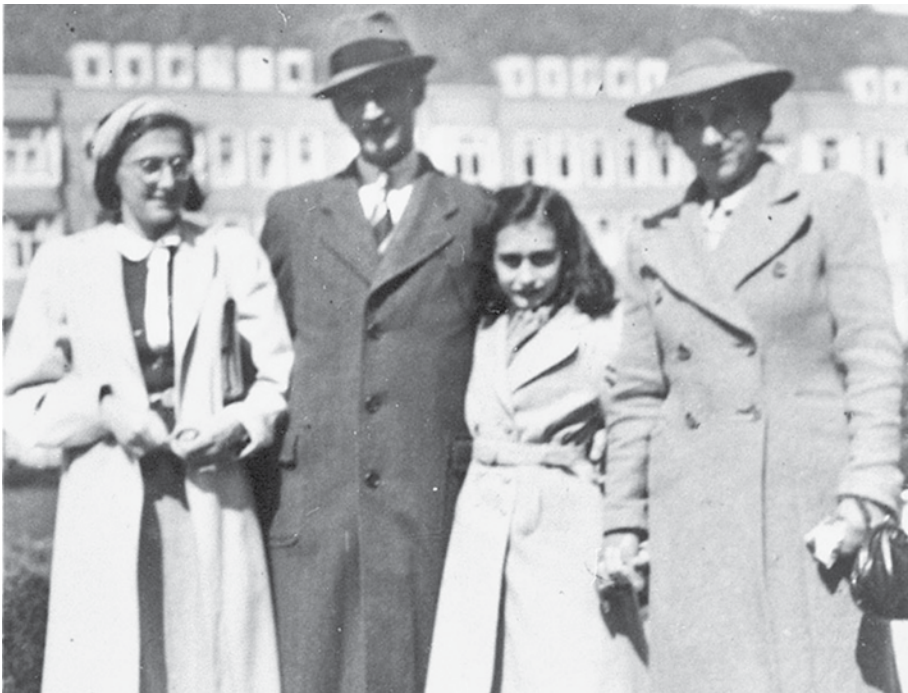




# Anne Frank The Refugee



The Frank family (from L to R: Margot, Otto, Anne and Edith) in Amsterdam, 1941 (courtesy of the Anne Frank Fonds, Basel, Switzerland)

**Before Anne Frank and her family went into hiding in Amsterdam they had already fled Nazi persecution in Germany, becoming German-Jewish refugees.**

Later this month Yale University Press will be publishing Ruth Franklin's new book, *The Many Lives of Anne Frank*, as part of their acclaimed Jewish Lives series.

Ruth Franklin is one of the leading Jewish-American literary critics of her generation and her 440-page book on Anne Frank is part biography, part history and part literary criticism, looking at Anne's life from her early childhood in Frankfurt to her terrible death from typhus in Bergen-Belsen and then telling the story of how her diary became so famous, especially in 1950s America, and

how it became adapted as an award-winning play on Broadway and a hugely successful film.

One of the most original parts of Franklin's book is how she looks at the story of the Frank family as German-Jewish refugees. Her father Otto was born in Frankfurt in 1889, the son of an assimilated upper-class family. His father Michael was a banker and stockbroker and lived with his family in an apartment in the elegant Westend. Otto's wife, Edith Hollander, also came from a

*Continued on page 2*

## STARRING...

Holocaust Memorial Day takes centre stage in this month's issue, with a write up of AJR's many events and projects as well as some of the impressive media coverage generated by these activities (pages 8-11).

We also reflect the current awards season with a look at some of the movies that have been nominated for an Oscar and how these relate to the Holocaust (page 12).

The story of the bond between a small community in Transylvania and a group of volunteers in Scotland would also make a great movie and we are delighted to share it with you (pages 14-15).

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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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## Anne Frank The Refugee (cont.)

wealthy Jewish family. 'The Franks,' writes Franklin, 'were assimilated Jews. ... Otto did not have a bar mitzvah and never learned to read or speak Hebrew.' But his parents-in-law 'kept kosher and attended synagogue regularly, a habit she maintained after her marriage to Otto, in 1925.'

Soon after Hitler came to power, Otto's sister Helene (Leni) and her husband, Erich Elias, moved to Basel to set up a Swiss office for the family business. His brother Robert left to open an art gallery in England. The other brother, Herbert, was already living in Paris. Otto was the last of the Frank siblings still living in Germany. His mother Alice, age sixty-eight, joined Leni and Erich in Basel. As a result, Otto's siblings and mother survived the war. In late 1938 Edith Frank's two brothers Walter and Julius managed to emigrate to the United States. They too survived the war.

'The Franks,' writes Franklin, 'considered trying to immigrate to Palestine. But quickly dismissed the idea... As assimilated Germans, they felt they belonged in Europe, or possibly America, but not in the Middle East.' Instead, they moved to the Netherlands where Otto could open a Dutch branch of the family company in Amsterdam. By 1934 they were settled in their new home, part of a growing influx of German-Jewish refugees which also included Anne's maternal grandmother, Rosa.

Things quickly started to get worse for the Frank family and the 140,000 Jews in the Netherlands. By 1941 their world had shrunk as for so many other European Jews. 'I am forced to look out for emigration and as far as I can see USA is the only country we could go to,' Otto wrote in April 1941 to a friend in America, Nathan Strauss Jr. Otto's cousin in London, Milly Stanfield, suggested that Margot and Anne live with her until the war was over, but Otto and Edith wanted to keep the family together.

Franklin spends the rest of this chapter describing what George Steiner once called 'the dark arts of bureaucracy', an increasingly hopeless world of visas, consulates and affidavits. In 1942 the Franks moved into hiding in the Annex.



Memorial placed for Anne and her sister on the site of their murder at Belsen

Margot talked about wanting to become a maternity nurse in Palestine. Two of Anne's friends managed to get to Palestine. Her classmate Theo Coster was once asked by a civil servant in Tel Aviv whether Theo was a Jewish name. 'Theo shot back that he had gone to school with Anne Frank,' writes Franklin. The Franks were the only members of their family to end up in the camps. Only Otto survived.

In one of his best novels, *The Ghost Writer* (1979), and a dark sequel, *Exit Ghost* (2007), Philip Roth imagines what would have become of Anne Frank if she had come to America like her two maternal uncles. In *The Ghost Writer*, Roth's most famous creation, Nathan Zuckerman, is a promising young writer who spends a night in the home of E.I. Lonoff (possibly a portrait of Bernard Malamud), an established author whom Zuckerman idolises. Also staying in the Lonoff home is Amy Bellette, a young woman with a vague past whom the narrator comes to suspect of being Anne Frank, living in the United States, having survived the Holocaust.

In *Exit Ghost*, the last Roth novel to feature Nathan Zuckerman, Zuckerman returns to New York and almost fifty years after he first met her, he is reunited with Amy Bellette. She is dying of a brain tumour.

Amy Bellette/Anne Frank is not the only character Roth brings to safety in America. He also wrote an essay about Kafka becoming Roth's boyhood Hebrew

tutor, *I Always Wanted You to Admire my Fasting; or, Looking at Kafka* (1973). 'But Kafka escaping?' writes Roth. 'It seems unlikely for one so fascinated by entrapment and careers that culminate in anguished death.'

It is a curious idea of Roth's, to take two of the most famous European Jews of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, both associated with images of entrapment, whether the Annex in Amsterdam or some of Kafka's most famous stories, such as *In the Penal Colony*, and imagining what would have happened if instead of dying of illness in Europe, Anne Frank of typhus and Kafka of TB, they had escaped to America. But Roth being Roth he doesn't give them a happy ending. Anne Frank/Amy Bellette dies of a brain tumour and Kafka lives out his later years in New Jersey as an obscure person. It is Anne's father, Otto, and most of her family and some of her schoolfriends, and Kafka's friend and literary executor, Max Brod, (who escaped to Palestine with Kafka's manuscripts) who survive.

Roth's novels tell a very different story of Anne Frank from the famous play and film in the 1950s. Both were part of a particular moment in American postwar culture which Franklin describes superbly in her book, a moment when American audiences, including American Jewish audiences, wanted Anne Frank to be a universal icon, not *too* Jewish. They saw her as an image of goodness, summed up by the most famous line in her *Diary*: 'In spite of everything I still believe that people are really good at heart.'

There is a very different moment in another fine new book about the Franks, *After the Annex: Anne Frank, Auschwitz and beyond* (2023), by the Dutch historian, Bas von Benda-Beckmann. He describes an eyewitness account of Anne just before she died: 'She was very thin, and she didn't have any clothes. She was cold and just had a blanket wrapped around her...' It must have been freezing in Bergen-Belsen in February, the coldest month of the year in Lower Saxony. Anne died soon after her sister Margot. When we think of the politicians and bureaucrats who closed the gates to those desperate to escape from wartime Europe, we should remember this image of Anne Frank.

