



# AJR JOURNAL

The Association of Jewish Refugees

## Leading the paperback revolution

### WITH GRATEFUL THANKS

The history of the AJR is forever linked with the armed service of many Jewish refugees, stretching back to our very founding in the summer of 1941 after the reversal of the government's disastrous policy of internment.

Having been dis-interned, many thousands of those who found refuge in Britain just two or three years earlier went on to serve in the Pioneer Corps and some in the Special Operations Executive. Refugees also served at Bletchley cracking and deciphering Enigma, and some as Secret Listeners, eavesdropping on conversations of German POWs – all of which helped shorten the war.

See pages 10-13 for reports and photographs remembering those who who fought so that we, today, can live in freedom.



Jewish refugees Helen Arendt, Arthur Koestler and Stefan Zweig were among the first authors to be published by Penguin, while Romek Marber designed the Penguin Crime series and Walter Trier designed the jacket for *Emil and the Detectives*.

**On 30 July 1935, almost exactly ninety years ago, the first mass-market paperback books bearing a penguin logo were published. Each book cost sixpence.**

The publisher Allen Lane was at Exeter railway station. He looked around for something inexpensive to read on the train home, but couldn't find anything – just reprints of Victorian novels, and magazines.

Back in London, Lane decided to set up a company selling contemporary fiction cheaply. He wanted a logo that was 'dignified but flippant.' Why not a penguin, his secretary suggested. An employee was dispatched to London Zoo, clutching a sketch pad.

On 30 July 1935, the first books bearing the ubiquitous penguin were published:

orange for fiction, blue for biography and green for crime. Each book cost sixpence. Ernest Hemingway, André Maurois and Agatha Christie led the way. These first Penguin books sparked a paperback revolution, books affordable enough, in Lane's words, to be 'bought as easily and casually as a packet of cigarettes.'

What has this very English story to do with refugees and émigrés? First, Lane's employee went to London Zoo to sketch penguins. In 1934, the refugee architect Berthold Lubetkin completed his revolutionary design for the new Penguin Pool at London Zoo. Lubetkin  
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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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## Leading the paperback revolution (cont.)

was a Jew from Tbilisi, then in the Russian Empire. The family moved to Warsaw. Berthold later came to Britain in 1931 but his parents were murdered during the Holocaust.

Second, André Maurois, one of the first authors to be published by Penguin, was not quite who he seems. He was born Émile Salomon Wilhelm Herzog, the son of Ernest Herzog, a Jewish textile manufacturer, and his wife Alice Lévy-Rueff, who had fled from Alsace after the Franco-Prussian war of 1870-1 and settled in France. Maurois, as he later became, then fled to Britain after the Fall of France in 1940, otherwise he would have been killed by the Nazis.

Third, and most important, British publishing was transformed after the war by a generation of Jewish refugee publishers, which included Andre Deutsch from Budapest, Peter Owen, Kurt Maschler and Marion Boyars from Germany and George Weidenfeld and Béla Horovitz from Vienna. What is perhaps less well known is that this generation also included a number of key figures at Penguin Books: designers, typographers, illustrators and, of course, authors who had an important impact on Penguin Books and therefore on British culture.

Among these authors were refugees such as Arthur Koestler, Martin Esslin, Hannah Arendt and Stefan Zweig. Another, perhaps less well known author, is Louise Kehoe, who wrote a fascinating memoir, *In This Dark House*, published by Penguin, about the dark story of her father, Berthold Lubetkin, the man who built the penguin pool at London Zoo. So, Penguin perhaps wasn't as English as we usually think.

The enduring principles of Penguin's design were defined by Allen Lane when he founded the company in the mid-1930s, but it was not until the late 1940s that it adopted a disciplined and coherent approach to design under Jan Tschichold. Before his arrival the design of individual books had varied with the views of the editor and printer. A firm believer in typographic systems, Tschichold designed a template for all Penguin books with designated positions for the title and author's name with a line between

the two. He unified the design of the front, spine and back. Finally he produced a set of Composition Rules which, he insisted, were to be followed by Penguin's typographers and printers to ensure that the same style was always applied.

