed to continue to threaten Israel's civilian population.

On top of it all, this year has now officially been declared a drought year, with farmers all over Israel struggling to produce the crops we need. We simple citizens can enjoy the mild winter days, and fortunately there is no shortage of water for our basic needs due to Israel's innovative desalination programme, but the overall situation is grim and the future is ever more difficult to decipher.

The trial of Benjamin Netanyahu has managed to deepen further the political divide in the country, with his supporters waging a war of animosity against his detractors. Bibi himself has not been backward in coming forward with statements denigrating the 'hostile' media and the 'less than impartial' legal system, with special antagonism reserved for the Attorney General, who stands alone as the last bastion supporting the rule of law in Israel.

Particularly upsetting for me is the hostility reserved by supporters of Netanyahu for the families of the hostages held by Hamas in inhumane conditions in the tunnels under Gaza. Together with a couple of hundred other inhabitants of Mevasseret Zion

and its environs just outside Jerusalem I stand on the bridge over the main highway from Jerusalem to Tel Aviv to demonstrate for the return of the hostages every Saturday night. We stand with our flags and are addressed briefly by representatives of various groups before the names of all the hostages are read out and we call for their return.

Last week we were addressed by a representative of one of the groups that had worked tirelessly to restore some semblance of order to the ravaged south of Israel after the seventh of October. The speaker, who was originally from a religious kibbutz, said that the aims and actions of the party purporting to represent Religious Zionism are not in accordance with the ideals of the religious Zionism on which he was educated. As a former member of Bnei Akiva, that certainly chimes with my own understanding of what religious Zionism is and should be.

With turmoil on Israel's northern border, war in the south, unrest in the West Bank and far-reaching internal divisions it seems callous to continue living in relative comfort and enjoying the sunshine, but that is all we can do as the tempest rages around us.

## FAREWELL BOB

The AJR mourns the loss of our treasured member, **Robert (Bob) Kirk.**

Bob came to the UK, on the Kindertransport, in May 1939. He married fellow Kind, Ann, in 1950 and they raised two sons, their relationship symbolising hope born out of the horror of the Holocaust. The pair have been highly involved with the AJR over the years and active Holocaust speakers and educators. The AJR is honoured to have captured Bob's testimony as part of AJR Refugee Voices archive.



Bob and Ann Kirk pictured in 2023

Bob will be deeply missed by the whole community. We will publish a full obituary in the coming months.

## THE COMMANDANT'S SHADOW

16 January at 7pm at JW3

To mark the 80th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz join us for a special screening of *The Commandant's Shadow*, a remarkable documentary following Hans Jürgen Höss, son of Auschwitz Commandant Rudolf Höss, as he confronts his father's legacy for the first time. Featuring an historic meeting with AJR member, Anita Lasker-Wallfisch and her daughter Maya, the film explores themes of loss, guilt, trauma, and reconciliation.

The screening will be followed by an exclusive Q&A with film director Daniela Völker, and Maya Lasker-Wallfisch. This event is in partnership with JW3, and tickets can be bought from the JW3 website only.

## IN PERSON EVENTS

Please note to attend in person meetings you must contact the co-ordinator listed for exact times and venue.

DATE	TIME	GROUP	CO-ORDINATOR
Thursday 9 January	Afternoon	Pinner	Karen Diamond
Tuesday 14 January	Morning	South London	Karen Diamond
Tuesday 14 January	Morning	Ealing (Bob Sinfield: Blasts From the Past)	Ros Hart
Wednesday 15 January		Wembley	Karen Diamond
Wednesday 15 January	Lunchtime	Edinburgh	Agnes Isaacs
Wednesday 15 January	Morning	Kingston	Ros Hart
Monday 20 January	Afternoon	AJR HMD Service – Belsize Square	Susan Harrod
Tuesday 21 January	TBC	Holocaust Lecture Glasgow	Agnes Isaacs
Wednesday 22 January	Afternoon	Bromley	Ros Hart
Tuesday 28 January	Morning	Wanstead	Karen Diamond
Tuesday 28 January	Evening	HMD Concert Glasgow	Agnes Isaacs
Wednesday 29 January		Bristol	12.30pm Ros
Thursday 30 January	Evening	Glasgow (Play: <i>Dreams of Anne Frank</i> by Bernard Kops)	Agnes Isaacs

### CO-ORDINATOR DETAILS

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07966 886 535

## ZOOMS AHEAD

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


Monday 6 January @ 4pm	<b>Jill Culiner – A Contrary Journey with Velvel Zbarzher, Bard</b> <a href="https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/81106681908">https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/81106681908</a>	Meeting ID: 811 0668 1908
Monday 13 January @ 4pm	<b>Bethan Griffiths – Forced Homes: the antisemitic housing policy of Nazi Berlin</b> <a href="https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/87377342105">https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/87377342105</a>	Meeting ID: 873 7734 2105
Tuesday 14 January @ 4pm	<b>Jonathan Bergwerk – Jerome Robbins: dancer, choreographer, director &amp; producer</b> <a href="https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/86225272026">https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/86225272026</a>	Meeting ID: 862 2527 2026
Wednesday 15 January @ 4pm	<b>Book Discussion (no speaker) – <i>Wuthering Heights</i> by Emily Brontë</b> <a href="https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/86894825671">https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/86894825671</a>	Meeting ID: 868 9482 5671
Wednesday 22 January @ 4pm	<b>David Glasser, CEO Ben Uri Gallery – Cultural Diplomacy: soft power, useless unless laser targeted</b> <a href="https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/87096346957">https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/87096346957</a>	Meeting ID: 870 9634 6957
Monday 27 January @ 4pm	<b>Margaret Mills – Nella Last: mass-observation diarist of WW2</b> <a href="https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/81774472274">https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/81774472274</a>	Meeting ID: 817 7447 2274
Tuesday 28 January @ 4pm	<b>Paul Stewart – Honeymooning on the 60th anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising and the March of the Living</b> <a href="https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/87242484319">https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/87242484319</a>	Meeting ID: 872 4248 4319
Wednesday 29 January @ 7pm	<b>Wendy Holden, author – <i>The Teacher of Auschwitz</i></b> <a href="https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/89041003702">https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/89041003702</a>	Meeting ID: 890 4100 3702

## 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



To mark the 80th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz, join us to explore the impact of the Holocaust on the second-generation

The AJR is proud to present a special screening of the internationally acclaimed film, *The Commandant's Shadow*, followed by an exclusive Q&A with 2G Maya Lasker-Wallfisch and film director Daniela Völker

18 January 2025 at 7pm at JW3  
Tickets on sale now on the JW3 website

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