**David Herman**

# 3G & 4G TRIP TO AMSTERDAM

The AJR is arranging a trip to Amsterdam for our younger members for the weekend of 16-18 May.

The itinerary will include a guided visit to the Jewish Cultural Quarter, home to four historic buildings including the new Holocaust Museum, opened just last year.

We'll also enjoy a delicious Israeli-style lunch at the café of the Jewish Cultural Quarter... and talking of food (this is AJR, after all!), we look forward to sharing Shabbat dinner with the local Jewish community, which will be a wonderful opportunity to make new friends and find out about life in the Netherlands.

Of course, no visit to Amsterdam would be complete without a visit to the Anne Frank House and to learn more about this icon of Holocaust memory, including seeing the attic where Anne and her family were forced to hide from the Nazis for over two years. There will also be the possibility to explore more of this vibrant city in the company of fellow Holocaust descendants.



Amsterdam's new Jewish Cultural Centre will be a highlight of the AJR tour

The cost for this two night, three day trip will include accommodation and activities but travel to Amsterdam will need to be booked by the participant. We expect the age range to be 18 – 45 years. Please email [nextgens@ajr.org.uk](mailto:nextgens@ajr.org.uk) for more information.

## A LIGHT IN DARK TIMES

A new online exhibition hosted by the University of London's Institute of Languages, Cultures and Societies traces the history of London's Austrian Centre and the little-known *Laterndl* (Little Lantern) theatre, which played to audiences from 1939 to 1945.



Evelyn Barrington in *Der unsterbliche Schweijk*, 1940

Set up in March 1939 to support the 30,000 Austrian Jews fleeing to Britain, the Austrian Centre offered a range of facilities including a café, hostel, library, performance space, weekly newspaper as well as tailoring and shoe mending services. Cultural and educational activities included lectures, theatre and cabaret, and music.

The *Laterndl* was the first and largest of the German-language theatres run by exiles in London, reuniting actors, friends and colleagues who had worked together in Vienna. Taking the Viennese political cabaret as its starting point, the theatre's repertoire responded to political developments, with members of the theatre company

writing their own material as well as performing plays by internationally known playwrights.

The University of London's archives contain one of the most complete sets of records of the *Laterndl* in existence. Its curators have supplemented these records with material from other sources to weave together the story of this unique theatre.

<https://exileresearchcentre.omeka.net/exhibits/show/laterndltheatre/introduction>



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## RETURN TO OXFORD

**On Tuesday 4 February Oxford University's Harris Manchester College hosted the AJR for an event that marked the planting of a cherry tree three years ago in honour of the Association's 80th anniversary, one of 80 planted around the country.**

The tree commemorates the sanctuary that Jewish academics fleeing Nazi Germany found at the University of Oxford and was generously donated by Dr Wendy Fidler MBE (Associate Member of the Senior Common Room) and Mr Brian Fidler (Supernumerary Fellow).

The visit began with a trip to neighbouring

New College for a fascinating exhibition of Jewish books and manuscripts that was kindly prepared by the College Library.

Representatives from the Association then returned to Harris Manchester, where the Association's Chief Executive, Michael Newman, delivered a short address in front of the tree that emphasised the contribution of Jewish refugees to the University of Oxford and academic life – and the special bond with our College, which welcomed Professor Fritz Heinemann, a philosopher from Frankfurt, in 1939.

To conclude the day, high tea in the Arlosh Hall provided a further opportunity for reflection and the exchange of personal memories and stories.



Plaque for the AJR tree at Oxford University

## 80 YEARS AFTER AUSCHWITZ

In the deep silence we remember our loved ones whose lives were torn away  
We remember them every day, especially today, International Holocaust Remembrance Day

Some of the few remaining survivors today have returned to that Death Camp  
How we wish genocide, antisemitism, oppression of minorities we could out stamp

But alas there are still so many who say the Holocaust never occurred  
We must remember its existence, this should by no one, by no group ever be blurred

Today, together at Hell's gates, royalty, dignitary, clergy and ordinary folk stand side by side  
To remember the million plus so brutally murdered, horribly they all died

We shall always remember January the 27th, 1945  
Only a few did survive, only a few walked out, barely alive

We will always remember them – we will remember them forever  
For never again must there be such brutality, cruelty as that – not now, NEVER.  
*Patricia J Tausz, London N3*

## THESE STITCHES TELL A STORY

This fabulous memorial quilt is currently touring the East Midlands to help raise awareness of the dangers of persecution.

The 80 Candles Quilt represents the stories of 80 individuals affected by the Nazi regime. Dozens of people throughout the East Midlands have contributed to its creation, either by stitching in solitary or attending one of a series of community workshops. They researched and connected with real human stories of persecution, loss

and survival which they have translated into beautiful slow stitched squares.

The project was led by Community Arts Practitioner Laura Burrill and you can see more information on her website [www.everystitchastory.co.uk/collaboration-community/holocaust-memorial-day-80-candles-quilt-introduction-and-instructions/](http://www.everystitchastory.co.uk/collaboration-community/holocaust-memorial-day-80-candles-quilt-introduction-and-instructions/)



Six AJR Trustees who retired in December were delighted to be presented with special editions of the AJR Journal celebrating the invaluable support and guidance that they each provided the AJR during their tenures.

# ART NOTES: by Gloria Tessler

The great artist Edouard Manet once said: “You would hardly believe how difficult it is to place a figure alone on a canvas, and to concentrate all the interest on this single and universal figure and still keep it living and real.”

It was a moment in a changing era, when he tried to identify the radical thinking behind the Impressionist way of seeing the world. But what created Impressionism and what was its central message?

The movement was launched around the 1860s by a group of young artists who wanted to paint simply what they saw and felt. They rejected the accepted portrayal of history and mythology. Instead, as their name suggests, the Impressionists tried to get down on canvas an “impression” of how a landscape, thing, or person appeared to them at a certain moment in time. This often meant using much lighter and looser brushwork than painters had up until that point, and painting out of doors, *en plein air*. The Impressionists also rejected official exhibitions and painting competitions set up by the French government, instead organising their own group exhibitions.

The Courtauld Gallery presents its first exhibition of Impressionist and Post Impressionist paintings from the Oskar Reinhart Collection, ‘Am Römerholz’ to be staged outside its Winterthur base in Switzerland. The collection features over 200 artworks from old masters to Impressionist and Post-Impressionist pieces.

In a nod to the origins of Impressionism, it opens with important works by pre-Impressionist painters. These include Goya’s 1808 *Still Life with Three Salmon Steaks* – a truly graphic red image on a dark background, Courbet’s *The Hammock*, featuring a sleeping girl lying in a most unwieldy pose in her hammock, her face rather tense, and her red-gold curls tumbling to the ground, and most emotional of all, Théodore Géricault’s *A Man suffering from Delusions of Military Rank*. It shows a gaunt man wearing a

*Au Café* by  
Edouard  
Manet,  
1878



pom-pom hat and a medallion showing signs of what today we would call post-traumatic stress.

It is unclear why these paintings were selected to open the show, except perhaps to demonstrate that the coming Impressionist movement would focus on individuals – whether human, animal or still life – rather than on the traditional self-important portraiture of leading figures of the past. It led into a different type of individualism, one which valued sensibility and emotion.

This emphasis on the individual is nowhere more striking than Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec’s *The Clown Cha-U-Kao* 1895. The performer is clad in a bodice of yellow frou-frou over a pair of black pantalons. She wears a clownish hat and there is a sense of partying all around her. But, like the typical sad clown, her expression is elsewhere, her lips are drawn in a tense red line, and her eyes are remote. The older woman to her right is downcast and dowdy, making you question the jollity that this painting actually depicts.

You could be forgiven if you thought Impressionism, as exemplified by Claude Renoir, was all about café society. But Edouard Manet’s *Au Café* reinforces the Toulouse Lautrec’s clown’s sense of *Here*, a well-dressed couple sit at a table in a busy café beside a young woman in profile. The colours are muted greys, but the woman, beside her top-hatted partner, gazes out of the picture with a question in her eyes. This

painting was ground-breaking in its time.

What I found interesting were two paintings by Van Gogh of the hospital at Arles, 1889. One is a cheerful image of the hospital courtyard, filled with plants and shrubbery and the bright yellow walls, while the other shows a hospital ward in which the patients sit idly, with crumpled expressions, with faceless nurses in the distance and blue curtains concealing the beds.

Another breakthrough still-life was Paul Cézanne’s *Still Life with Faience Jug and Fruit* (c1900). In stunning colours of orange and blue, the more you look at this painting, the more vividly it comes to life. The way the fruit bowl almost tilts towards the jug on a messy blue cloth partly disguising the plain wooden table indicates the communion between natural objects.

Pierre-August Renoir’s 1865 *Lily and Greenhouse Plants* is a lush floral display behind the real individual here, a tall lily in a pot.