Born Johannes Tzschichhold in Leipzig in 1902, he studied at the Leipzig Academy for Graphic Arts and Book Trades. In 1923 he visited the first Bauhaus exhibition in Weimar, which heavily influenced his typographic style for the rest of his career. In 1933 he fled to Switzerland. According to Phil Baines, in his book, *Penguin by Design*, 'He moved away from the new typography, which he began to associate with fascism, shortly before the war and began to work in a reformed classical manner... It was this later work ... which Allen Lane wanted to apply to Penguins.' It was Tschichold who persuaded Allen Lane to accept illustrated covers for some of his books. After the war, he became Head of Design at Penguin, in charge of overhauling and standardising Penguin design and layout (1946-9), before returning to Switzerland for the rest of his life.

He was succeeded by another German refugee, Hans Peter Schmoller (1916-85), who became the production director for Penguin and was responsible for the elegant and stylish Penguin 'look'. Born in Berlin, he left Germany in 1933 and spent the war years working in South Africa, before coming to Britain in 1947. In 1949 he succeeded Jan Tschichold at Penguin Books and stayed until 1976. He died in 1985. His design for the famous 1950s architectural series, *The Buildings of England* written by the historian Nikolaus Pevsner, was modelled closely on Tschichold's templates.

Romek Marber (1925-2020) was a Jewish-Polish graphic designer, one of three children of Moshe Marber, a manager in a textile factory, and his wife, Bronka. In 1939 Romek and his twin sister, Roma, were transported, along with his mother and grandparents, to the Bochnia ghetto to the east of Krakow. Marber discovered that most of his family had been murdered at Belzec. In 1943, Romek was betrayed by a Nazi collaborator who handed him over to the Gestapo, and he was sent to Plaszów, then on to Auschwitz and finally to Flossenbürg, where he was liberated by US soldiers in April 1945. In 1946

Marber came to London, studied graphic design at the Royal College of Art and went on to work for a number of famous magazines but he is perhaps best known for redesigning Penguin Crime books.

Marber's redesign stood out for the underlying grid that brought consistency and clarity and, above all, visually compelling images, mostly dark and enigmatic, hinting at the drama and tensions of the plot.

According to his obituary in *The Guardian*, '[T]he "Marber Grid" ... came to be considered a classic of its kind: sustaining a consistent series identity, it also allowed for the use of strong graphic images on each cover.' In 2017 the Jewish Museum in London included Marber as one of 18 designers in an exhibition entitled *Designs on Britain*, and his work is now conserved in the design archive of the Victoria and Albert Museum in London.

Walter Trier was born to a middle class German-speaking Jewish family in Prague in 1890. An anti-fascist, Trier's cartoons were bitterly opposed by the Nazis and he escaped to London in 1936, worked for Stefan Lorrant, providing drawings for *Lilliput* and, later, *Picture Post*. But he was perhaps best known for his illustrations for children's classics like *Brer Rabbit* and *Emil and the Detectives* published by Penguin and Puffin Books.

Germano Facetti (1928-2006), born in Milan, was not technically a refugee but he was arrested in Italy in 1943, age 17, for putting up anti-Fascist posters. He was deported to Mauthausen as a forced labourer and came to Britain in the early 1950s and became art director at Penguin in 1960. He is perhaps best known for the black cover designs of the Penguin Classics series from 1963. He recruited many leading designers of the day, and one of his important achievements for Penguin before he returned to Italy in 1972 was to impose a consistently high standard of cover design.

These refugees had a huge impact on the look of Penguin Books in these crucial early years, especially in the first decades after the war. We remember famous refugee authors, but too often we forget the designers and illustrators who made Penguin such an important brand.

**David Herman**

## MAKING GAY HISTORY

Alongside millions of Jews, homosexuals were also persecuted by the Nazis. So when *Making Gay History* podcaster, Eric Marcus, planned a series on *The Nazi Era* he supposed it might be six episodes.

He ended up creating twelve episodes as there was so much compelling material to include. The result is a fascinating series, in which homosexuals, lesbians, transgender, and sympathetic witnesses describe the horrific consequences of not only being Jewish but also gay and at the mercy of the Nazis.

Making Gay History is available on usual podcast platforms and on [www.makinggayhistory.org/season-fourteen/](http://www.makinggayhistory.org/season-fourteen/) and we were lucky to have Eric introduce us to the series in person at our April event, Voices from the Shadows.

Debra Barnes

## JOIN US IN PARIS

As a member group of the World Federation of Jewish Holocaust Survivors & Descendants we are delighted that its 35th Annual Conference will be held in Paris on 12-15 September 2025.

