



AJR JOURNAL

The Association of Jewish Refugees

90+ years of Aufbau



The first edition of *Aufbau*, published in December 1934 (left) and the January 2025 issue of the *Aufbau*, now a glossy magazine

David Herman looks back at the history of a magazine aimed at Jewish refugees which has been almost continually published for over 90 years, even longer than our own AJR Journal.

Aufbau (German for 'building up, construction') was a weekly journal for German-speaking Jews in America and abroad. It was founded in December 1934 by the German-Jewish Club, which was later renamed the New World Club, and it was published in New York until April 2004. It was originally published as a monthly newsletter for the club, and included information and helpful facts for Jewish refugees.

From 1 September 1944 until 27 September 1946, *Aufbau* also printed numerous lists of Jewish Holocaust survivors located in Europe, as well as a few lists of victims. *Aufbau* became one of the leading anti-Nazi

publications of the German press in exile. It became an essential platform for refugees from Hitler and the displaced people and concentration camp survivors who arrived in the United States after the war.

Aufbau closed its New York offices in 2004, after twenty years, but the Swiss company JM Jüdische Medien AG acquired the paper and re-launched it as a monthly magazine a year later, in 2005. Since 2018 it has been published several times a year.

In March 2019 a definitive account of the history of the publication came in the form of Peter Schrag's book *The World* Continued on page 2

EVENTS & TRIPS

The next couple of months look very busy for the AJR. On 23 April we will be marking Yom HaShoah as part of the national commemorations. Please see p3 for more information.

We are also organising a special heritage trip to Amsterdam, exclusively for members of the third and fourth generations. It takes place from 16-18 May. Please email nextgens@ajr.org.uk if you are interested.

Finally we would really love to welcome you in person at our forthcoming VE Day celebration tea on 6 May. It promises to be a very special and fun event. See p3 and the enclosed leaflet for details.

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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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90+ years of *Aufbau* (cont.)

of *Aufbau: Hitler's Refugees in America* (University of Wisconsin Press). It describes how, towards the end of 1935, the focus of the *Aufbau* changed from primarily being about the club and community promotion, to depicting more of what was happening to Jewish people in Germany.

The *Aufbau* changed again in November 1938 in response to the annexation of the Sudetenland in Czechoslovakia. It increasingly began to report on the situation for those still in Europe as opposed to those who had immigrated to the United States.

In 1939 Manfred George (1893-1965), previously a leading journalist in Weimar Germany, took over as the new editor. He was born Manfred Cohn in Berlin and worked for a series of German publications including the *Berliner Morgenpost*, the *Berliner Volks-Zeitung* and *Tempo*. He left Germany after the Nazis came to power and managed to come to America in 1939. He remained in charge of the *Aufbau* until his death in 1965. *The New York Times* wrote in his obituary:

'Dr. George, a biographer and novelist, who was known as a liberal editor in Germany before the rise of Hitler, became editor of *Aufbau* in 1939, after arriving here as a penniless refugee. *Aufbau* was then a small monthly newsletter published by the German Jewish Club of New York, which is now the New World Club, Inc. Dr. George marshaled a distinguished advisory board, including Albert Einstein and Thomas Mann, and built the publication into an influential weekly with a circulation of 30,000.'

Together with his colleagues, mostly fellow Berliners who included Hans Steinitz and Kurt Grossmann, George transformed the thin monthly newsletter of the New World Club into a weekly paper with a global impact, reaching out from its offices on Broadway and 74th Street in the heart of New York's Upper West Side. For its readers, said George, the paper served as a 'refuge, information bureau, missing person's bureau, school, and news agency.' As a result, the circulation rose fivefold, from 8,000 to 40,000, in just five years.

Several factors contributed to its rise. Its readership grew as roughly 130,000 German and Austrian Jews immigrated to the United States between 1933 and 1945. Then, of

course, there was the outbreak of war and growing concern about the desperate plight of European Jewry. *Aufbau* also didn't hesitate to point out that stories being published by competitors like *The New York Times* had already appeared in *Aufbau* weeks before. According to George, *Aufbau* was central to the concerns and culture of its readers and helped them attain 'spiritual and material shelter against the storms of the time.'

Running between 30 to 40 pages, *Aufbau* covered a wide variety of news topics, from the plight of Jews in Germany to the current situation in Mandate Palestine, to which tens of thousands of German Jews had fled. It also printed book, concert, film and theatre reviews, advice columns, articles about U.S. immigration policy and tips for new immigrants on American English pronunciation. It celebrated American values and a photo of FDR was given pride of place in the paper's offices, but it also addressed darker issues, such as American antisemitism. *Aufbau* increasingly paid attention to events in Palestine. When Israel became an independent state, *Aufbau* allotted ten pages to its founding.

But perhaps the main reason for the importance of *Aufbau* was the number of famous refugee writers and intellectuals who wrote for it. Contributors included famous German-speaking refugees such as Hannah Arendt, Franz Werfel, Albert Einstein, Thomas Mann, Carl Zuckmayer, Lion Feuchtwanger and Stefan Zweig. Arendt wrote some of her famous essays in *Aufbau*, including her first in October 1941, five months after she arrived in New York. 'In it,' write the editors of *The Jewish Writings: Hannah Arendt* (2007), 'we hear for the first but certainly not the last time her outraged and indignant voice, here rejecting the demand that Jews ought to be grateful to those non-Jews ... who helped some to escape Nazi persecution.' 'Is our alternative,' she wrote, 'truly only between malevolent enemies and condescending friends? Are genuine allies nowhere to be found, allies who understand ... [t]hat in this war our freedom and honor [sic] hang in the balance...?'

Her short and accessible articles, her editors write, 'provide a unique Jewish perspective on the course of the Second World War... In them she calls for the mobilization of Jews



Unidentified couple seated on grass reading the *Aufbau*, undated. LBI Archives, Herbert Buky Collection, AR 5143.

in action, the formation of an international Jewish army to fight the Nazis under its own flag.' As she was writing these articles in *Aufbau*, Arendt learned of the destruction of European Jewry by the Nazis, which became perhaps her greatest subject in her later books during the 1950s and 1960s.

Altogether, Arendt wrote more than fifty articles for *Aufbau*. The editors of Arendt's *Jewish Writings* divide these articles into three categories: 'The Jewish War That Isn't Happening' (October 1941-November 1942); 'Between Silence and Speechlessness' (February 1943-March 1944); and 'The Political Organization of the Jewish People' (April 1944-April 1945) and these make up more than one hundred pages of the book. From March 1942 Arendt started writing a biweekly column for an insert, 'Jewish World', included in the *Aufbau*.

In an interview given to *Aufbau* in July 1940, the famous refugee writer Stefan Zweig asked, 'Freedom – haven't we all forgotten what this means? ... There is a deep sorrow in the fact that we had to lose that [freedom]. ... After the war we will be better off than before, because only then will we have properly recognised human values.' When FDR died, Thomas Mann wrote a moving elegy for *Aufbau*, and he actively supported political candidates who continued the New Deal legacy.

Toward the end of *Aufbau*'s tenure in New York, none of its final editors were refugees and one, Monika Ziegler, was not even Jewish. This was typical of the changing world of many Jewish publications, and indeed of Jewish communities, on both sides of the Atlantic. For over ninety years, *Aufbau* has reflected the Jewish world it is part of.

A MESSAGE TO AJR MEMBERS

FROM THE ORGANISERS OF THE YOM HASHOAH COMMEMORATIONS

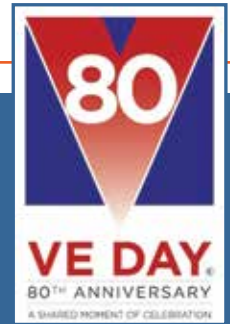
On Wednesday 23 April, as the sun sets on Victoria Tower Gardens, the proposed site of the new National Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre, thousands of people from across the country will gather for this historic milestone commemoration. But without you, it simply will not be the same.

For 80 years, the first generation has shouldered the weight of memory. They have told their stories – not for themselves but for us – so that we might understand, learn, and never forget. They have been the torchbearers of history, lighting the way for generations who might otherwise have never known the truth of what they endured.

But as we mark 80 years since the end of the Shoah, the time is approaching when this sacred responsibility must rightly pass to the next generations. This year's commemoration is an opportunity to witness the promise that their legacy will not only be remembered but cherished, honoured, and carried forward with confidence and pride.

You will be among thousands of British Jews, united in remembrance, standing shoulder to shoulder outside Parliament, a site of immense historical and symbolic significance.

Entrance by ticket only, from www.yomhashoah.org.uk



JOIN US FOR VE DAY

As you may have noticed from the leaflet enclosed, the AJR is planning a very special event on Tuesday 6 May, to celebrate the 80th anniversary of VE Day.

Taking place at the wonderful RAF Museum in north London, this guarantees to be a fun-filled afternoon, with themed entertainment and refreshments. So, dust off your dancing shoes and help us mark this momentous milestone in the history of our community. We are hoping to bring together all generations, on this special day which incorporates our annual tea, so please spread the word to family and friends.

We would like to invite you to bring along any memorabilia from that period to display on the day. For those of you who served in the various armed forces please wear your medals and caps or even uniform, if you wish.

Prior to the event we would be delighted if you would send in any photos you have of VE Day Commemorations and/ or family members in uniform. We will be displaying these on a screen throughout the event.

The cost of the tea is subsidised by AJR to enable everyone to attend. Any donation you are able to make, in addition to the charge of £25 per person, would be greatly appreciated.

You will find more information and booking details in the leaflet and we very much hope to see you and your family at this momentous event.



PREFER THIS IN AUDIO?

With over half of all UK adults now opting to listen to, rather than read, books and magazines, you may be interested to know that the AJR Journal is also available as an audio recording.