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CONTEMPORARY  
PAINTING AND SCULPTURE

# 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.

## MOVING WORDS

I read David Herman's article about Auschwitz, *80 years after Liberation* (January), with great interest. He persuasively demonstrates that current historians and less well-known personal accounts are widening our understanding of the Shoah beyond the prevalent image of Auschwitz.

Herman highlights Otto Dov Kulka's memoir, *Landscapes of the Metropolis of Death: Reflections on Memory and Imagination* (2013) as the best of these less familiar memoirs. Kulka was also a distinguished historian. He included in this memoir, as an appendix, an article written in 1984, where he argues, drawing on original documents, that the 'Family Camp' at Auschwitz was meant to be used as a façade to showcase fair treatment of the Jews to the International Red Cross delegation who had visited Terezin and planned to visit 'a Jewish labour camp'. Since the delegation did not raise any further questions after completing their visit to Terezin, being convinced by its portrayal as a final camp, the 'Family Camp' at Auschwitz became superfluous. Less than three weeks after the Red Cross visit to Terezin, the Family Camp was liquidated.

I have read Kulka's memoir several times. I also established that my grandmother was on the transport Ea, on 16 May 1944, from Terezin to Auschwitz where all were taken to the 'Family Camp'.

I emailed Kulka on 9 June 2020 to share how profoundly touched I was by his memoir, adding that, had my grandmother survived the journey from Terezin to Auschwitz, she would have lived for a few weeks in the same place as Kulka himself. He replied to the email the same day 'Thank you so much for your moving words on your deep impressions on reading my book'. Kulka died seven months later, on 29 January 2021.  
*(Mr) Dominique Dubois, London SW20*

## LORE LUCAS

I read your lovely article about Lore Lucas' 105th birthday. We have interviewed Lore twice, once by audio and once on a video

which is also on our podcast channel.

Gathering the Voices Association is a small group of six volunteers who collect the stories of Holocaust survivors and refugees who settled in Scotland. Our website is known across the globe for its innovative approaches in Holocaust education and we also publish our resources on the new [www.holocausttestimony.org.uk](http://www.holocausttestimony.org.uk) portal.

We have also interviewed two AJR members who sadly recently passed away: Karola Regent and Kathy Hagler.  
*Dr Angela Shapiro, Trustee*  
[www.gatheringthevoices.com](http://www.gatheringthevoices.com)

## A NEGLECTED GROUP

What a very interesting article by David Herman in your January edition. But have the various research groups missed out a group of refugees?

My father was dismissed from his job at the Kaiser Wilhelm Institute in Berlin. It might be of interest to note that his notice of dismissal is signed by none other than Fritz Haber who himself was Jewish. My father worked there as assistant to Professor Michael Polanyi who also happened to be Jewish and had already left the K.W.I. to take up a position at Manchester University. When Polanyi arrived in Manchester and saw what a state the Physical Chemistry Department was in, he asked could he send for his assistant (my father) and his secretary. They were both allowed to leave Germany, but only allowed into the UK on a two-year visa; after two years my father had to leave the UK and try to go elsewhere or back to Germany and an uncertain future.

As it happened, a chance meeting at a garden party in South Manchester with Chaim Weitzman secured him a job at the Daniel Seev Institute in Rehovot in Palestine.

But he cannot have been the only refugee from Europe who was only allowed into the UK on a limited time visa, and should they perhaps also have been included in the list of 'Neglected Groups'?  
*John Martins, Manchester*

The letter from Cameron Woodrow about his 'non Jewish' family refugees (December) and your response (February) have got me thinking.

I write as the 'non Jewish' daughter of a Jewish kindertransport father. I am 'non Jewish' because my mother was not Jewish, although her paternal grandmother was a totally assimilated and non-practising Jew and we believe that her maternal grandmother was also probably a Jew. The UK family that cared for my father as a child took a conscious decision not to allow him to maintain contact with the Jewish community so that, in his borrowed words, he became an "empty Jew", lacking the knowledge of the Jewish traditions to pass on to his family, and like many, also very reluctant to talk about his past. However my own identity has been very strongly shaped by the experiences and fate of my father and his extended family.

So my first response is to ask what does or doesn't make one "Jewish" and does it matter? And my second response is that actually what matters, particularly in these days of rapidly rising hatred for 'the other' whether that is a Jew, a Muslim, a Palestinian, a Transgender person or anyone else whose face or ideas don't fit, is our shared history of othering and persecution. My plea here to all AJR members is that, as the echos of 1930s Europe get ever stronger, every person who shares that history finds it within themselves to stand up and speak out loudly against all those who promote that hatred, and against the demolition of the checks and balances of governance and democracy. Surely that is what we must mean by "Never Again".  
*Charlotte Reynolds, Cornwall*

## UNDERSTATEMENT

My wife Brita and I love reading your marvellous magazine, but there was one line in February's *Letter from Israel* which disturbed me. It read 'The footage from Gaza is not pleasant to watch'.

Surely this should read 'The footage from Gaza is terrible or horrific to watch'?  
*Ed Wolff, London NW3*

**KEEPING MEMORIES**

I should like to acknowledge David Herman's lovely review of *The Memory Keeper* (February). The way he engaged with my grandparents' story I found especially pleasing; my wish had always been to understand them as complex human beings, not see them only as victims.

David was spot on when he described Max and Mally as 'classic, assimilated middle-class German Jews'. And yet, as I have been discovering only recently, respect for the orthodox and traditional ruled their lives too. My Israeli cousin has been unearthing and sending me scans of older documents in Yiddish belonging to our great-grandfather Moses Rychwalski. They show the support he, and later Max, gave to Moses' brother and descendants who had settled in Jerusalem and devoted their lives to learning, possibly founding a yeshiva. I see how some of that tradition had even trickled down to my mother, although she herself might not have realised it. Making these connections is fascinating!  
*Jackie Konstamm, London NW2*

**85 YEARS ON**

Last month I celebrated the 85th anniversary of my first arrival in England as a ten-year-old Jewish refugee. On 6 February 1940 I was the guest on the captain's deck of a British ship. Hugo Neumann had driven me through a snowstorm during the night from Brussels to Ostend and handed me over to the captain. I was collected in Folkestone by George Schatz, my father's cousin, and taken to Amersham, about 25 miles outside London – where he was living with his wife, Magda.

My parents could not meet me, but they were safe in England. They had arrived in August 1939 to take up the post of butler and cook, domestic servants with a doctor in Basingstoke. They could not have come here had I not already escaped from Nazi Austria.

About two years earlier – after my 9th birthday in March 1938 – I had witnessed with my own eyes Adolf Hitler's triumphant

entry into Vienna to the jubilant acclaim of the local population. I could not understand why the (Jewish) adults of my family, watching from a balcony, were gloomy and fearful. Of course, Austria became part of the Reich and anti-Jewish law and practice began. I was kicked out of my Boy Scout group and the local school and had to take a bus to a Jewish school across town. My father lost his employment but was spared arrest because he had served for Austria in WW1. There was a scramble for visas for any country that would take Jewish families but too few were available. In small communities across Austria whole Jewish communities were thrown out of their homes, shops and businesses and their towns were declared "Jew-free". The mass deportations and killing did not start until later.

Some countries, led by the UK, reacted to these attacks by offering to take children unaccompanied by their parents. I was able to take a Kindertransport train from Vienna to Brussels in March 1939. Hugo and Liesl Neumann, who had settled in Belgium earlier, took me into their home with their two small children. They treated me very well, like their own, and I had a good life.

When the war began Belgium remained neutral but was under threat of invasion. Towards the end of 1939, the Neumanns advised my parents that it would be better if I were to go to England. I was granted a visa and that's how I came to be on that ship.