Recent conferences have been held in the US and Canada, so having it in Paris brings it much closer to us. Being part of this conference is an incredible experience; the opportunity to spend a weekend with other descendants from all over the world, as our reports of 2022 St Louis, 2023 Washington DC, and 2024 Toronto in previous AJR Journals prove.

More details about the Paris conference, which will be held at the Marriott Rive Gauche, can be found on [www.holocaustchild.org/conferences/upcoming-2025-conference/](http://www.holocaustchild.org/conferences/upcoming-2025-conference/). If you would like to travel from London with the AJR group please email [nextgens@ajr.org.uk](mailto:nextgens@ajr.org.uk).

## WORTH WATCHING



BBC One's new series of *Who Do You Think You Are?* began with a deeply personal journey into the family history of actor Andrew Garfield. The episode traces Garfield's paternal Jewish roots back to Poland, uncovering the circumstances that led his ancestors to leave their homeland.

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TUESDAY 22 JULY 2025



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Home of the Kitchener Camp

THURSDAY 19 JUNE 2025

Join us for a special walking tour of Sandwich, Kent led by Clare Ungerson

Travel is by train from London St Pancras Station

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



Join us at a special central London venue for a talk by **LADY AURELIA YOUNG**

MONDAY 23 JUNE 2025 12PM



Lady Young will be talking about her father, renowned sculptor and refugee Oscar Nemon, his life and his famous sculptures

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**BOAT TRIP WITH AFTERNOON TEA**

MONDAY 7 JULY 2025



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Coach pick-ups in Edgware and Finchley Road

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

# SUPPORTING DEMENTIA HEAD ON

Five years ago AJR member **Trevor Salomon** helped us set up a special online support group for partners of people living with dementia.

I had been caring for my wife since she was diagnosed with young onset Alzheimer's disease in 2013 and I had become involved in an informal group of Jewish men all in the same position and living in NW London. I had also been using my voice to campaign and raise awareness of this bafflingly dreadful disease on behalf of Alzheimer's Society so (for all the wrong reasons) my profile was already quite high in the dementia community.

Whilst much information, help and guidance is available from charities either online or via support centres, and family and friends do their best to be a crutch, there is absolutely no substitute for talking to others who *truly understand* the ups and downs felt by carers. Caring for someone with dementia can be isolating and emotionally draining so sometimes just being able to say 'me too' can feel like an absolute lifeline.

So in 2020 the AJR's Caryn Bentley and I set three simple objectives: to provide participants with coping strategies to manage the stresses and challenges of being dementia carers, to ensure they knew which benefits they were entitled to claim, and to build up their confidence to share their issues openly and ask for help.

Our first get together over Zoom was, as you might imagine, quite tentative and we accomplished nothing more than sharing our circumstances and getting to know one another. I say 'nothing more' but actually this was an imperative for a basis of empathy, understanding and trust amongst total strangers. Every carer develops his or her own strategies for handling challenges, whether it's dealing with aggression, managing routines, or communicating effectively so we soon discovered that networking helps carers learn practical, tried-and-tested tips from people in the same boat.

Over time what started out as a group initially just for men broadened to include women too.

One of the most common but least talked about issues is carer burnout. Through our support group we shared and took on board self-care techniques, talked about the need for respite care resources and embracing help, whether on a daily basis or just a few hours a week.....absolutely crucial for mental and physical well-being.

I'm not one to adopt an ostrich mentality when dealing with dementia and we therefore did not avoid embracing for example planning for back-up if/when a carer perhaps needs to be hospitalised, how to deal with 'taboo' topics such as incontinence management, and choosing the right practical options such as live-in care, care-home selection when we recognise we can no longer keep going 24/7.



Occasionally I invite in professional experts to talk about, for example, financial planning and updating wills.

Our group is now in its fifth year and we all know that dementia can involve behaviours and daily challenges that are hard to explain to outsiders but the fact that we all 'get it' helps us feel seen and understood, instead of judged.