As soon as all the artwork for the coming month is finalised a proof is sent to volunteer David Collins, who edits the various articles to create enough content for approximately one hour of audio.

David, whose wife is a second generation Holocaust refugee whose father directly benefitted from the AJR's support, was headteacher of a Jewish school for 25 years. He also edits the audio versions of the *Jewish Chronicle* and the *Jewish News*.

David works with a small team of other volunteers, who each record their assigned articles. In the past, recording of the articles would take place in studios at Jewish Care in Golders Green. However this facility was closed down during Covid, which means recordings now take place in the homes of the volunteer readers.

None of the readers have been professionally trained so are required to do a voice test beforehand, to ensure that their pace is both slow and clear enough.

The recorded items are sent electronically to the Jewish Care offices in Golders Green, where Phillip Zsehranszky collates them to produce the master recording for each issue. Max Bianconi then oversees distribution, via memory sticks sent out by post, although we are currently looking into options for recipients to download the



The AJR Journal is available in an audio version

digital audio version using an emailed link.

The service is completely free for AJR members with a qualifying registered disability. For more information contact karin@ajr.org.uk.

JOSEPH PEREIRA
(ex-AJR caretaker over 22 years) is now available for DIY repairs and general maintenance.
No job too small, very reasonable rates.
Please telephone 07966 887 485.

THE COCKNEY YIDDISH PODCAST

You can now explore the vibrant Jewish popular culture of London's East End through a brand new podcast series.

Spanning seven episodes – six in English and one in Yiddish – the series brings to life newly unearthed songs, stories and voices from the 1880s to the 1950s, offering a fresh perspective on immigrant life in London.

Hosted by historians Professor Nadia Valman and Dr Vivi Lachs from Queen Mary University of London, the podcast delves into the fascinating intersections of Cockney and Yiddish cultures. Special guests, including Michael Rosen and Miriam Margolyes, and Klezmer music add personal experience.

Each episode explores a different aspect of East End Yiddish life, from music halls and street markets to political protests and family anecdotes.

Episode 1: Now You're Talking Cockney Yiddish – Find out how Jewish migrants fleeing poverty and pogroms brought Yiddish to London, where it blended

with Cockney, with linguist Professor Paul Kerswill. Archival songs and the story "A London Girl's Secret," narrated by Miriam Margolyes, bring this history to life.

Episode 2: Forverts! Politics and Protest – Discover East End radicalism including the Battle of Cable Street through stirring protest songs and historical insights, with Professor Ruth Livesey.

Episode 3: When You Go to a Yiddish Theatre – Dive into the vibrant world of Yiddish theatre, with David Schneider performing Shakespeare in Yiddish.

Episode 4: Oy! Who Are You Laughing At? – Explore the comedy of East End Yiddish life, including rhyming slang, family jokes, and comic songs, with special guest Michael Rosen.

Episode 5: Khanike oder Krismes – An all-Yiddish episode reflecting on the pressures of assimilation, with learners involved in the Yiddish-language revival, and featuring stories of families navigating Hanukkah and Christmas traditions.

Episode 6: Look Back in Shmaltz – Nostalgia takes centre stage with songs



and stories evoking memories of old Whitechapel and migrant experiences through food, with curator Aditi Anand.

Episode 7: The Mystery of Solomon Levy – Uncover the tale of the iconic "gramophone man" of Petticoat Lane Market, immortalised in song and film, with broadcaster Alan Dein.

The podcast is accompanied by a website, www.cockneyyiddish.org, where you can access Yiddish texts, translations, and additional resources to kickstart your own language-learning journeys.

Search for *The Cockney Yiddish Podcast* wherever you listen to your podcasts.

'My name is Fredy Hirsch. Please, be so kind as to remember my name....'

The idea to write a book about Fredy Hirsch first came to me in the autumn of 2017 when I was living and working in Prague, researching a book called *One Hundred Miracles about the Holocaust survivor and world-renowned musician Zuzana Ružičková*.

Aged ninety and tiny like a bird, this indomitable survivor of three camps cried only twice throughout our extensive interviews. First when she recounted how her father died in Terezín and secondly when she told me about Fredy Hirsch. On her desk she kept a photo of him beside pictures of her mother and father, referring to them as her three guiding lights.

'This beautiful man was like some sort of vision,' Zuzana said. 'I'd fainted not long after we arrived and, when I came to, he was leaning over me with a warm smile on his face. From that moment on, he became the most important person in my life.'

Every child survivor of Terezín or Auschwitz whom I have met since, or whose testimonies I have examined, had the same reaction. Their faces immediately lit up with affectionate memories of the kind, brave, young gay man who – impossibly – gave them some of the best days of their lives in the worst places imaginable.

Remarkably, Fredy was able to create a little piece of heaven in Auschwitz: children could escape the horrors to sing, dance, put on shows, even meditate to stave off their hunger and the constant fear of death. All those who survived him still missed him terribly decades on and swore that the physical and mental resilience he instilled in them remained with them their whole lives. It also saved them: when the December transport was due to be liquidated when their six months ran out, the children who survived did so because of Fredy.

Not only did Dr Josef Mengele, the so-



called 'Angel of Death', save almost ninety teenage boys (who became known as The Windermere Boys after being rehomed in the Lake District) because he'd come to know them personally in Block 31, but his decision to select younger people for slave labour also saved Zuzi – and her mother – by default.

Paraded naked before senior SS officers who were deciding who should be gassed and who sent for slave labour, Zuzana watched in horror as her middle-aged mother was sent to the left, which meant death. Panicking, when it was Zuzi's turn, she decided to tell them she was a gymnastics teacher rather than a pianist in the hope that might save her. Until she met Fredy, she'd never done any gymnastics in her life as she was too frail and spoiled but she hoped he had taught her enough.

'Show us some gymnastics, then,' she was told by a drunken SS officer. Taking a breath, Zuzi performed a perfect somersault. Impressed, they told her to go to the right. Lifting her chin in defiance, she stepped left. The Obersturmführer frowned and scolded, 'You silly goose, you're going to your death.' Zuzana tossed her head in defiance and replied, 'My father died in the ghetto. My mother is going to be killed. I have no reason to live.' He sighed and said her to her mother, 'You, old goat, go to the right with your daughter.' With that split-second decision, the fate of both was sealed. Zuzana lived

until the age of ninety after a career as one of the world's greatest baroque musicians and her mother had lived until eighty-seven.

After the war Fredy was either forgotten or denigrated by Communists and homophobes who accused him of being a coward and a collaborator, accusations that felt to the survivors like a terrible betrayal. No monuments were ever erected to their beloved Fredy until, after decades of obscurity, Zuzana and others had a memorial plaque to his memory installed in Terezín. Bearing his face carved in stone, the inscription reads, *Fredy Hirsch – gratefully, children of Terezín, Birkenau BIIb*. As Zuzana later told me, 'Fredy was the spirit of morality, an ideological figure. In giving us a spark of hope, he not only saved our lives but he also saved our souls.'

From the moment I first heard her speak his name and saw how deeply etched it was in her psyche, I was determined to give Fredy a voice. I hope I have done so in this book, fictionalising parts of his story to fill in the gaps and make it more accessible. It is my fervent wish that no one who reads this will ever forget the name of Fredy Hirsch.

Wendy Holden

The Teacher of Auschwitz is published by Zaffre Books, price £14.99
www.wendyholden.com

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.

A NEGLECTED GROUP

Thank you for David Herman's interesting lead article about non-Jews who fled to Britain from Nazi Europe (February).

As a descendant of such people, I feel I should emphasise that being a "non-Aryan Christian" was equally fatal. My maternal grandfather and step-grandmother were both deported to Theresienstadt in 1942, then to Auschwitz in the autumn of 1944. My grandfather was on the last transport. I think that they only survived as long as they did because one of my mother's many Jewish cousins was a senior member of the ghetto administration (his second wife was one of Benjamin Mummelstein's secretaries).

David might add to his list of emphatically non-Jewish ("Aryan Christian") refugees the first husband of one of my mother's favourite cousins. Ellen Kessel-Ruhemann (née Schulz) was married twice. Her second husband was the Berlin Jewish architect Fritz Ruhemann (twin brother of the art restorer Helmut Ruhemann). All I think may have been mentioned in long-ago editions of the *AJR Journal*.

But her first husband was a gentle neurosurgeon who may have escaped attention, Professor Franz Karl Kessel. They met at the University of Vienna and came to the UK together, where he got a job in Manchester. They only divorced because he was obliged to return to Germany after the war, in order to pursue his career. He was working as a surgeon at the Rechts der Isar Hospital in Munich in 1958.

Hence he recognised instantly one of the patients carried into their emergency department after the air disaster as a famous British football player. He, along with several other Munich hospital staff, were subsequently honoured with a civic visit to Manchester.

Cameron Woodrow, Birmingham

Charlotte Reynolds (March) states that her paternal grandmother was Jewish and her maternal grandmother was probably Jewish. If she was, this would make the writer Jewish according to Jewish law. However,

the fact that her father was Jewish would make her Jewish in the eyes of the world, as witnessed by the Hitler regime.

My son has a German friend, whose paternal grandfather was Jewish and my son's friend's father had a terrible time under Hitler.

I have always told my children that whether they were religious, secular, or did not think of themselves as being Jewish makes no difference to others.

I think it is important for all of us to remember that.

Hannah P. Gummers, Ulverston, Lancs.