I did not speak any English except the song: "my bonnie lies over the ocean . . .", but I learned to speak fluently in a few months. Two months later I was reunited with my parents. Later I changed my name from Hans Farago to John Farago. From the skyline in Amersham we watched the Blitz, the red skyline of London being bombed by the Nazis. Meanwhile the Nazis invaded Belgium and Hugo Neumann went to a concentration camp, but he and his family miraculously survived the war and we remained good friends. After the war – in 1947 – my parents and I were offered British citizenship.  
*John Farago, Kent*

# LOOKING FOR?

**MARGIT**

Patricia Willmott would like to contact a former refugee child called Margit who was fostered for a time by her aunt and uncle, Dennis & Gladys Mayes of Raunds in Northamptonshire. Margit may have had family in Hatton Garden, London.  
[ppwillmott@icloud.com](mailto:ppwillmott@icloud.com)

**EDITH & ERIKA COLLINS**

Ariana Neumann, writer and historian, is researching the histories of Edith and Erika Meyer from Langenfeld, Germany. One went to Texas as a child in 1938, the other was deported to Riga in 1941. Ariana hopes to find:

- a) Relatives of anyone who travelled on the SS Washington from Hamburg to NY on 15 June 1938
- b) Anyone who knew:
  - Gunther Rosinius from Rottweil
  - Fedor or Hans Benjamin from Beuthen
  - Hannelore Oppenheimer from Bad Mergetheim
  - Franz Putzrath from Austria
  - Leni Bareinski from Wuppertal
- c) Anyone brought to the US by the Jewish Children Aid Agency or who remembers Lotte Marcuse, Kaethe Rosenheim or Ellis Pincoff
- d) Anyone with testimony from 1930s Cologne or Dusseldorf or the Riga ghetto

[ariana@ariananeumann.com](mailto:ariana@ariananeumann.com)

**RESISTANCE DURING THE HOLOCAUST**

Author and former *Boston Globe* reporter Larry Tye is writing a book outlining how, during the Holocaust, Jews fought back everywhere, from the death camps and forests to undergrounds and Allied armies. He will be in Edinburgh and London April 5-10 and would love to hear your story.  
[larrytye@gmail.com](mailto:larrytye@gmail.com)

**MIRIAM (MIMI) KESTER**

Daniel Dost of Chemnitz would like to contact Miriam Kester, daughter of Stephanie Kester (*née* Leyser in 1927).  
[daniel@buntmacherinnen.eu](mailto:daniel@buntmacherinnen.eu)

# AJR and

At the end of January the world commemorated the 80th anniversary of the liberation

## AJR BLUE PLAQUE AT GORDON

**On 29 January HRH The Princess Royal paid tribute to Gordonstoun founder Dr Kurt Hahn as the AJR unveiled a special commemorative plaque in his memory to mark HMD.**

Hahn was forced to flee Germany after publicly speaking out against the Nazi party as it rose to power in the 1930s. After escaping to Scotland, the Jewish educationalist set up Gordonstoun in 1934, with Prince Philip one of the school's first students.

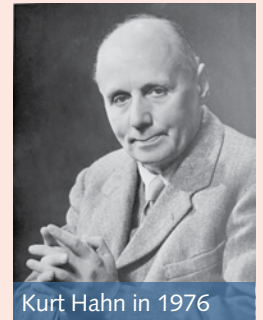
This is the 15th blue plaque installed by the AJR. It was unveiled by AJR 2G member Michael Flesch, a former Gordonstoun pupil. Michael's father attended Salem School in Southern Germany, where Hahn was Headmaster before fleeing to Scotland.

The Princess Royal – who holds the role of 'Warden' at Gordonstoun – expressed her thanks to the AJR and the school for honouring Hahn, in a letter read out during the commemoration service: *"This plaque will be a permanent monument, informing students, teachers and visitors of Kurt Hahn's bravery and accomplishments. It will serve as a reminder of how it came to be that Hahn came here to Gordonstoun, and a warning of what happens when a society succumbs to the dangers of indifference in the face of extremism and racial hatred."*

*"My late father, The Duke of Edinburgh, thrived during his time here and counted Kurt Hahn as a personal friend, having already benefited from his wisdom in the formative years in Germany. I am sure that he*



AJR CEO Michael Newman delivered the plaque to Gordonstoun



Kurt Hahn in 1976

*would have deeply approved of this unveiling."*

Princess Anne also wrote of her "great pride" that her grandmother, Princess Alice, is recognised as a Righteous Among the Nations for providing sanctuary to a Jewish family facing Nazi oppression and persecution in Greece.

Gordonstoun Principal Peter Green said: *"Our founder Kurt Hahn showed immense courage in publicly standing up to the Nazi party in the face of extreme adversity. We owe him an eternal debt of gratitude for his vision in setting up a school with an educational philosophy focused on service and compassion. Hahn was ahead of his time in his thinking and today his memory lives on through the achievements of our wonderful students with their passion and instinct to help others, whether it's in the local community or further afield."*

Scotland's First Minister John Swinney said in a letter to the AJR: *"The*



The musicians performing at Wigmore Hall

**To mark the 80th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz, the AJR and Holocaust education charity *Learning from the Righteous* staged an emotional concert that focused on the music played at Auschwitz.**

The special concert at Wigmore Hall on 23 January featured pieces of music that were played in Auschwitz, honouring the musicians who were forced to perform there, punctuated by the testimony of musician-prisoners and other eye-witnesses.

## MUSIC IN AUSCHWITZ

Music was a tool of Nazi control. Musicians performed marches to corral slave-labourers into orderly columns, entertain the SS on Sunday afternoons and provide the backdrop for private gatherings in the commandant's villa. There were even musicians on hand to accompany public executions. Most inmates were repulsed to hear music in such a hell-hole, but to some it was an escape from the relentless presence of death. Most camp musicians suffered the same fate as their fellow prisoners, but those who survived often asserted that music had saved their lives.

The concert was narrated by Jason Issacs. Over his distinguished 35 year career, Jason has appeared in numerous films, including *The Death of Stalin*, the Harry Potter franchise and recently as Cary Grant in the bio-drama *Archie*. Jason grew up in the close-knit Liverpool Jewish community, attending the synagogue youth club and King David High School. His family relocated to London in the 1970s, where he experienced the bullying and intolerance of the National

# HMD

of Auschwitz. The AJR was at the heart of a number of important events here in the UK.

## STOUN

*atrocities inflicted upon the Jewish people during the Holocaust remain one of darkest periods of human history, but it is the bravery of individuals such as Mr Hahn that can inspire the rest of us to stand in solidarity against forces which seek (to) target the most vulnerable members of our society."*

AJR Trustee, Frank Harding MBE, who devised the AJR plaque scheme, added: *"The AJR is deeply honoured that this initiative has attracted the support of Her Royal Highness The Princess Royal and the First Minister of Scotland.*

*The plaque recognises Hahn's remarkable contribution to British society and forms part of the AJR's mission to bring awareness of how Nazi oppression and the Holocaust impacted the lives of people who rebuilt their lives in this country. Our plaque scheme complements the other resources we have assembled, including our testimony archives, that help bring the past into the present and perpetuate the memory of the Jewish refugees."*

The special service recognising the achievements of Hahn was supported by Interfaith Scotland whose Director, Maureen Sier, said: *"It is always a great honour for Interfaith Scotland to support Holocaust Memorial Day and to remember the Holocaust and subsequent genocides. The theme this year for Holocaust Memorial Day is 'for a better future' and so it is significant to be attending a commemoration at Gordonstoun School, a school founded by Kurt Hahn, a survivor of the Nazi regime who dedicated his life to supporting young people to build a better future for everyone".*

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The In Their Footsteps exhibition as set up in Wigmore Hall

Front, which he describes as perfect preparation for the villains he would later portray on screen.

The soloists were the cellist Raphael Wallfisch, whose mother Anita Lasker-Wallfisch is a survivor of the women's orchestra at Birkenau, the cellist Gemma Rosefield and the violinist Benjamin Nabarro. They performed music by Beethoven, Schumann, Laks, Monti and Bruch.

Concert-goers also had the opportunity to visit the exhibition, *In Their Footsteps*, based on ceramic shoes which were created by artist Jenny Stolzenberg in response to her father Wilhelm Pollak's lifelong silence about his concentration camp experiences.

## AJR ANNUAL COMMEMORATION SERVICE

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**AJR's annual Holocaust Memorial Day service took place at Belsize Square Synagogue on 20 January.**

Officiated by Rabbi Gabriel Botnik, the service featured vivid accounts of the Shoah, including – as reported in our February issue – live testimony from Mindu Hornick MBE, who miraculously survived Auschwitz.

The theme of HMD 2025, 'For a Better Future', seems especially relevant at a time when Jews around the world are facing increasing antisemitism and Holocaust distortion and where the remaining living witnesses rely on us, more than ever, to carry forward their legacy in the hope of tackling prejudice.

During the proceedings, six AJR Holocaust survivors and refugees illuminated memorials in a moving candle lighting ceremony and memorial prayer. AJR CEO Michael Newman reflected on the vital importance of remembering the victims of Nazi terror, as well as the launch of two groundbreaking resources:

The **Holocaust Testimony UK Portal** is a collection of collections, an interactive and easy to use archive of those who experienced Nazi oppression that brings together testimonies taken over many years by varied and leading institutions.

See [www.holocausttestimony.org.uk](http://www.holocausttestimony.org.uk)

The **80 Lives/ 80 Objects** digital exhibition presents 80 objects from filmed testimonies of Holocaust survivors and refugees, who settled in the UK. The 80 artefacts, photographs, documents and everyday items, create a tangible link to the lives of each testimony giver; to the before of a disrupted past and the traumatic experience of discrimination, exclusion, emigration, and survival.

See [www.holocausttestimony.org.uk/80-objects](http://www.holocausttestimony.org.uk/80-objects)

Guests of honour included The British Envoy for Holocaust and Post Holocaust Issues, Lord Pickles, and representatives from the German, Austrian and Ukrainian Embassies in London as well as representatives from organisations with which the AJR works closely.