If you're a husband, wife or partner looking after someone with dementia and you'd like to join our little group, even just to vent sometimes, please contact Tommy Gambrell, Family Carer and Next Generation Support at the AJR, for more information. [Tommy@ajr.org.uk](mailto:Tommy@ajr.org.uk)

## MEMORIAL LECTURE

**Helen Rosenau was a brilliant art historian who was also a refugee and frequently wrote for *AJR Information*, the predecessor to the *AJR Journal*. She will be the subject of the 2025 Martin Miller and Hannah Norbert Miller Memorial Lecture at 6pm on 12 June 2025.**

Entitled **Her Heart Belongs to Jewish and Women's Questions**, the lecture will be given by Professor Griselda Pollock and will explore Helen Rosenau's Jewish and Feminist Studies as Anti-Fascist Defiance. The event is being organised by the Centre for German & Austrian Exile Studies and will be held at University of London Senate House, followed by a reception. More information at <https://ilcs.sas.ac.uk/events/her-heart-belongs-jewish-and-womens-questions-lutz-weltman-1951-art-historian-helen-rosenaus>.



Helen Rosenau

# Remembering Belsen

**Our Life President Andrew Kaufman MBE and Trustee Stephen Kon represented AJR at the recent 80th Anniversary of the liberation of Bergen-Belsen. Here are their accounts.**

**Andrew:** At 5.15am on Sunday 27 April we set off somewhat apprehensively to Stansted. We were guests of AJEX who had chartered a plane to Germany for 180 members of the UK Jewish community including, I am delighted to say, students from Jewish schools and several universities, all acting as HET Ambassadors. From our arrival at and departure from Hanover and everything in between, the entire day was meticulously planned.

Arriving at Bergen-Belsen one's thoughts inevitably turned to Richard Dimbleby and the men of Britain's 11<sup>th</sup> Armoured Division who rolled through the gates 80 years ago totally unprepared for the horrors they were to encounter.

The main camp was burnt down by the British troops to prevent the further spread of disease, leaving virtually nothing to depict the hell on earth that was Bergen-Belsen, other than 14 mass graves containing over 23,000 poor souls. Yet AJEX and the organisers of the commemoration managed to recreate an unimaginable portrait.

Over 800 guests attended the main ceremony which was broadcast all over the world. Speakers included the UK's Deputy Prime Minister Angela Rayner, the Israeli Ambassador to Germany Ron Prosor, and various survivors. Standouts for me were survivor Mala Tribich and two survivors born in Belsen after it became a Displaced Persons Camp. Music was provided by our wonderful Shabbaton choir.

The main ceremony was followed by a special English service at the Jewish Memorial, with moving contributions from the Chief Rabbi and Chazan Johnny Turgel, whose grandmother was famously liberated from the camp. During a late lunch (very German, with white asparagus soup) we listened to Lord (Danny) Finkelstein, Robert



Voss (HM Lord Lieutenant of Hertfordshire), Defence Minister Lord Coaker, and media personalities Rob Rinder and Rachel Riley.

Time then to go round the impressive museum before heading back to Stansted (with Johnny Turgel and the choir entertaining us on the plane), eventually getting home after midnight.

**Stephen:** This remarkable day was for me and, I suspect, many others one of bitter-sweet contrasts. The stunning blue sky and striking heath and woodlands we met as we approached the camp contrasted with the knowledge of the atrocities that had taken place there over 80 years ago. It was difficult to comprehend initially that this was the site of what Paul Fox, National Chair of AJEX, described as "Hitler's genocidal conveyor belt".

My personal tutor in international law, Colonel G I A D Draper, was one of the first officers to enter the camp in 1945; an experience that seriously damaged his health and incapacitated him for the rest of his life. Yet, unlike Auschwitz, there are no lines of barracks or remains of gas chambers; nothing to suggest that the British soldiers arriving there found "...a pile 60 to 70 yards long, 30 yards wide and 4 ft high of unclothed bodies of women all within sight of several hundred children" (David Woodward, press correspondent).

But then one notices the tell-tale signs: the gentle mounds in an essentially flat parkland (the remains of the mass graves); the small number of seemingly randomly situated gravestones, such as the one for Anne & Margot Frank, who both died shortly before liberation.

The hostility and human torment which was endemic to every aspect of Bergen-



TV presenter Rachel Riley posted a photograph of herself laying a wreath at the Bergen-Belsen ceremony

Belsen 80 years ago strongly contrasted with the warmth, kindness and humanitarian support surrounding every aspect of this day of commemoration. At the centre of the ceremony was the iconic obelisk, representing eternity and a lasting monument to those that perished. The hatred and destructive antisemitism that once underpinned every aspect of the camp was now replaced by an empathetic celebration of the survival of the Jewish faith and the establishment of a Jewish homeland in the State of Israel.