GEORG EHRLICH

Your February edition contained a fascinating article about the artist and sculptor Georg Ehrlich. I have one of his works, to which a story is attached. One of my mother's cousins was married to the Viennese artist Josef Floch (1894-1977). Correspondence was exchanged during the war with an uncle in Switzerland but I had no idea what he looked like, so I tracked down Josef's surviving daughter in the USA



Cameron Woodrow's etching by Ehrlich, entitled *Lamenting Women* and dating from 1922, with a personalised manuscript dedication to his friend Josef Floch

a few years ago and asked for a photo.

Instead of a photo, I was given a pair of fine drawings by her father and several prints and etchings acquired by him from contemporaries, including Ehrlich.

The Floch family escaped via France and Spain, assisted by Varian Fry in Marseille. They travelled to the USA in 1941, via Bermuda, on the notorious SS *Navemar*. One of the other passengers on the ship was a 34 year old Hannah Arendt.
Cameron Woodrow, Birmingham

GROW YOUR OWN

In this era of the spiralling cost of food, growing vegetables has become more than just a hobby for many people. They realise the many health benefits of growing and eating truly fresh vegetables and enjoy spending time in the fresh air and the link with nature.

I have been involved in growing vegetables for over 30 years. My interest in the land developed when I was living in Israel on Kibbutz for 22 years. Since coming back to the UK I have taught, and since retiring worked voluntarily in a Jewish School in their vegetable garden. I also lead a Grow Your Own Group for the local U3A and welcome new members.

Despite my considerable experience, I find it's a continual learning curve. If anyone is interested locally in growing vegetables, I may be able to give some guidance. I am keen to encourage people to grow chemical-free vegetables in an environmentally friendly way.

Eric Hess, Hampstead Garden Suburb
arik.hess@outlook.com



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LOOKING FOR?

KIND RESCUED BY THE BOURNEVILLE QUAKERS

Rob Holland is hoping to trace descendants of any Kind who stayed during transit with his grandparents, the Artiss family, at 1 Beech Avenue, Bournville.

The Artiss family were part of the wonderful Quaker mission to which so many Jewish refugee children owed their lives. Being Quakers, Rob's grandparents always downplayed their contribution. Even their own children did not fully appreciate the significance, despite often having to share their bedrooms with refugee children in transit.

Rob's uncle David is still alive and Rob would love to be able to connect him with the families of any of these childhood roommates.

rob.holland@live.com.au

GEORGE SINGER

Linda Tichauer is looking for descendants of George Singer (1925-2004) who came on the Kindertransport, and his wife Elizabeth (d.2019). They had two sons (names unknown). George had a sister Marianne (b.1920) who died in Angola or Portugal. George was a third cousin of Gabrielle Falk, né Freund (1923-2019).

lydiatichauer@gmail.com

GOLDMANN FAMILY FROM LEIPZIG

The community in Leipzig is planning to place a memorial plaque at the former home of Rabbi Felix Goldmann, his wife Eva, and their three sons, Michael, Joel and Hans Goldmann, who all arrived in the UK around 1939. The community would very much like to contact any descendants of the family to invite them to the event.

annegretstein@t-online.de

KINDER FROM GERMANY TO THE US

Historian Ariana Neumann would love to hear from:

- Relatives of anyone who travelled on the SS Washington from Hamburg to NY on 15 June 1938.
- Anyone who knows, or is related to, the following child refugees:
 - Gunther Rosinius from Rottweil, Germany
 - Fedor Benjamin from Beuthen, Germany
 - Hans Benjamin from Beuthen, Germany
 - Hannelore Oppenheimer from Bad Mergetheim, Germany
 - Franz Putzrath from Austria
 - Leni Bareinski from Wuppertal, Germany
- Anyone related to any unaccompanied child refugee from Germany to the US, or brought to the US by the Jewish Children Aid Agency or who remembers Lotte Marcuse, Kaethe Rosenheim (coordinator of efforts to save children from Germany) or Ellis Pincoff (from NYC, who acted as chaperone).
- Anyone whose families lived in the area near Cologne/Dusseldorf in the '30s.
- Any relative, descendant or friend of Riga survivors who have information about, or recollection of, life in the ghetto.

ariana@ariananeumann.com

MORE POETRY PLEASE

The AJR's Poetry Please group has just reached a fantastic milestone – 100 sessions of sharing, reading, and discussing poetry!

Meeting on Zoom every other Wednesday at 11, we've built a welcoming community where members read their own work or suggest favourite poems, sparking spirited discussions. To prepare for each session, participants receive a poetry booklet, a teabag, and a biscuit – perfect companions for thoughtful conversation.

Over the years we've explored classic and contemporary poetry, discovering new voices and revisiting beloved verses. Whether you write poetry or simply enjoy listening, there's always space for you in our group.

Please contact naomi@ajr.org.uk.

We'd love to share a poem (and a cuppa) with you!

ART NOTES: by Gloria Tessler

Israel is noted for its creativity, but can art truly flourish in the wake of war? Many artists have given expression to the aftermath of the deadly Hamas attacks on October 7, 2023. Some work is charged with anguish; others almost with a hopeful naïveté.

The Jewish Museum in Munich launched a large commemorative installation based on the poem *Safe Room*, written immediately after the October 7 attacks by the Israeli poet, **Agi Mishol** and curated by Ulrike Heikaus in cooperation with Yuval Schneider.

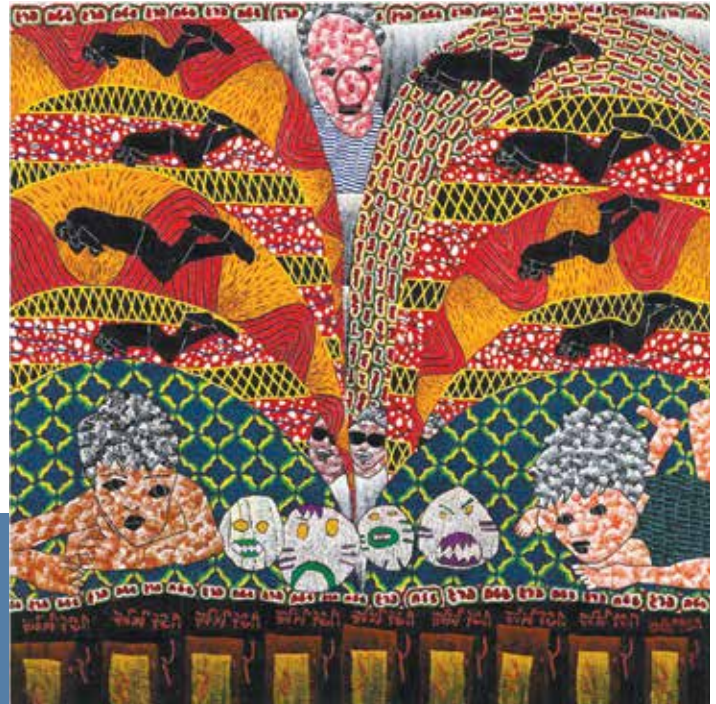
Israeli photojournalist **Ziv Koren** exhibited graphic images of people and places since the Hamas onslaught at the **Peres Center for Peace and Innovation** in Jaffa, which he claimed had become a kind of Yad Vashem. The exhibition was scheduled to tour 40 cities across Europe, the Americas, Singapore, Tokyo, New Delhi and Canberra.

War Decorations at the **Tel Aviv Museum of Art**, curated by Amit Shemma, showed works by **Tal Mazliach**, who was born and grew up in Kibbutz Kfar Aza. Her vibrant paintings in oil on wood or acrylic reflect her terror while hiding for 20 hours until she was rescued by the IDF. Unreal faces, arcs of fragmented shapes, birds and hands move incessantly throughout her work.

The founders of the Nova Music Festival staged a memorial exhibition in Tel Aviv which attracted large numbers of festival survivors who came to honour their lost loved ones. Created and directed by Reut Feingold who then took the exhibition to New York City, Los Angeles and Miami, it aimed to recreate a festival dedicated to peace and love so savagely cut short. It featured a healing room, burnt cars, the festival stage, posters of the hostages – and perhaps most poignant of all – a collection of shoes found and paired up after the attacks.

ANU, the Museum of the Jewish People, recorded what it describes as “the unique

Tal Mazliach,
Untitled (War
Decorations at
Tel Aviv Museum
of Art), 2024



creative burst that is well felt among Israelis since the war began”. Curators Carmit Blumensohn and Michal Houminer chose work by 25 artists, some who had died on October 7 or during the ensuing war, and others by survivors. The curators said: “The aftermath of the horrific attacksled many Israelis to rethink the way we interpret our history, art, and culture. The prevailing feeling is that even after the war ends, things will never be as they were and that the anger and profound grief will have a lasting effect on our lives.”

Pink was the world of **Inbar Hayman**, a graffiti artist and fourth year student at Haifa School of Design, who attended the Nova Music festival as a volunteer. She was taken hostage by Hamas and later murdered. For her, pink represented optimism, blossom, youth and love. Staring at her large installation painting in ANU’s lobby, you feel overwhelmed both by her murder and by the betrayal of her innocence.

The colourful, woven **Dreamcatchers**

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Jonathan Fishburn

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

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for more information

installation by **Raz Ben-Ami** from Kibbutz Be’eri is based on the Native American concept of filtering out bad dreams while allowing good dreams to pass through to the sleeper. Raz and her husband Ohad were kidnapped by terrorists who led her into Gaza, barefoot and still in her pyjamas. She was thankfully released in a hostage-prisoner swap.

Shay Azulay’s *Sea of Tears*, (oil on canvas) has a simple eloquence, featuring a figure crawling out of a blue sea beneath a brilliant orange sun. **Barn Owl** is a dramatic black and white photo-montage by **Sophie Berzon MacKie**, a survivor of the Kibbutz Be’eri massacre; it shows a dramatic barn owls photo-montage with a scattering of white flowers. She says: “Art articulates occurrences and provides us with images.”