# MAKING THE HEADLINES

January 16, 2025 **Ham&High**

## Objects kept by Holocaust survivors that are a 'pathway into history'

January 27 marks the 80th anniversary of the day when Ukrainian soldiers drove open the gates of Auschwitz concentration camp. They found one 1,000 survivors at Belzec and surrounding camps, where in less than five years, 1.1 million people - mostly Jews - along with Poles, Roma, Soviet and German - had been murdered by the Nazis. The Holocaust was chosen as the UK's Holocaust Memorial Day, marked in the UK this year with services, talks and events.

**BY ROSEMARY GAYTON**

Survivors after her mother and younger sister were taken into nearby woods - and murdered. Milla became a star soldier, was deported to Ravensbrück, then put on cattle trucks to Bergen-Belsen where she contracted typhus. When the British Army liberated the camp in 1945, she was transferred to a children's hospital to recover, and then sent with other survivors to Sweden in 1946.

**THE TIMES**

## International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance London Plenary

By **UK TIMES** on 17 December 2024

TOP NEWS

- Daniel Craig absent view at UK Times
- MI northbound eastbound Accident

**Survivors share stories behind precious keepsakes**

**BY JULIANA KIRKUP**

THE JC

**Anne pays tribute to man who fled Nazi regime and founded Scottish school**

Kurt Hahn fled Germany in 1933 after he spoke out against the Nazis' 'race' laws

**THE INDEPENDENT**

**Ham&High**

## Survivor's joy at hostage release and fear at return of antisemitism

**Holocaust survivors share their keepsakes to teach lessons of the past**

The 80 Objects 80 Lives digital exhibition was launched just before Holocaust Memorial Day

**BBC WORLD SERVICE**

**AJR commemorates 80 years since the liberation of Auschwitz**

Six Holocaust survivors and refugees light candles in remembrance of the six million Jews murdered by the Nazis

By **MICHELLE ROSENBERG**  
January 24, 2025, 1:59 pm

**itv LONDON**

## 'We thought we had entered hell': Stories of Holocaust survivors retold for TikTok generation

**BBC WORLD SERVICE**

**DAILY Mirror**

## EXCLUSIVE: Holocaust survivor, 95, reveals one thing that kept her alive through horrors of Auschwitz

Mindu Hornick, 95, says luck, kindness and being with her sister saved her from the Auschwitz gas chamber 80 years after its liberation

By **Sanjeta Bains, Features Writer**  
20:00, 19 Jan 2025

**BBC WORLD SERVICE**

## World leaders to gather 80 years on from liberation of Auschwitz camp

**BBC NEWS**

## Gordonstoun remembers its founder who fled the Nazis



# AROUND THE UK

## SALFORD

Salford City Council were delighted to host their HMD event at Swinton Masonic Hall on 28 January. Those attending were spellbound by the recollections of 100-year-old Kindertransport refugee and AJR member, **Marianne Philipps**. Marianne was able to recall the horrors of Nazi antisemitism in Berlin, including her experience of Kristallnacht.



Marianne is pictured with Salford City Mayor, Paul Dennett and the Deputy Ceremonial Mayor of Salford, Councillor Heather Fletcher.



## GLASGOW

For many years the AJR has proudly sponsored the annual Holocaust Memorial Lecture at Glasgow University. Pictured at this year's event are Henry Lovat, Vice Principal Sara Carter, the AJR's Agnes Isaacs, and the University of Huddersfield's Professor Caroline Sturdy Colls who spoke to a crowded lecture theatre about the physical remains her forensic archaeology team had unearthed at the site of the Treblinka extermination camp.



Cynthia took part in an HMD event at Truro Cathedral

## CORNWALL

AJR 2G member Cynthia Hollingsworth was interviewed on local radio and TV about her family story.

Cynthia's mother travelled from Tarnow ghetto, to Plaszow labour camp, to Auschwitz Birkenau concentration and extermination camp and to Stutthof concentration camp where she remained incarcerated until April 1945 when she miraculously survived the sea evacuation, landing in Kiel, Germany in May 1945. Cynthia's grandfather Izak and Uncle Zvi had gone into hiding after the Nazi invasion of Poland, but were subsequently shot, while her grandmother Cyla and Uncle Jozef were both murdered within a month of arriving at Auschwitz.

Cynthia says that she was grateful for the opportunity to bear witness on radio and television and felt a huge sense of responsibility. She is very conscious of the words of Elie Wiesel: whoever listens to a witness becomes a witness.

Together with fellow AJR 2G member Bernie Graham, Cynthia also participated in a very moving HMD event at Truro Cathedral, during which fellow AJR Members Renate Collins BEM and her son Paul lit candles. A recording is available on the Cathedral website.

# And the Oscar goes to...

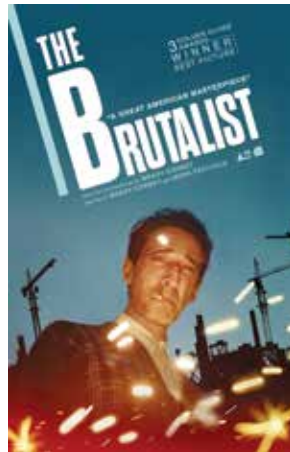
The AJR's Head of Education and Heritage, Alex Maws, considers the emergence of post-Holocaust film as an award-worthy genre.

With the 80th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau having just taken place in January and the 80th anniversary of the liberation of Bergen-Belsen coming in April, we find ourselves in a season of reflecting on the *end* of the Holocaust and grappling with questions about its present-day meaning. It seems entirely apposite that the 97th Academy Awards ceremony should fall squarely in the middle of this period of commemoration, for two Best Picture nominees – *The Brutalist* and *A Real Pain* – confront issues of the Holocaust's legacy in powerful, albeit very different, ways.

The term 'post-Holocaust' is a nebulous and misleading one, which suggests a clear delineation between one historical period and the one that began just after it. The reality for those who survived was often that issues of displacement, restitution, justice, trauma and memory meant that the 'end' of the Holocaust was not so straightforward.

Brady Corbet's *The Brutalist* illustrates on an epic scale that long tail of the Holocaust. Over three and a half hours, two archetypal post-war narratives — that of Jewish trauma and that of a golden age of American ambition and prosperity — crash headlong.

Although countless viewers may struggle to articulate what this film is *about*, invariably any description of it will include the words 'Holocaust survivor', as this is the fundamental identity of the film's protagonist László Tóth, a Bauhaus-trained Hungarian architect. But it is not merely Tóth's background story which situates this film squarely in the post-Holocaust genre. More salient are the film's themes of the search for a place of sanctuary and acceptance in a world still filled with casual antisemitism, and the lengths – both self-destructive and literally *constructive* (for if there is any



simple plot summary of the film, it is about erecting a building) – that many survivors go to in order to process their trauma.

Half the length of *The Brutalist* and with a story arc that plays out over a matter of just a few days, is Jesse Eisenberg's *A Real Pain*. The journey – a literal one in this case, on a Jewish heritage tour in Poland – of the film's two central characters, cousins David and Benji, is an experience that is likely familiar to many AJR members. More broadly, their urge to 'connect', in some meaningful but vague sense, with their deceased grandmother, will resonate with members of the ancestry.com generation.


This film also contrasts with *The Brutalist* in that it features, critically, laughs. But despite its humour and more modest ambitions, it still manages to squeeze in numerous moral and philosophical questions about Holocaust memory. Is it acceptable to pose for photographs at a Holocaust memorial? To ride in the first class train carriage when travelling to visit a death camp? And is the point of learning about the Holocaust to *know* things or to *feel* things?

These types of questions are obviously very different ones than those posed by last year's Best Picture nominee *The Zone of Interest* – a film distinctly in the Holocaust rather than the post-Holocaust genre – but that does not mean they are insubstantial. If audiences spend 90 minutes immersed in these debates, then *A Real Pain* may be a more successful conduit for Holocaust

learning than most textbooks.

One final mention goes to *September 5*, nominated for Best Original Screenplay, a film about the murder of 11 Israeli Olympians, as experienced by an American sports broadcasting crew. Though not as obvious a piece of post-Holocaust storytelling, it does conspicuously 'go there' by raising the question of the responsibility of younger Germans for the sins of their parents and the unavoidable issue of the failure of West German authorities to protect the safety of visiting Jewish athletes. Whether this failure was seen by those responsible as a moral one or merely a public relations one is a discussion for which the Holocaust is the most important piece of context.

While many conversations about Holocaust memory are dominated by a fear that with the passing of time, the Holocaust is becoming less relevant to audiences, this year's crop of Oscar contenders complicates that paradigm. Post-Holocaust stories such as these may serve an important function in introducing challenging debates into popular culture and discourse.



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# NOT UNKNOWN TO US

Early this month we will discover whether the new Bob Dylan biopic has won any of the eight Oscars for which it has been nominated. Entitled *A Complete Unknown*, it focuses on the period between 1961 and 1965 when Dylan rose from obscurity to become a big star. But Dylan's back story is familiar among many AJR members.