Jewish Museum of Munich:

Juedisches-museum-munchen.de

www.peres-centre.org.en

Tal Mazliach: *War Decorations/Tel Aviv Museum of Art*

ANU online tour:

Sharonh@anumuseum.org.il

Annely Juda Fine Art

23 Dering Street
(off New Bond Street)
Tel: 020 7629 7578
Fax: 020 7491 2139

**CONTEMPORARY
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'NEW' ARCHIVES UNCOVER THE PAST

The team at World Jewish Relief (WJR) has recently discovered a treasure trove of documents which have helped to unveil some fascinating family histories. WJR's Chief Executive Paul Anticoni shares an example.

Mrs Ilse Cranmer was just twelve years old when, in 1939, amid the rise of Nazi persecution, she was sent to England as part of the Kindertransport rescue operation. "To my shame, I was not at all worried about travelling to England because I had been told that my new family had children and a dog," Mrs Cranmer recalled.

Now 98, this dark period of her life remains etched in her memory. As a young girl, Mrs Cranmer witnessed the Nazis marching through her hometown of Vienna and she vividly remembers the signs declaring 'Jews Out'. Her father, Hugo, promised they would reunite in America soon. This promise was tragically unfulfilled however, as both he and her mother, Theresia, perished in the Holocaust.

Mrs Cranmer arrived in England on 23 June 1939, unsure of what awaited her. "I had not one word of English," she said, yet her adoptive family welcomed her with open arms, providing not just shelter but also love and support. "They adopted me like a child," she recalled, describing how they enrolled her at Varndean School, where she quickly adapted and learned the language.

Recently, our team at World Jewish Relief had the profound honour of revealing something special to Mrs Cranmer and her family: her original case file from 1939, which contained information about her foster family, her schooling, and her work life up until her marriage. For decades, WJR's case files were lost and forgotten until a chance discovery revealed a treasure trove of



Ilse when she was younger



Ilse Cranmer with her daughter Penny Livermore

PHOTO COURTESY OF HANSHAM PAVILION

documents detailing the extraordinary help the charity provided to Jews fleeing Nazi persecution. Now, we are returning these documents to families, unveiling fascinating details of their histories.

In Mrs Cranmer's words, "I am extremely grateful to have received my case file from you so quickly, and from so many years ago. My daughter read it to me as I am partially sighted. Some of the things I knew about, and lots I did not. The files will be kept safely as historic family records, and I hope treasured for the years to come by my next generation."

Our archives contain the names of over 315,000 individuals, as well as records for the 65,000 refugees we supported in the 1930s and '40s. This includes many of the 10,000 children who arrived via the Kindertransport, and countless others who arrived on domestic visas or under guarantors.

To preserve these crucial historical documents and protect information relevant to Jewish genealogy, our original records were digitised in 2015. This effort was made possible with the support of the Association of Jewish Refugees and the Otto Schiff Housing Association and has since made it easier to reunite individuals with their Jewish ancestry records. Our archives hold remarkable

documents for many of those we helped, tracing the support provided by WJR in bringing refugees to Britain and assisting them in establishing their lives here. Sometimes, only a registration card remains, but they may also contain crucial papers such as case files, birth certificates, immigration papers, school records, letters, and records of financial support provided by WJR.

As Mrs Cranmer reflects on her past, she emphasises the importance of remembering history to ensure such tragedies never occur again. By sharing these narratives, we honour the memory of those who suffered and remind ourselves of the necessity of compassion and humanitarianism in our world today.

World Jewish Relief remains committed to preserving these stories and supporting refugees, ensuring that each voice is remembered, and every life honoured. If you believe we may hold records for your family, we encourage you to make a free enquiry through our website:

www.worldjewishrelief.org/archives.

We'd love to help you uncover their story.

Call **020 8736 1250** or email archives@worldjewishrelief.org

OPEN BRITAIN – Portraits



JJ Keith



Heinz' Austrian identity card



Osman in his juice shop in Shepherds Bush

JJ Keith is a London born and bred photographer and director whose father, Heinz Leopold Klapp, was a Jewish refugee who lost all his family during the Holocaust. JJ has recently started a photographic project celebrating migration, which has uncovered a deep rooted fascination with his own history.

Open Britain: Portrait of a Diverse Nation began when JJ took a picture of Osman at a juice stall in Shepherds Bush Market. Osman was born just outside Cairo, where he built a successful fruit and vegetable import and export business with over 250 employees. In 2013, after a disastrous experience with a British customer, he came to the UK to start legal proceedings. Costs escalated and Osman found himself sleeping on the streets. With the help of some homeless charities and the NHS Mental Health team, Osman found his feet on the streets of London once again. Over the next five years he established a thriving juice business and is now working towards achieving British citizenship.

JJ and was particularly touched by Osman's amazing story. He has now photographed 150 first generation migrants, including two Holocaust survivors, Ruth and Vera.

In June 2023, JJ – who was only 17 when his own father died – photographed a German psychoanalyst born just before WW2. During the interview she turned

the tables and opened JJ's eyes to the fact that his parents were not merely a convenient 'backstory' to the project but a subconscious deep-set inspiration and motivation. That moment was profoundly moving.

HEINZ'S STORY

JJ's father, Heinz Leopold Klapp, was born in 1919 in Vienna. He grew up an only child, very close to his mother, less so to his often-absent father. As war approached, the rumours of the Nazis' plans began to circulate and his London based Uncle suggested he and his mother Anna, should come to England. The gravity of the situation was not clear at that stage, Anna chose to stay.

As an intrepid 19-year-old, Heinz started selling black market cigarettes from Zagreb to raise funds for his own journey. He then travelled up through Italy before claiming refugee status at the British Embassy in Switzerland. He was taken to the Orkney Islands to join the British army where he was a radiologist and peeled potatoes. For his new papers he requested to keep the same initials...

...so Heinz Leopold Klapp became Henry Lancelot Keith.

His mother Anna was deported on transport 15 from Vienna to Riga on 26 January 1942 where she was murdered in the Shoah. His father Gustave, who had been trading paper with China, was murdered in Shanghai the same year, the details of which are not clear. Of his whole family only two cousins survived the Holocaust.

In post-war London he started with nothing. He put on parties and events before moving to fashion, retail and restaurants, notably a 'fashion mini-store' on the Kings Road, a small hotel in Hampstead and two restaurants in the West End. It was whilst working on these businesses that he saw the price of real estate soar and turned his hand to property.

Heinz died in 1988 at the age of 69 of a stroke having had an incredibly full and happy life, despite the unfathomably hard early years and having to live with extreme grief. He made a big contribution to 60s and 70s London. Not least playing a part in the arrival of the two-piece bikini to the UK.

VERA'S STORY

Vera Schaufeld MBE was born in Prague in 1930. Her father was a lawyer and her mother was studying to become a doctor, unusual for a Jewish lady at the time.

Vera's happy childhood was interrupted by the Nazis occupying Czechoslovakia in March 1936. She recalls sitting round the table with her family listening to the radio anxiously. The impact of antisemitism was immediate. Her father was arrested.

Her mother took her to the park after school and told her she was sending her to England on her own. Her parents were not allowed onto the platform as nine-year-old Vera left on the Kindertransport. It was the last time she would see them.

Vera arrived in May 1939 at a very

Portrait of a Diverse Nation



The young JJ with his father Heinz



Vera Schaufeld MBE



Ruth

noisy Liverpool Street Station to loud announcements and people speaking in a daunting foreign language. Something that would have a big impact on her life.

She went to stay with Mr and Mrs Fairs and their daughter Betty. They were very kind. Betty was instructed to split her pocket money with Vera, which she did 'without complaint'. Vera and Betty remained best friends for life.

Vera had planned to return to Czechoslovakia until she learnt that all her family had been murdered at Terezin and Tawniki camps.

After school she studied to be an English teacher. However, feeling completely disconnected from her Jewish roots, she went to work on a kibbutz for a year. Here, on the first night, she met her future husband, Avram. A survivor of various concentration camps, including Auschwitz Birkenau, he still had his identification tattoo.

They married in 1952 and returned to England. Vera enrolled on a linguistics course, courtesy of Brent Council, and became a recruiter and examiner of teachers for migrant children who were unable to speak English. At that time there were many Indian migrant refugees from Uganda and Kenya. With the help of EU funding she was able to place over 100 teachers to help children to assimilate. She continued to work in this field for many years, eventually receiving an MBE for her work. She was driven by her own daunting experience of arriving in a foreign land to a language she did not understand.

RUTH'S STORY

Ruth was born in Vienna in 1936. Her father was Jewish and her mother Catholic, so under Nuremberg Law she was considered Jewish. It was illegal for a Jew and a non-Jew to even have a relationship, let alone a child, and as they were also both very young, the pregnancy was hushed up. At six weeks old she was fostered by Herr Kummer, a public notary, and his wife.

In 1939 Herr Kummer realised that he would lose his job if he continued to house Ruth. The Jewish orphanage wouldn't accept her because her mother was not Jewish, and the state orphanage wouldn't accept her because her father was Jewish.

In London a man called Dr Breuer addressed a Law Society function on behalf of 'Aktion Gildmeester', an Austrian organisation which was looking for people willing to save Jewish children. Present was Walter Raeburn (a barrister), who went home and discussed it with his wife. They had four children at the time, and had previously lost another daughter, Anne. Perhaps feeling the urge to fill a gap in their family, they stepped up.

Dora Raeburn travelled on her own to Vienna to collect Ruth. Walter could not go as he was Jewish. Concerned about how quickly the political situation was worsening, rather than wait for papers, Walter was advised that Ruth could be smuggled into the country. This could happen at Dover, by handing her over a wall on the way to customs. Apparently, Ruth cried all the way from Vienna until the moment she was passed into Walter's

arms, and when they got in a taxi at the station in London, Ruth kept repeating 'Lainzer Strasse, Lainzer Strasse', her Vienna address.

The Raeburns formally adopted Ruth when she was twelve. Walter took her for a walk in the country and told her everything. Ruth's reaction was immense embarrassment, and being very comfortable in her big British family, she didn't address her history again until well into her seventies.

Ruth assumed her father had been deported to a camp and died. It wasn't until much more recently that she discovered that he had in fact survived, changed his name and ended up living in Canada. He died before she learned this.

Ruth studied law at LSE and practised as a solicitor until the birth of the first of her three children, when she became a mother and set up a Montessori-inspired nursery. She now lives in Brighton where she has an allotment adjoining a playground. Children love to visit and help with the gardening. Ruth also does yoga every day, and still manages a headstand now and again.

Having come over at the age of two and a half, Ruth is very British, but recently re-acquired her Austrian Citizenship, and is teaching herself German.

You can read many more interesting migrant stories on www.instagram.com/openbritain/ If you would like to be included in the project please do not hesitate to contact JJ directly, on 07973 146 911 or mail@jakeith.com.

JACK AND THE CEDAR BOYS

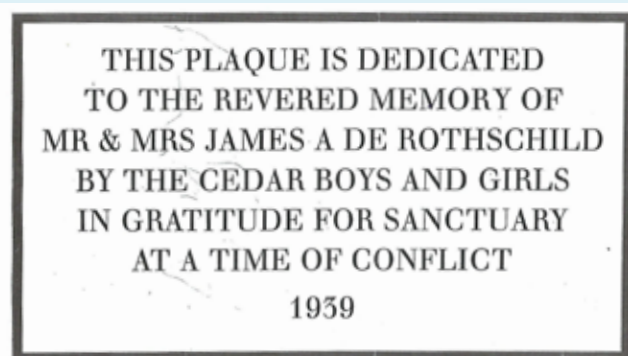
Jack Spier was one of 26 Jewish children brought to the UK from Nazi Germany by the Rothschild family. His daughter Margaret Brewer takes up the story.

My father Hans Joachim Spier (later known as Jack) was born on 9 January 1928 in the village of Treysa, in the district of Kassel, north east of Frankfurt. At the age of 10 he was expelled from the village school because of his Jewish faith. Passing the entrance exam for the Philanthropin school in Frankfurt, he had to board at the Flersheim-Sichel-Stiftung to attend school. The children were attacked daily on their way from the boarding house to school.

After Kristallnacht life became even more difficult and Lore and Helga Steinhardt, whose parents ran the boarding house, began asking for help. One of their letters was addressed to Lord Rothschild, who passed the letter to his cousin, Mr James de Rothschild of Waddesdon Manor in Buckinghamshire. Mr & Mrs James de Rothschild sent Col. Julian Leighton to Germany to ask the parents of the boys for permission to take the boys to England, and he also undertook all negotiation with the authorities. On 15 March 1939 Mr & Mrs Steinhardt, their two daughters, and 26 boys aged between 6 to 13, left via Kindertransport. They travelled by boat to Harwich, then onto Liverpool Street Station where a coach took them to Waddesdon where a house had been made ready for their arrival. The house was called The Cedars after two cedar trees that stood at the front of the property. Thereafter the children were known as the Cedar Boys.

On their first morning the boys were playing football on the lawn when a group of boys from the village joined them. After their game, the village boys said, "We'll see you tomorrow." It was an experience that the boys had not had for years. They could not believe that non-Jews wanted to see them tomorrow!

Soon afterwards English classes were introduced, enabling the boys to attend the village schools. If the boys were caught speaking German they forfeited a week's pocket money.



In 1993 a plaque was placed at Waddesdon in honour of the Rothchild family's rescue of the Cedar Boys

The boys helped with growing vegetables, collecting eggs from the hens, and going round the village collecting paper, old clothes, and metal for the war effort. When once asked why they were digging a big hole in the garden they said that they were digging for Australia.

My father's August 1941 school report read '*Another reliable boy and Prefect. He is very intelligent and industrious and has made good progress. He is punctual and his conduct is excellent.*'

My father left school at the age of 14 and took an apprenticeship with WD South, Baker and Confectioner, in Aylesbury. He later became a Master Baker, owning a group of three shops in Hastings and St Leonards.

In October 1966 my father worked with Sir Barns Wallace to produce an aero-dynamic custard pie to be catapulted from a wooded structure as part of the 900th anniversary celebrations for the Battle of Hastings.

Jack was a founder member of the Hastings and St Leonards Jewish Society, Buckets and Spades (a holiday home for disabled Jewish children), and became president of the Hastings and St Leonards Rotary Club as well as the Master Bakers Association. In 1949 he married Madge and they instilled a deep love of family in all their six daughters, and a sense of togetherness, gentleness and kindness.

Jack was a wonderfully happy man, seldom cross or irritable, who always had a smile on his face and a twinkle in his eye. Although he always looked forward in life, he never forgot his Jewish upbringing.

On my father's death in May 2007 his paperwork came to me as the family archivist. I have since discovered so much more about my family. My grandmother Rosa Spier suffocated in the cattle truck on the way to Sobibor and my grandfather Willi was murdered on arrival at Sobibor. My maternal great-grandparents escaped to Amsterdam but were then taken to Westerbork transit camp before being murdered in Auschwitz. My paternal great-grandfather was beaten so badly he died from his injuries and is buried in an unmarked grave in Treysa, whilst my blind paternal great-grandmother was murdered in Theresienstadt. My great Uncle David escaped to Marseille, France, interned in Camp des Milles, before travelling via Drancy concentration camp to his death in Auschwitz.



The 1993 plaque unveiling was covered by the Jewish Chronicle



Menu from the children's first full day at The Cedars, 17 March 1939

PLAYING THE POOLS

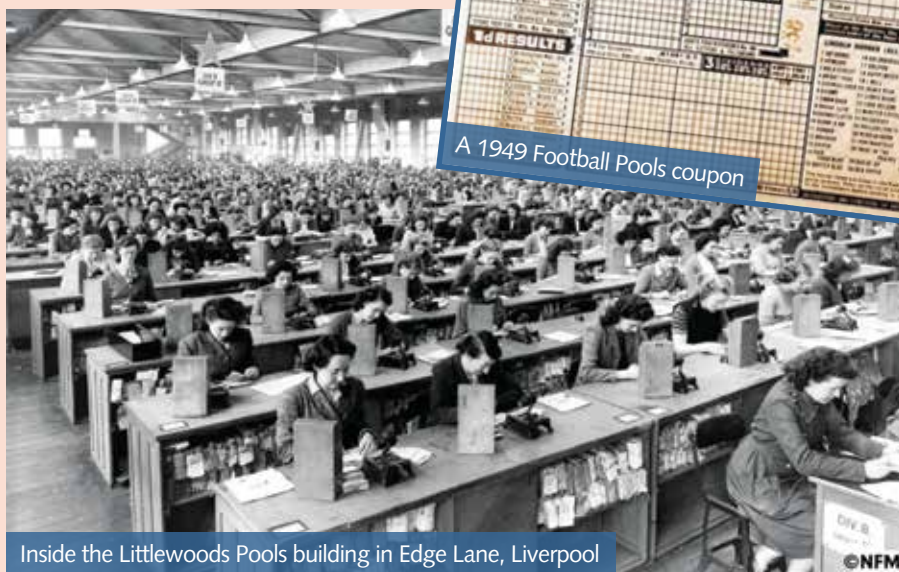
We are grateful to Simon James for sharing this highly entertaining report about a very popular pastime, which has a more sobering message.

Not all inspired acts in the face of difficulty are remembered. Some heroes are lost to history as they have preferred not to sing their own praises or feel diffident about their heroic acts. This is one such story that concerns four Jewish refugees who arrived from Germany around 1937 and settled in north west London. They were friends of my late father and they forbade him, or anyone else, to relay their story about their secret, which they nicknamed *The Spiel*. So I am honour bound not to reveal their names, even now. I make no apology therefore for not doing so, but this is their story.

When WW2 ended the four men were single and living together in West Hampstead in a tall yellow brick Victorian villa in Gascony Avenue, off West End Lane. They were all highly educated and cultured men, who had been academics in Germany in Berlin before being forced out of public office by the Nazis. Their area of learning was in mathematics and probability calculus.

All four struggled to gain skilled employment immediately after the war, instead scratching a living from rather menial jobs. One day one of the men, a former professor of mathematics from Berlin, came up with a somewhat improbable way to make a living, the football pools. They discussed at length the possibility of using their mathematical skills to systematically work out the odds on the pools, distributing the hoped for large winnings between them. It seemed like a very long shot indeed. But the four refugees thought they had the mathematical and statistical skills to make it work.

At that time players of the football pools entered their guesses on who would win or lose matches, who would draw, and all the permutations in between, on weekly coupons. Predictions needed to be submitted on pre-printed forms, and



Inside the Littlewoods Pools building in Edge Lane, Liverpool

either sent via Royal Mail, with payment by postal order, or given to pools collectors who gathered them in for the pools companies. Pools players had to check their own copy of the pools form they had submitted, and if they had won, make a claim in writing to the pools company.

The four quickly got to work. The living room on the ground floor of their house became strewn with football pool coupons, sporting newspapers and almanacs, and ledgers in which they attempted to calculate the odds of each game. Much strong coffee was drunk, and many cigarettes smoked, whilst their calculations were made. Their winnings were rather sparse at first, but the four mathematicians persevered, and they started to see some bigger payouts – measured in hundreds, thousands and even tens of thousands of pounds. The money mounted up quite quickly, and soon the four men were buying their own properties outright in desirable leafy areas of north west London. The men still met and worked at *The Spiel* – they were consistently winning.