Timothee Chalamet as Bob Dylan in *A Complete Unknown*

Robert Allen Zimmerman was born in Minnesota on 24 May 1941. His father Abram was a middle-class electrical shop owner of Russian-Ukrainian Jewish descent, and his mother, Beatrice (Beatty) was of Lithuanian heritage. Dylan's Yiddish-speaking grandmother lived with the family, and his parents were central to the close-knit Jewish community of their hometown: his father was president of B'nai B'rith, and his mother was president of the local Hadassah Women's Zionist Organisation of America.

Dylan's paternal grandparents, Anna Kirghiz and Zigman Zimmerman, had emigrated from Odessa following the 1905 pogroms. His maternal grandparents, Florence and Ben Stone, had arrived from Lithuania in 1902.

The young Robert had his barmitzvah on 22 May 1954. He attended cheder at the Orthodox synagogue Agudas Achim and spent his summer holidays at the Herzl Camp in Wisconsin. Those Jewish roots infiltrated many of his earlier songs through biblical imagery and references. As he told his early biographer, Robert Shelton, in 1971: "I'm a Jew. It touches my poetry, my life, in ways I can't describe."

Yet he was not always so comfortable with his Judaism. In the late-70s he became a born-again Christian and

for a few years his work brimmed with references to his newfound Christianity. But by the early 1980s, Dylan had returned to his Jewish roots. He was soon seen holding a barmitzvah for his eldest son Jesse (born to Dylan's first wife Sara Lownds) at the Kotel in Jerusalem. He sent his children to the same Jewish summer camp he'd enjoyed as a child and in 1983 he expressed solidarity with Israel in his song *Neighborhood Bully*, with lyrics that are surprisingly resonant today.

Dylan is also no stranger to the pages of the *AJR Journal*. Eight years ago our former consultant editor Dr Anthony Grenville questioned Dylan's eligibility for the 2016 Nobel Prize for Literature. This was by no means a criticism of Dylan who – according to Dr Grenville – "...transformed popular music, almost single-handedly raising the level of its lyrics from the cheerful banalities of 1950s pop to that of serious culture. He did so by the combination of his words and his music, conveyed through his unique style of delivery and performance. But a pure poet he is not, and the committee that awarded him the Nobel Prize was arguably mistaken to treat him as if he were."

You can read the full version of Dr Grenville's well-informed article in the January 2017 issue of the *AJR Journal* on [www.ajr.org.uk/ajr-journal/](http://www.ajr.org.uk/ajr-journal/)



PRIVATE GUIDED TOUR

## FREEMASONS' HALL

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WEDNESDAY 26 MARCH 2025



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Cost: £12 per person



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



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Meeting at a London DLR station

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# THE UNBREAKABLE BOND BETWEEN TÂRGU



Trustee Colin Black in the hut in which Margit Genut had been living for 30 years



Seated, camp survivor Márta Marmor (who died in 2021, aged 95); standing from left, Harold Woldman, Marta's daughter Inke, Sandra Silverdale, Sharon Mail and Ethne Woldman

**Sharon Mail is the author of a new book about a unique relationship that formed between struggling Holocaust survivors in Transylvania and a small group of volunteers in Glasgow. Sharon tells us more.**

The AJR has provided significant support to UK-based refugees from the Holocaust and continues to do so. Sadly, there was no one to help many thousands of survivors who remained in Eastern Europe after the war.

I first became aware of the survivor community in Târgu Mureş, Transylvania, Romania, after becoming a journalist for the *Jewish Telegraph* in January 2006. Since then my interest in this community of 250 mainly concentration and labour camp survivors has grown, along with my admiration for the work of the Târgu Mureş Trust, formed by a small group of Scottish volunteers in 2000.

The volunteers provided the Romanian survivors with so much support, including medicine, food parcels, glasses, hearing and walking aids and home helps and anything else that was needed. They also visited the area four times a year, always at their own expense, taking clothes, gifts and a huge amount of love. A beautiful bond developed between the survivors and the trustees and supporters – they became like family to each other.

I had wanted to visit Târgu Mureş for a number of years and it finally became possible in April 2018, when I was invited to take part in a special visit. At last I got to meet some of the survivors and other community members I'd heard so much about. I immediately felt the same connection to them that the trustees had.

I made two further visits to Târgu Mureş, in October 2018 and October 2019, which proved to be the final official Trust visit. I interviewed the survivors whose stories I hadn't already captured, as well as some 20 members of the community.

This was a story I felt compelled to write, but why?

The idea of Holocaust survivors living under desperate circumstances was something that deeply troubled me. I had grown up hearing tales of the horrors that had befallen millions of fellow Jews and others in Europe. Having been to Auschwitz-Birkenau, I've seen first-hand the scale of the horrors there.

The small number who did survive should have been able to continue their lives in comfort and support, free from hunger, deprivation and fear. To have suffered so much should have meant, for them, an end to hardship, save for the incalculable physical and emotional scars they bore.

That wasn't the case for the survivors of Târgu Mureş. The lucky few survivors returned to their hometowns to find that most of their families and friends had

perished. Some were physically unable to have children while others, if they married or remarried, were fearful of having children under the Communist regime. Their homes were taken over by neighbours or confiscated by the new Communist state. There was mass emigration to Israel and elsewhere, first in 1951 and then from the '60s onwards, leaving a tiny proportion of mainly elderly community members behind.

After the toppling of the Ceauşescu regime in 1989, there was a concerted effort to bring the small, remaining community closer together again. The dignified, uncomplaining survivors were fortunate to be led by four compassionate, noble men – Bernat Sauber, Sándor Ausch, László Grün and Dr Pál Horváth. They would later be called by those who formed the Târgu Mureş Trust, the "four wise men." Though fellow strugglers, they helped others as much as they could.

They lived their lives with dignity and without complaint – feeling lucky simply to be alive when so many others had perished. They didn't believe anyone would be interested in helping them.

And then, in 1999, the 'miracle' happened, when the community was discovered by leading Glasgow community member Ethne Woldman and social work director Dr Sue Ross. The Trust was set up in 2000 and the Holocaust survivors were supported for over 20 years, until the last camp survivor Zsuzsa Diamantstein died on 28 March 2024, aged 101. Indeed, many lived well into their 90s. The Trust greatly enhanced and extended

# MUREŞ AND SCOTLAND

their lives.

I obtained a lot of material from the trustees, Târgu Mureş community and elsewhere. This material highlighted the needs of the survivors, none more than that of Margit Genut who was living in a 'chicken coop' – a tin hut, where the rain poured down the inside of the walls. She kept her milk on the roof of the hut, because it was cold. She had been there for 30 years, without complaint or self-pity. She viewed herself as one of the lucky ones, because she had survived.

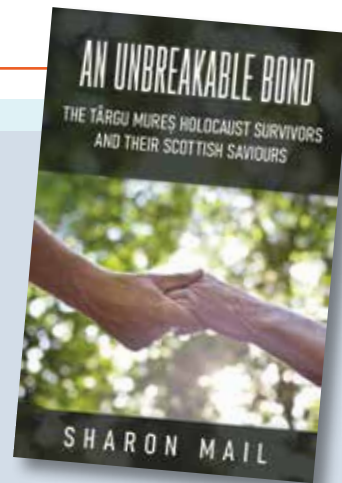
My book includes testimony from several survivors, including those who had been moved into the Târgu Mureş ghetto before onward transmission to Auschwitz. For example, Márta Marmor, told me about her mother, who was savagely beaten by

## AN EXTRACT FROM THE TRUST'S CASE STUDIES:

*Eighty-six-year-old lady living alone in a tin hut in atrocious conditions. Pre War, she was wealthy and had three homes. She was in three camps. Even after the War she was in a nice apartment but was apparently cheated out of it by a neighbour when she had to move to Târgu Mureş, to get treatment for TB after the camps.*

guards. Her hair turned white overnight and she could barely walk. She was sent straight to the gas chambers on arrival at Auschwitz, aged 45.

I hope my book serves as a reminder of the



Sharon's book is available from online retailers or direct from [sharon.mail@ntlworld](mailto:sharon.mail@ntlworld)

horrors perpetrated in the Holocaust and also a record of two very special groups of people – the warm, dignified survivors and their Scottish saviours, who formed an unbreakable bond of love and mutual respect.

# ROB'S ROMANIAN REVELATION

My life changed in May 1998 when my mother phoned to say her aunt Hilda – my great aunt – had died and her funeral was taking place shortly in Frankfurt. I asked why so soon, suggesting she postpone it so I could accompany her. She refused, so I visited her for a chat.

It wasn't so much a chat as a revelation. It turned out that my mother, Hilda, her other aunt Emma and her cousin Marta were our family's only survivors from the Holocaust. I was 34, and until then did not even know I was Jewish.