As time wore on all four men married and, with their respective wives, started families. There was no shortage of cash. Their children were able to attend private schools and some were successful in obtaining Oxbridge places. They were in a word comfortable, very comfortable.

As the four assimilated into British society and the years marched on, they each

became uncomfortable with their unorthodox way of making a living. What they really craved was to be recognised as respectable academics or businessmen and pillars of society. And so it was that *The Spiel* came to an end, with each of the four securing excellent permanent positions in academia and industry.

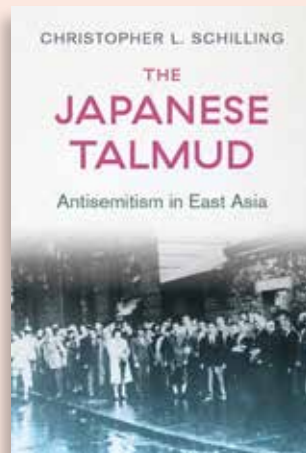
It must have been a with some sense of relief that they no longer had to camouflage their unorthodox former occupation. However the four remained very close and, my father told me, always looked back at their many years of weekly calculations in Gascony Avenue with great affection.

Their story has its humourous side, but is also an incredible tale of resilience and, dare I say it, skill and chutzpah. For me, it is intertwined with great sadness at these flights from persecution, the difficulty of integration in a foreign land, the loss of loved ones in the Holocaust, and the interruption of the careers of serious thinkers.

The son of one of the spielers was a very good friend of my family. He was like a son to my late father, and an uncle figure to me. He was a handsome man of huge charm, generosity and warmth. After graduating from Oxford he became a very successful stockbroker and insurance underwriter as well as chess and draughts champion. He never referred to *The Spiel*, not once. I miss him enormously.

JEWES NOT RECOGNISED IN CHINA

Christopher L. Schilling is a lawyer and political scientist who has held numerous international academic positions. His latest book, *The Japanese Talmud*, looks at antisemitism in east Asia. Christopher has kindly given us permission to share a fascinating extract with you.



Most of Chinese-Jewish history took place in three cities: Kaifeng in central China, with its Jewish community tracing back to the Middle Ages; the northern city of Harbin, which, especially after the Bolshevik revolution in Russia, hosted a Jewish expat community; and Shanghai, where the Yangtze River meets the Pacific Ocean and much of China's contact to the rest of the world unfolds. Shanghai's Jewish community has been established since the nineteenth century, which saw Sephardi Jews immigrating from India, Iraq, and Egypt.¹

During the Holocaust, China became a haven for Jews from Europe thanks to the help of people like Ho Feng-Shan, who served as Chinese consul-general in Vienna and saved thousands of Jews from the Nazis by issuing them visas. (In 2000, Yad Vashem recognized him as a 'Righteous Among the Nations'.) Yet, during the Japanese occupation of Shanghai, Jews suffered as the Japanese forced Jewish refugees – at first about 20,000 of them, and later all Jews but the Russians – to live in an area of approximately one square mile in the Hongkew district, and increasingly stepped up restrictions after that.² The area was a slum with about twice the population density of present-day Manhattan, where ten people lived in a single room and with near starvation, disastrous sanitation, scant employment,

rampant disease, and isolation.³ Two thousand of the Shanghai Ghetto's (formally known as the Restricted Sector for Stateless Refugees) Jewish inhabitants – roughly 10 per cent – died during the few years of the Ghetto's existence, due to the miserable living conditions created by the Japanese occupiers.

Xiao Xian, scholar at Yunnan University, wrote of the Chinese people's knowledge of Jews that "Although Jews lived in China for centuries, the Chinese people were long unaware that these people were part of a worldwide Diaspora. Not until the European powers forced open China's closed door in the second half of the nineteenth century did the Chinese begin to know about Jews in the outside world and to connect them with the small Jewish community inside China."⁴ Jews remained largely a minority, and if noticed at all they were called by various different names, one being Yi-ci-le-ye (Chosen People).⁵ Nowadays, the Jews of China officially do not exist as a legal group but are seen merely as "descendants".⁶ They are not among the fifty-six recognized (sic) minorities in China,⁷ while there are reports of them being under state pressure as a group.⁸ Judaism is also not one of the officially recognized (sic) religions in the People's Republic of China unlike Buddhism, Daoism, Islam, Catholicism, and Protestantism.

1 Owyang, Sharon, *Frommer's Shanghai*, Wiley Publishing, 2007, pp. 164–5.

2 Christopher L. Schilling, "Book Review: Under the Shadow of the Rising Sun: Japan and the Jews during the Holocaust Era by Meron Medzini", *Shofar: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Jewish Studies*, vol. 36 no. 3, 2018 p. 202.

3 *Ibid.*, p. 203.

4 Xiao Xian, "The Chinese People's Knowledge of Jews in the First Half of the Twentieth Century", Aharon Oppenheimer (ed.), *Sino-Judaica. Jews and Chinese in Historical Dialogue. An International Colloquium Nanjing (11–19 October 1996)*, Tel Aviv University, 1999, p. 64.

5 Gilya Gerda Schmidt, "Why the Chinese People Are Interested in Judaism, the Holocaust, and Israel", in Manfred Hutter (ed.), *Between Mumbai and Manila (Proceedings of the International Conference, Held at the Department of Comparative Religion of the University of Bonn. (May 30, to June 1, 2012)*, Bonn University Press, p. 259.

6 Xin Xu, "Chinese Policy Towards Kaifeng Jews", *East Asia*, vol. 23, no. 2, 2006, p. 98.

7 *Ibid.*, p. 93.

8 Chris Buckley, "Chinese Jews of Ancient Lineage Huddle Under Pressure", *New York Times*, 24 September 2016, <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/09/25/world/asia/china-kaifeng-jews.html>.

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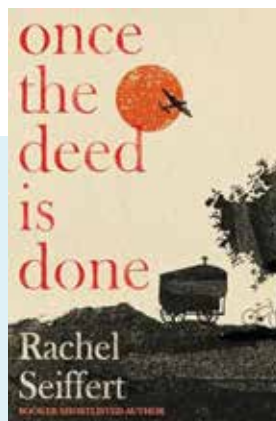
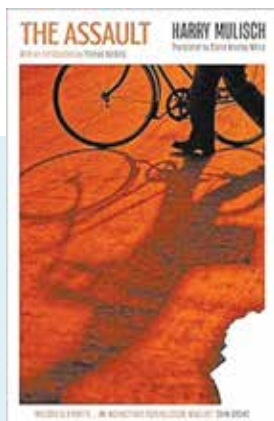
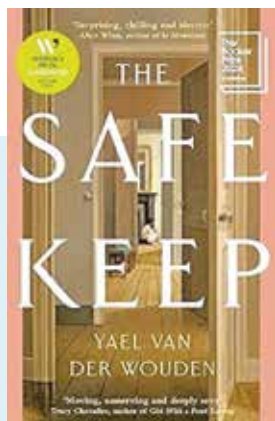


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NEW FICTION ON REFUGEES

The last few weeks have seen a wave of excellent new novels about occupied Europe and Jewish refugees. What is perhaps most striking about these books is how little there is in them about the Holocaust.

Some of the best of the novels have been about occupied Europe: Belgium (*33 Place Brugmann* by Alice Austen), the Netherlands (*The Safe Keep* by Yael van der Wouden and *The Assault* by Harry Mulisch, originally published in 1982 and republished this Spring) and Germany (*Once the deed is done* by Rachel Seiffert). They are all about ordinary people during or soon after wartime and the choices they make or can't make.

33 Place Brugmann (Bloomsbury) is Alice Austen's first novel. Interestingly, Austen actually lived at this address when she spent some time in Brussels a while back and got to know some of the older residents. The book is set in an apartment building in the centre of Brussels and moves between the stories of the residents. It starts on the eve of the Second World War and follows their lives through the war. They are a fascinating mix: a Jewish art dealer and a retired colonel, an architect, a notary and a former café owner, now an unpleasant gossip, and Masha, a Russian refugee with a heart of gold who came to Belgium in 1924, on a Nansen Passport, and now works as a seamstress.

The novel begins with a mystery: 'The

Raphaels leave in the middle of the night, and they leave everything behind... In their wake, rumors swirl through the building, The Raphaels haven't left *everything*. They took their silver. And the paintings? The paintings simply disappear.' We later find out that the Raphaels have escaped from Belgium. They have become Jewish refugees and have settled in Britain. What will become of the parents and their two grown up children? Their son is now a philosophy student at Cambridge, studying with Wittgenstein and their daughter wants to be a nurse. Then there is Professor Weiss, who teaches History of Art and is going to go into hiding. Masha, too, 'has seemingly gone away for good.' What will become of them all?

33 Place Brugmann is a gripping thriller. It is never clear who you can trust or whether her characters are what they seem. Who will escape and who will survive? And will love triumph over evil?

Rachel Seiffert became famous for *The Dark Room* (2001), which told the story of three ordinary Germans. Her new novel, *Once the deed is done* (Virago), is also mainly about ordinary Germans, but also foreign workers from Poland and Ukraine and British soldiers trying to restore order in post-war Germany and moves between their stories. Some of the Germans are collaborators. Others are a curious mix: teachers, builders, bakers and children.

Then there is Ruth Novak and her family, refugees who have escaped to north London. Ruth looks at her father, 'smiling at how very English his life had turned out – his two children most of all.' He hosts regular Friday-night gatherings: '*His émigré evenings*. This is what Ruth and Daniel

called them, when they were among themselves... Most of them medical men like her father: they were Frankfurt surgeons, Berlin internists. Warsaw students – all of them exiles. Stripped of their savings, their reputations; torn from friends and family, left to throw themselves on London mercy.'

Ruth then finds a job, working for the Red Cross in occupied Germany, helping foreign labourers and children, who hope to become refugees and dread being repatriated, which means living under Stalin's terrible rule.

But what is most striking about all these novels is how little there is about refugees. The two Dutch books don't feature them at all. And how little there is about the Holocaust, except *The Safe Keep*. These are novels about the dilemmas and moral choices of Occupation. There are occasional references to 'camps', but these are not named and there is little that is said about them. This isn't necessarily a criticism. They set out to tell the stories of ordinary people in ordinary situations. This is not east Europe or the Soviet Union after all. But as we have seen in Ruth Franklin's terrific new book, *The Many Lives of Anne Frank* (Yale University Press) (see my review in the March issue, p1-2), many Jewish refugees who fled to the Netherlands, like the Franks, ended up in Auschwitz and Bergen-Belsen. Others, like the Raphaels and the Novaks, made it to Britain, where they built good enough lives, especially their children. Unlike the Franks, they were the lucky ones.

David Herman

REVIEWS

THE LAST TRANSPORT: THE HOLOCAUST IN THE EASTERN AEGEAN

Anthony McElligott
Bloomsbury Academic

Before the war Rhodes had a thriving Jewish community until the final gasps of the conflict when all were tragically sent to Auschwitz on the last transport to leave Greece. This book is about families who perished in the Holocaust and some individuals who survived due to good fortune. In July 1944, 1755 Jews from the Dodecanese islands of Rhodes and Kos who, until then, had lived mainly peacefully with the local population, were deported. The Nazi move on grounds of ideology came as the Germans were losing the war and it took everyone by surprise.

Author and historian Anthony McElligott tells of the brutal ending of the Jewish community. He immersed himself in old records and archives during the past decade, including the illuminating Carabinieri (police) records and survivor accounts. The book is all encompassing, including the vagaries of local life and attitudes of the island's rulers.

Rhodes had been under Italian control since before the First World War and the regime had a largely benevolent attitude towards Jews. But after the country's withdrawal from the war and the German occupation, the remaining obstacles to Jewish annihilation were finally removed.

The Ladino-speaking Jews lived largely in the *Juderia* inside the walled city. They comprised close families, often with the different generations at the same address, and included merchants and those involved in business and commerce. A vivid picture is painted of a community where religious festivals were observed and people enjoyed a rich social life. Emigration, however, intensified dramatically in the 1930s, especially if there were family connections abroad. The situation was complex and this detailed and even-handed narrative explores inconsistencies in attitudes. Although racial laws took their toll, most survivors remembered benign treatment.

But in July 1944 Jews were told to assemble at the Aeronautica (military) barracks, with belongings, for a 10-day journey. Valuables were confiscated and everyone was detained for three days. Some 55 escaped in the nick of time by obtaining Turkish papers although the majority had only tenuous connections with that country. Then the deportees – who had no idea where they were going – faced a gruelling sea voyage to the Greek port of Piraeus. Here they faced cruelty and extreme violence at the notorious Haidari camp. They then suffered a terrible journey in cattle trucks to Auschwitz, reached three weeks after leaving home. Shockingly, those unfit to work were gassed on arrival after fairly random selections. Others were killed later or died of overwork, disease and starvation.

By the time of Allied liberation many survivors had been transferred to different work camps or faced death marches. Only about 266 survived, including those repatriated to Turkey. A small group who escaped from Kos also lived. Recovery was difficult and survivors ended up in Displaced Persons Camps before either emigrating, if they could, or trying to go back home.

But in Rhodes life had changed and goods had been stolen from properties, often in the face of local hunger and poverty at the bitter end of the conflict. New people had moved into homes previously owned by Jews who now had to take Greek citizenship. Again, the picture is varied but the old life in the *Juderia* which was remembered with great affection was gone forever.

Janet Weston

WHO WILL RESCUE US?

Laura Hobson Faure
Yale University Press

Why did the U.S. Kindertransport scheme fail? While Britain's lifesaving operation rescued nearly ten thousand Jewish children from the Nazis, the United States took around one thousand unaccompanied children, of whom some three hundred came from France. They were mainly from German, but also from Austrian, Czechoslovakian and Polish families. And that modest number was

despite frantic efforts by a myriad of humanitarian organisations on both sides of the Atlantic.

In her new book, *Who Will Rescue Us?* Laura Hobson Faure, professor of modern history at the Sorbonne, seeks to unravel the complexities behind what she calls 'this dismal number'. She published a related work, *The 'Jewish Marshall Plan'*, a few years ago.

Faure is not the first to tell the story of the unaccompanied Jewish children who fled the Nazis for France and the United States, and she acknowledges that she has built on previous scholarship. But she has found new archival sources such as children's diaries and letters, as well as survivors' harrowing testimonies. The result is a convincingly detailed account of the many factors, from widespread antisemitism to bureaucratic infighting, that shaped this tragedy.

Faure focuses on the work of both Jewish and non-Jewish philanthropic bodies, and particularly the political role – not just 'carers' – of the dedicated women such as baroness Germaine de Rothschild, as they tried to rescue the children. Besides the specifically Jewish 'Joint' – the American Joint Distribution Committee – and the French Oeuvre de Secours aux Enfants, major players included the Quakers and the U.S. Committee for the Care of European Children (USCOM), both non-Jewish. That's a pointer to one of the problems: there were too many organisations – Faure lists 23 – and inevitably too many conflicting agendas.

A key difference here was that the non-Jewish groups also wanted, reasonably, to help non-Jewish children in danger. Besides non-Jewish Germans opposed to Hitler, there were those fleeing General Francisco Franco's nationalist armies during the Spanish civil war, and later the British children threatened by the Nazi Blitz. For years, the perception prevailed that Jewish children were not more at risk than the others.

No less important were the rivalries in the U.S. government: till 1940 the immigration and naturalisation service had been part of the pro-refugee Department of Labor. But it was the less liberal State Department that controlled

the consuls who issued the entry visas and who demanded the financial affidavits to prove refugees would not be a public charge. And, lurking in the background, were the hostile forces of U.S. antisemitism and Washington's pro-'WASP' immigration quotas.

As a result, initiatives in Congress following Kristallnacht in November 1938 were never even put to the vote; they had aimed at letting in twenty thousand 'German refugee children' (no mention of 'Jewish').

After Hitler overran France in June 1940, a mixed group of 29 children left that December, and a further five small groups – involving around three hundred children in all – reached the U.S. in 1941-42. Some of the rescued children had been in the unoccupied zone, while others were freed from internment. By the summer of 1942, the Vichy regime had of course begun to round up and deport Jews to the East.

With his wife Eleanor already helping USCOM, President Franklin Roosevelt now authorised the issuance of five thousand entry visas for unaccompanied children. But Vichy officials said they would release 500 children, and then only if there was no publicity.

Sadly, by then (November 1942) it was too late. Doctors, nurses and relief workers sailed from the U.S. for Europe, to help the children's evacuation. But the Allies had invaded North Africa and Hitler already occupied Vichy France. U.S. citizens still residing there soon found themselves interned, and while this was often in relative comfort in the empty hotels of Vittel, the thermal resort in the Vosges Mountains, the abandoned Jewish children found themselves on the way to 'resettlement in the east'.

Martin Mauthner

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'Signora Auschwitz'

Edith Bruck is a Hungarian-born writer, director and Holocaust survivor. She has lived most of her life in Italy and writes in Italian.

This July Edith will be a finalist in the Strega European Prize (*Premio Strega Europeo*) an annual literary award given to a novel in Italian translation by a European author who has received national recognition in their home country). In her books about the Holocaust, she likened the experience to being "eternally pregnant with a monster she cannot abort". She has promised to bear witness until she no longer can.

Originally named Edit, she was born in a village called Tiszakarad in Hungary in 1931.

When she was 13 years old, she and her family were deported: her mother and father were murdered in Auschwitz and her brother in Dachau. Miraculously, Edit and her sister survived Auschwitz, Dachau, Bergen-Belsen; they were close to death when they were liberated in April 1945, both of them looking like skeletons.

From the 1950s onward she no longer wrote in Hungarian, only in Italian. Her new language provided her with a sort of shield when talking about her sufferings.

Her nickname, Signora Auschwitz,



Edith Bruck

originated from students with whom she worked, who knew nothing about the Holocaust. She has promised to tell the story of the Holocaust until she no longer can.

Edit (who adopted the name Edith after the war) lived in various countries, including three years in Israel until, in 1954, she settled in Rome. Here several of the books written by her (all of them about her life and the Holocaust) were published and translated into several languages. In the 1970s she became involved in theatre and in directing films. She is the winner of several literary prizes and has also had the Cavalierato di Gran Croce conferred on her by the president of Italy. If further proof of her importance were needed, she even received the visit of Pope Francis.

She believes it is her duty to write about her experiences and this helps her to deal with the horrors of the life she had before she was finally liberated.

Janos Fisher



KINDER EVENTS

LUNCH

THURSDAY 15 MAY at 12pm

Calling all Kinder and their descendants

This informal lunch will be held at North London Venue, details to be advised upon booking, and will be an opportunity for Kinder from all generations to socialise and discuss plans and events for the coming year.



susan@ajr.org.uk

OBITUARIES

Rita KNOPF (née Hahn)

Born: 21 September 1931, Vienna

Died: 3 January 2025, London



Rita Knopf left behind a legacy of resilience, determination, and a contribution to Holocaust education.

EARLY LIFE AND PERSECUTION

Rita's early life in Vienna was up ended by the rise of Nazism and the Anschluss in 1938. In 1939 her family was forced to move apartments because their home was deemed "too big for Jews". Her father, Robert, a dentist, left for Holland en route to England in 1939, with plans for the rest of the family to follow. However, the outbreak of WW2 and tightening travel restrictions prevented their reunion.