I'm now 62 so, in a sense, that conversation marked a divider of my life: the second half with a new background, family story and identity. It has been a long, slow journey of exploration.

My mother died in 2017 and it took me five years to appreciate that it's up to our generation to tell our family stories as a way of keeping the Holocaust real for younger people. So for the past year I have spoken in schools as part of HET's outreach programme.

In 2023 I cycled from my home in south-west England to Târgu Mureş in central Romania, where my mother was born,

retracing her deportation to Auschwitz and forced labour in Freudenthal before her emigration to England. I wanted to better understand where she experienced and lived, partly so I can tell my story with more conviction. I also raised over £3,500 for the AJR and the Holocaust Educational Trust.

Last November I read about AJR's Connect Project and thought I'd see if, by chance, it might lead me to anyone from Târgu Mureş or the surrounding area of Transylvania. Agnes Isaacs immediately put me in touch with Ethne Woldman of the Târgu Mureş Trust.

Ethne founded the trust in 1999 to help the 250 Holocaust survivors still in Târgu Mureş. Many were living in dire circumstances: buying one slice of bread at a time, sharing medicines, making do without glasses or dentures. One lady was living in a chicken coop. The story of the individuals in the Glasgow Jewish community who provided such invaluable support for these survivors is the subject of Sharon Mail's book.

Ethne told me lots of stories and gave me contacts. It turned out I was just in time for Sharon Mail's book launch where I met the



In 2023 Rob Angell followed his family's journey through Romania on bike

granddaughter of another survivor. We discovered that her grandfather and my grandparents had lived in the same village.

For the past 18 months I have been going through the process of reclaiming my Romanian citizenship. It took six months just to find an official record of my mother's birth certificate, but I have now submitted the paperwork and am looking forward to revisiting Târgu Mureş and discovering more about about my family's life before the war.

**Rob Angell**

**On Monday 10 March at 4pm Rob will talk about his journey to AJR members over Zoom. See link on back page.**

# REVIEWS

## THE LAST YEARS OF POLISH JEWRY: VOLUME 2: THE PERMANENT POGROM, 1935–37

By Yankev Leshchinsky, translated by  
Robert Brym and Eli Jany  
Open Book Publishers

Even before the war Polish Jews were already experiencing great persecution and suffering, prompting Yankev Leshchinsky to write about their plight before anyone knew the horrors to come. The articles by this leading scholar and journalistic analyst are translated from the original Yiddish by Robert Brym and Eli Jany for the first time. They focus on horrifying anti-Jewish pogroms and the response from victims. Although 12 of these riots in towns and villages are identified during the period, a picture emerges of a single sustained collective event over the three years. Leshchinsky brands this a “permanent pogrom” and his writings explore popular and official antisemitism.

Jews were made scapegoats for everyone’s woes in the face of great jealousy of their mercantile skills. The unprovoked attacks forced Jewish shops and businesses to close and allowed others to take them over, ensuring great fear in towns and villages alike. The unprovoked attacks involved collectively targeting Jews in more than 150 towns for beatings, stabbings, bombings, looting, arson and vandalising shops and business in often bloodthirsty attacks. This included the helpless, elderly and young. Children were also bullied by classmates. Activists were mobilised above all by the Narodowa Demokracja party whose members known as Endeks are frequently denounced here in vivid and evocative terms. Dangers created are described graphically together with the indifference of countrymen, although there were some heroic acts with Poles risking their own lives to save the endangered.

The book’s essays narrate continual, violent and gruesome incidents, including gratuitous attacks resulting in murders, life-changing injuries leading to loss of livelihood and children orphaned.

People hid in attics and cupboards, and mothers sacrificed themselves to protect their young. Everything came to a head with the Pshitik pogrom and in the trial that ensued 43 Poles and 14 Jews were accused of violent crimes. Afterwards 39 Poles, including the murderers of Khaye and Yosef Minkovski, a Jewish couple, were sentenced to light prison terms ranging from six months to a year.

The accused Jews credible claim of acting in self-defence was rejected resulting in sentences from six months to eight years imprisonment. The description of the trial is riveting, including witnesses too frightened to testify. But afterwards furious Jews, supported by political parties, retaliated and organised a highly effective national strike of a quarter of a million shops and market stalls and 200,000 Jewish workshops in unison across the country.

The Polish situation is set against a background government that encouraged economic sanctions and the intensification of persecution of Jews in Nazi Germany. The author highlights the continual fear, dejection, exhaustion and impoverishment. As time went on discrimination in education, especially universities, increased inexorably with students forced to sit separately on ghetto benches and increasingly being forced out of their studies. But Leshchinsky recognises that although ineffective in tackling pogroms, the Polish government did not actually organise them as happened in Hitler’s Germany.

Poland saw heart-breaking suicides borne of despair. Many Jews were forced to emigrate to a wide variety of countries overseas, facing the challenges that migration brings. As long as they went somewhere “safe” they were to escape the fate of the three million Polish Jews who perished in the Holocaust after this collection was written.

Janet Weston

## THE LOCKED SAFE: A FAMILY MEMOIR Miriam E. David with Charlotte Reiner

Many of the best books about Jewish refugees in the 1930s and 1940s have been about scientists, intellectuals and creative people who escaped from major

cities and university towns to British cities and university towns.

It was a massively *urban* migration. This is not insignificant. European high culture, in the first third of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, was dominated by cities. It was a product of universities, theatres, art schools and concert halls, but also of cafés, newspapers, literary magazines and discussion circles.

One of the best things about *The Locked Safe* is that it reminds us that this story is only partly true. There were many Jewish refugees who came from small towns in central Europe, ordinary Jews who escaped after 1933 and settled in towns in the north of England and the Midlands, people like the David and Lea families whose stories are at the heart of this superbly researched book.

When Miriam David’s father, Curt died, she and her sister found a locked safe. ‘To our immense surprise, not to say shock,’ writes Miriam David, ‘it contained five old German passports, four of which bore Nazi insignia... The passports belonged to my father, Curt, his parents, Adolf David and Clementine David (née Rothschild); Bertha David, his paternal grandmother; and Klara (Koch), Curt’s aunt and Adolf’s younger sister.’

What follows is the story of two families. The Davids, an ordinary Jewish family from provincial Germany, and the Leas (Miriam’s grandmother, Golde Lea, née Horowitz, was born in Ukraine and her mother, Esther Lea, was born Leachinsky) and how they came to be in northern England. *The Locked Safe* is part family memoir and part social history.

Tobias David, Miriam’s great-grandfather was buried in the village where her grandfather Adolf grew up (Nieder-Wöllstadt in Hesse), which today is 70% Protestant and 30% Catholic and zero % Jewish. The Davids were Jews living in rural pre-war Germany: butchers, corn and leather merchants, traders. Some were killed fighting for Germany in the First World War. Some others emigrated to Palestine and the United States but most remained in Germany.

Miriam’s father Curt trained to become a mechanical engineer. He

came to Manchester in 1936 and here is the first big surprise. In 1939 he was followed by his parents, his grandmother and his aunt. His elder brother Ernst, who had been imprisoned in Dachau after *Kristallnacht*, came separately. Six members of the family managed to get out of Germany. They were not wealthy or well-connected. They weren't helped by any of the well-known refugee organisations. Then comes the second twist. In 1940 Curt and his brother Ernst were interned. They were eventually released and the family spent the rest of their lives in England except for Ernst who moved to South Africa in 1950.

*The Locked Safe* is well written and the research has taken years. There's much to admire here but best of all it reminds us that not all German refugees were famous or had dramatic lives. Many lived very ordinary lives in ordinary places and even their experience of exile could be very ordinary.

David Herman

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# Remembering 'Mimi'

**Doris Hedwig Schwarzkopf – aka Mimi – would have been 100 on 6 March. Sadly she barely made the age of 20, dying in Bergen-Belsen shortly before the end of the war, after years of working in and surviving other camps. Her niece, Carol Henrey, wishes to honour her memory by sharing the translation of a letter that her grandmother received 18 months after Mimi's death. The letter was written by a fellow Czech lady, Antonia Munk, who helped Mimi from the moment she arrived at Auschwitz-Birkenau and who miraculously survived her own ordeals.**

After marching 12 days through ice and snow, we came to Gross-Rosen. As I was – as we did 10 times a day – standing on roll-call, two 'new ones' came from the delousing, both from Birnbäum: Mrs Marenka Fuchs-Wassermann (who should now be back in Prague) and Doris. I was delighted by the charm and grace of this child, with the beautiful curly hair and the lovely eyes. Doris was completely naked, just wrapped in a blanket. She was freezing terribly and I pulled her towards me and thus started our journey together. Next day she received rags like all of us, called garments.

From there we were loaded into open cattle trucks or coal trucks and spent five days and nights standing up and completely drenched by streaming rain, travelling to Celle, near Weimar, where we were bombed on the open line by the Americans. Many people died but I remained – God bless – unharmed. Doris was hit by a splinter on the upper arm. It was a deep wound contaminated by dirt, and purulent. Doris did not make a sound or complain, and I did not realise then how much she must have suffered.