In 1940, Rita and her mother, Irene, were forced to move again to a single room in Vienna's Im Werd district, where authorities concentrated Jewish residents. Then, in 1942, Rita and Irene were deported to Terezin. Rita was 11 years old.

LIFE IN TEREZIN

Rita spent three years in Terezin, enduring hunger and illness, including jaundice. Despite the harsh conditions, Rita and her mother maintained contact, with Rita visiting her mother in her barrack about three times a week. Her mother always managed to find her a treat, such as a piece of chocolate.

Rita received medical care from Jewish doctors and dentists within the camp. She had a lung condition stemming from a bout of double whooping cough in Vienna, which entitled her to an extra ration, such as some additional bread.

The inhabitants of the camp tried to maintain some semblance of normalcy, with concerts and cabaret performances organized by Jewish artists. As the war neared its end, Terezin was threatened with conversion into an extermination camp, but this never materialized.

LIBERATION AND POST-WAR LIFE

Rita and her mother were liberated from Terezin by Russian forces. After liberation, Rita and her mother were quarantined due to a typhoid outbreak in the camp. Following the war, they spent time in Deggendorf displaced persons (DP) camp, where Rita participated in sports and school.

Rita knew there was a lot of growing up to catch up on. She took walks with other displaced kids where they would discuss their future lives. A highlight was when she and her mother took roles in a camp production of *Im weißen Rössl* (*The White Horse Inn*) – a very popular musical comedy operetta in the early twentieth century.

In Deggendorf, with a Polish family, Rita also experienced her first seder night. She called this a turning point in her Jewish and her Zionist lives.

Rita and her mother eventually moved to England. Rita's father had already fled to England in 1939 but Robert Hahn never lived with his wife and daughter again, instead remarrying. For decades, Rita was unable to speak about her experiences during the Holocaust.

LATER LIFE AND LEGACY

In 1950 Rita met Kurt Knopf at an Association of Jewish Ex-servicemen dance. Two years later they were married. They spent two years in New York trying to make a life in America, but eventually decided to return to the UK. In 1967 they settled in Edgware and started a family.

In later years Rita became dedicated to sharing her story with younger generations. She spoke at schools in Austria about her experiences during the Holocaust as well as recording video interviews for University College London (1993) and the University of Southern California Shoah Foundation (1996). In a 1996 video Kurt Knopf says that, despite her early life experiences, Rita was

always focused on the future and moving forward.

In 2019, Rita visited Vienna and insisted on showing her family the Karmelitermarkt, the square where she had lived during the war, as a testament to her survival. She said that she wanted to show Vienna that she was still going.

In her final ten years, after the death of Kurt, Rita lived in their flat in Edgware. Despite increasing frailty, she enjoyed shopping and socialising.

Rita Knopf is survived by her two sons Steven and Laurence, their partners Harriet and Emma and by her five grandchildren Cyrus, Lorelei, Oscar, Jaxon and Casper.

A more personal eulogy can be found at hesped.org/person/rita-marion-knopf.

Steven Knopf



SCOTTISH GATHERING
WEDNESDAY 21 MAY 2025

Please join us for our Annual Scottish Regional Get-together in Glasgow.

The event will include discussion groups, a delicious lunch, and the chance to socialise with friends old and new. Plus of course a keynote speaker, details soon to be announced.

 agnes@ajr.org.uk

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Rosemarie LOWENBERG

Born: 21 January 1935, Luckau, Germany

Died: 8 January 2025, London



Rosemarie Lowenberg née Lessing was born in Luckau, a beautiful small town in the Spree Wald, Brandenburg, Eastern Germany, about 150 km southeast of Berlin.

Her family were Christian *Junkers* (landed gentry) who were deeply involved in publishing and the arts. The family ran for many years *The Vossische Zeitung*, which was generally regarded as Germany's national newspaper of record. Rosemarie was four when her father was called up for the second time for military service, placed into the Wehrmacht, as a major.

A life of aristocratic privilege came to an end with the war, and ideas that my mother did not share thrust upon her. Aged just five, she was forced to march to the tune of Hitler's League of German Girls (*Bund Deutscher Mädel*). When the Russians came in 1945 life was even harder. Dieter, her older brother, just 14 became their mother's right hand. He worked on the estate, collected food for and protected them, in particular their younger brother, Gunter, who was a baby at the time and handicapped.

But he could not protect them from everything.

On 11 May 1946 her mother decided to escape East Germany with her three children to hopefully meet up with their father in West Germany. As my mother said to me, 'Our playtime swimming games were put to good use when fully clothed, all four of us swam across the river Elba, thirty minutes which seemed an eternity. Throughout Dieter swam next to me, with our mother carrying Gunter in front. We got to the other side and found refuge in the American camp in Helmstedt. Six weeks later we were reunited with our father who had gone through de-Nazification. We had

nothing but we had each other.'

Life after was a series of deprivations, living in coal bunkers, searching for scraps of food, my grandfather sweeping streets, being called *Kartoffelkäfer* (potato beetles: a term the West Germans called East Germans who had escaped to the west), barely surviving, pretty much starving, but happy and grateful to be alive.

Not surprisingly my mother's formal education was, for many years, non-existent, but she eventually enrolled at Giessen university to learn about chicken sexing and battery farming. Germany needed food and chicken battery farming was in its infancy. She lived and worked in Zurich and Paris before moving to foggy London in 1959 where she met a tall, dashing and truly kind man called Ernst Josef Loewenberg at a dance hall in Cricklewood. Twelve years her senior, she absolutely adored him and vice versa. Six months later they were married and five years on I came screaming into the world. How could a German Jew who had had 150 members of his immediate family brutally murdered in the Holocaust, whose mother had tried to kill herself a number of times as a consequence, who had had to be placed into the *Juedisches Waisenhaus Pankow* (Jewish orphanage) in Berlin when his parents could no longer work, who literally escaped Berlin with the help of the ORT only three days before the outbreak of war and who had worked for the American army after the war as a translator for the Nuremberg trials, marry a German Christian whose father had been a major in the Wehrmacht and a member of the Nazi party? The answer is easy: both my father and my mother did not look at each other as someone belonging to a group that was different to themselves, somebody who was 'other' but instead saw each other as human beings, appreciating each other's actions rather than words. In the process of doing so they realised

they had far more in common than they could ever have guessed when they first decided to dance with each other. A shared language, culture, food, love of literature, art, music, travel, even grandparents who had been friends with each other at school in Leipzig, quite true, and of course war. Both my parents were children of war and its aftermath. As my father always maintained, where he had suffered mentally, my mother had suffered physically. They had both been refugees, happy to make England their home.

Rosemarie worked at Wembley High School first in the science department as a science technician and then ran the audio-visual department. Actively involved in Holocaust education she arranged every year for Holocaust survivors to speak to the pupils. Rosemarie also taught her husband and disabled children to swim.

Monica Lowenberg



Being Second Generation

AN ONLINE WORKSHOP

11am on SUNDAY 27 APRIL

Children of Holocaust survivors and refugees will explore together how it has affected their lives. The workshop will be led by Gaby Glassman, a psychologist and psychotherapist who has facilitated second generation and intergenerational groups since the 1980s.

Please note that this session is exclusively for 2G and there is a cost of £10. Although this is an **ONLINE ONLY EVENT**, numbers will be restricted to enable full participation from all attendees.

www.jw3.org.uk/whats-on/being-second-generation-11

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
Wednesday 2 April	Lunchtime	Manchester, with guest speaker Andy Burnham, Mayor of Greater Manchester	Michal Mocton
Wednesday 2 April	Lunchtime	Stanmore / Edgware – a private tour of and lunch at Bentley Priory	Ros Hart
Thursday 3 April	Afternoon	Pinner	Karen Diamond
Thursday 3 April	Lunchtime	Edgware	Ros Hart
Sunday 6 April	Afternoon	Edinburgh, with bestselling author Larry Tye	Agnes Isaacs
Monday 7 April	Lunchtime	Bournemouth	Ros Hart
Tuesday 8 April	Lunchtime	Nottingham	Karen Diamond
Wednesday 9 April	Morning	Glasgow	Agnes Isaacs
Wednesday 9 April	Lunchtime	Muswell Hill	Ros Hart
Thursday 10 April	Morning	South London	Karen Diamond
Tuesday 22 April	Lunchtime	Kingston, Surrey	Ros Hart
Wednesday 23 April	Afternoon	Bromley	Ros Hart
Thursday 24 April	Lunchtime	Birmingham	Karen Diamond

CO-ORDINATOR DETAILS

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ZOOMS AHEAD

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

Tuesday 1 April @ 4pm	Judy Karbritz – Frankie Vaughan, aka Mr Moonlight https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/87469910819	Meeting ID: 8746 991 0819
Wednesday 2 April @ 4pm	Dan Fox – A general and personal history of Jewish service in HM Armed Forces https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/83612445789	Meeting ID: 836 1244 5789
Monday 7 April @ 4pm	Quiz Time https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/89745383926	Meeting ID: 897 4538 3926
Tuesday 8 April @ 4pm	David Allen – The Amazing Mr Charles Dickens https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/82706945119	Meeting ID: 8270 694 5119
Wednesday 23 April	Book Discussion (no speaker) – Books by author Graham Greene https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/89788984753	Meeting ID: 8978 898 4753
Monday 28 April @ 4pm	Margaret Mills – The Arts and Crafts Movement https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/87519888317	Meeting ID: 875 1988 8317

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



AJ RAMBLERS CLUB



Our next walk will take place in May

 karendiamond@ajr.org.uk



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