In Celle we were turned out and led on

foot towards the most horrible place – Belsen. At night we were ushered into block 198, where rotten straw and a beastly 'blockova' (kapo) was waiting for us. But there was a washroom and a latrine in the block. Doris and I were allowed to remain on the straw only this night before we were moved. I kneeled and begged the blockova to give Doris a place. The wound got very bad with lots of pus and I was terribly worried for her. I have cried all my tears in these days, and I could cry no more. Doris bore the terrible pain heroically. I did not leave her for a minute, being afraid to lose her.

After one week disaster happened: we had to move to another block (Kitchen 2), and I wish to report now only about Doris, to leave all the other – terribly horrible – details by the side. Thirteen weeks without water and food, we were covered by millions of lice. We both contracted typhoid – I also typhus. Doris got terribly weak, lots of pus oozed from the wound, and I begged her day and night to go to the sick bay. Doris did not want under any circumstances to separate from me, as we both knew that my days were numbered. My whole body was bloated and my dearly loved Doris wanted to be with me to the last minute.

Two days later my child collapsed during roll call. And before I could make a move, she was dragged to the sick bay. I tried in despair from that day to learn something about her, all in vain. I could not creep as far as the infirmary. When the Americans came (translator's note: Belsen was liberated by the British), I begged a soldier to look for Doris. He told me that there were only dead bodies in the infirmary. I did not believe it and tried to hide behind a mountain of dead bodies in order to watch until the infirmary was emptied. All in vain.

In Sweden, I tried through all available sources to trace Doris, without success. Doris and I had been united in our decision to move to Palestine, where I would adopt her as my own child. I had held her tight for many days and nights. I will reproach myself for the rest of my life that I did not go with her to the infirmary. Perhaps I could have done something for



Doris Schwarzkopf (aka Mimi)

her, at least be with her.

Dearest Mrs Schwarzkopf, it is so little what I can report, and these are just words, yet I was so happy with her. Never, as opposed to myself, was she beaten, she was so sweet and picture-like beautiful, that these beasts did not touch her. Whether she died of the wound or of typhus, I do not know, I should think it was the latter and that she hopefully fell asleep like the thousands in Belsen around us.



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# OBITUARY

## Peter FRAENKEL

Born: 7 December 1926, Breslau

Died: 12 December 2024, London



**Peter Fraenkel was a radio broadcaster who grew up in Germany but fled from the Nazis, with his family, to Northern Rhodesia (now Zambia) in 1939.**

He was born in Breslau, lower Silesia, a city that now sits on the Polish side of the border and has been renamed Wrocław. Peter's father, Hans, was a government tax lawyer, who was suspended from work on account of Jewish ancestry after the Nazis rose to power in 1933. Peter's mother, Margot, sought to get the family out of Germany but only after the burning of the synagogues during Kristallnacht did Hans acknowledge their need to depart urgently.

In Lusaka, Northern Rhodesia, Hans ran a dry-cleaning business. Margot commenced a successful dress retail shop. Peter – an only child – grew up anticipating that he would likely need to support his parents in their old age. He went to boarding school in Bulawayo (Southern Rhodesia, now Zimbabwe)

before attending the University of Witwatersrand (or 'Wits') in Johannesburg, South Africa. He subsequently migrated to the United Kingdom in 1957, working first for Reuters and then at the BBC, making his way up from Greek section to become Controller of European Services. In Liberia in 1958, he married my mother, Merran McCulloch, an anthropologist by training, who later worked in Citizens Advice centres in inner city London.

Throughout his life, Peter was an excellent storyteller, displaying a great wit and personal warmth. He was author of *Wayaleshi* (1959), which recounts his work setting up the first radio station broadcasting in African languages to African audiences. He later described those experiences as 'the most exhilarating period of my career'. At the BBC, his fondest memories were from his earlier days, when he recalled smuggling rebel songs out of Greece at the time of the Colonels, using reel-to-reel tape wound around his coat-buttons. Peter took responsibility for the BBC's broadcasts in the vernacular to eastern Europe at the height of the Cold War before his retirement at the age of 60 in 1986. He

was strongly committed to the ideals of independent and balanced journalism.

In 2005, he published *No Fixed Abode*, an autobiographical account of his transition from persecuted Jew to the privileged elite in a British colonial society. In 2024, he published *The Return of the Wolves*, a novel that focuses on the lives of four people who lived in the Auvergne in central France, which he and I proof-read and edited just one month before he died. Peter's other monographs include his translation of the memoirs of Bär Löbel Monasch, his great-great grandfather; *Susanne and the Nazis*, a story about beautiful hostess Susanne Kochman who managed to survive in Berlin high society through the 1930s despite her Jewish ancestry; and *The Consul and the Samurai*, an account of the murder of another relative, German Consul and trader Ludwig Haber, at the hands of a Samurai in Japan in 1874. 170 of his short stories are published on [www.peterfraenkel.co.uk](http://www.peterfraenkel.co.uk).

Apart from his annual summer travels to the Auvergne, Peter lived most of his retired years on the 27<sup>th</sup> floor of the Barbican in central London. Together with Merran, he travelled extensively during that period, visiting (among other places) India, Mali, Senegal, Cuba, Thailand, southern parts of the former U.S.S.R and many countries across Europe. Merran died in 2018 having spent her last two years in a nursing home. Most of those days, Peter drove the two miles distance on his disability scooter to visit her, even in bad weather. A year later, in 2019, and despite his advanced years, he traversed the globe to visit me and my family in New Zealand. He is survived by his sons, Jonathan (myself) and Mark, and his grandchildren Carl, Andrew and Ethan.

**Jonathan Fraenkel**

The young Peter chairing a studio discussion for radio



## 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
Monday 3 March	Lunchtime	Yorkshire	Michal Mocton
Monday 3 March	Lunchtime	Bristol	Ros Hart
Tuesday 4 March	Lunchtime	Enfield	Ros Hart
Monday 10 March	Afternoon	Pinner	Ros Hart
Wednesday 12 March	Morning	Golders Green	Ros Hart
Wednesday 12 March	Lunchtime	Purim Party Glasgow	Agnes Isaacs
Monday 17 March	Morning	Ramble	Karen Diamond
Monday 17 March	Lunchtime	York	Michal Mocton
Tuesday 18 March	Morning	Wembley	Karen Diamond
Tuesday 18 March	Lunchtime	Edinburgh	Agnes Isaacs
Wednesday 19 March	Lunchtime	North Lancs	Michal Mocton
Thursday 20 March	Lunchtime	Westcliff, Essex	Karen Diamond
Monday 24 March	Lunchtime	Leeds	Michal Mocton
Tuesday 25 March	Morning	Ealing	Ros Hart
Tuesday 25 March	Lunchtime	Liverpool	Michal Mocton
Tuesday 25 March	Evening	Barbican Concert <i>See advert on page 17</i>	Karen Diamond/ Ros Hart
Wednesday 26 March	All Day	Freemason's Hall Tour <i>See advert on page 13</i>	Karen Diamond/ Ros Hart
Thursday 27 March	Lunchtime	Norwich	Karen Diamond

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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.

Thursday 6 March @ 2pm	<b>Kinder Contact Project</b> <a href="https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/84826630489">https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/84826630489</a>	Meeting ID: 8482 663 0489
Monday 10 March @ 4pm	<b>Rob Angell – Târgu Mureş, the cyclist and discovering I was Jewish in my 30s</b> <a href="https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/83081456476">https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/83081456476</a>	Meeting ID: 830 8145 6476
Monday 17 March @ 4pm	<b>Rodge Glass, author – Writing Jewish Lives</b> <a href="https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/87103673038">https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/87103673038</a>	Meeting ID: 871 0367 3038
Wednesday 19 March @ 4pm	<b>Book Discussion (no speaker) – My Cousin Rachel by Daphne du Maurier</b> <a href="https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/83600288298">https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/83600288298</a>	Meeting ID: 836 0028 8298
Monday 24 March @ 4pm	<b>Colin Grant, journalist and author – The Mystery of the Missing Heart: how a Holy Land power struggle led to the tragic death of a Scottish Tourist</b> <a href="https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/87452386302">https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/87452386302</a>	Meeting ID: 874 5238 6302
Monday 31 March @ 4pm	<b>Joanne Aston – Righteous Among the Nations: Gentiles honoured by the State of Israel</b> <a href="https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/87667317385">https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/87667317385</a>	Meeting ID: 876 6731 7385

## 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	<b>Get Fit where you Sit</b> (seated yoga) <a href="https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/85246889439">https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/85246889439</a>	Meeting ID: 8524 688 9439
Every Tues @ 11.00am	<b>Shelley's Exercise class</b> <a href="https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/88466945622">https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/88466945622</a>	Meeting ID: 884 6694 5622

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