British and Germans, wartime enemies; Jews – whose annihilation was a core Nazi objective and encapsulated all that the camp represented – and gentiles; young and old; were now all united in grief and recognition of what Angela Rayner described as "...our duty to bear witness to the survivors and to carry their stories forward".

Nowhere was this more trenchant than at the UK service officiated by the Chief Rabbi, where Jewish prayer resonated across the whole camp; Kaddish honouring those who had perished and affirming our connection to their sacrifice, followed by the loud and defiant singing of the Hatikvah celebrating the Jewish homeland that emerged from the ashes of death and destruction.

While these contrasting thoughts will continue to haunt me, overwhelmingly the day will stand out as a testimony to compassion and humanity, values that I hope will prevail.

# 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.

## COCKNEY YIDDISH PODCAST

What a wonderful podcast and thank you for bringing it to my attention (April). Although it is essentially about London, it brought back vivid memories of regular visits to my grandparents' house in Cheetham Hill, Manchester, in the late 1940s or early 50s, when Yiddish was still very much used by people I considered as a child to be old.

My father came to this country in 1934 from Berlin and when my brother and I were small my parents made a conscious decision not to speak German in front of me and my brother as we lived in a suburb of Manchester. But we heard enough to realise that this other strange language that my grandparents and friends spoke was similar. When I asked my father why he would not reply to those speaking to him only in English he said it was very poor German like the Irish speaking English LOL. (Apologies to any Irish AJR members)

In the 1970s I met a friend of my mother's, whose husband had just passed away and had left a record collection of old 78 rpm songs all in Yiddish, by people like Stanley Loudon and Micky Katz. I asked if I could borrow them and recorded them to tape. Well, this podcast has sent me scurrying into the attic looking for those tapes and I shall try to download them onto my computer so that I can share them with anyone who may be interested.

Once again thank you for a fascinating article.

*John W Martins, Manchester*

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## VE DAY

Today we commemorate the 80th anniversary of the end of the Nazi era in Europe. We mourn the millions – soldiers and civilians – who died before and during the 1939 – 1945 war. I remember my own good fortune. Due to the generosity of family and friends in Belgium and England, my parents and I were able to escape as Jewish refugees from Nazi persecution in Vienna before war began and to begin a new life in England. My family and I were given the opportunity to live in

England and to become British citizens. I thank all my neighbours here – whatever their names – for the privilege of now living in peace and freedom in England. I thank those who fought and died so that I could survive and live. My peaceful life contrasts with the sad conflicts of hostages and killing in Israel/Gaza, the war between Ukraine and Russia and violence in Kashmir. I am glad that we have ended violent conflict within the British Islands and Ireland.

I thank my wife and family for their love. I am grateful to the country that continues to support my health and wellbeing at the age of 96.

*John Farago, Deal, Kent*

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## VOTING IN GERMANY

In your May issue Stephan Falk asked if anyone who has acquired German citizenship has had success in registering to vote in German elections. I acquired German citizenship in 2021 through my mother, who was born in Stuttgart in 1938 and left Germany in 1939, three days before the start of WW2.

Like Stephen I saw the notice in the *AJR Journal* about registering to vote. I decided to make an application in January just before the February elections. To be honest I did not expect to be successful but, to my surprise, my application was approved and I was able to vote.

I hope the following observations are helpful to Stephen and others considering applying:

The application is a simple form that needs to be supported by an explanation about why you feel you should be considered for the right to vote and, specifically how you have "gained personal and direct familiarity with the political situation and is affected by the political situation in Germany." This supporting information needs to be written in German. I am learning German and treated this as a bit of my Hausaufgaben (homework). Through a combination of original work, Google Translate and the help of my

German teacher, I prepared a side of A4 making my case. I set out my family history and how and when I had received my citizenship.

I explained my long and deep interest in German history, society and culture and that I was learning German. I also said how I supported the work of the Article 116 Reconciliation Project which successfully campaigned for reform of the German citizenship laws and how I had participated in some of their events. I specifically made a point of noting how important the 2025 election was for Germany and, whilst taking care not to make any explicitly political points, I hope this reference about the need to support Germany's democratic system was clearly understood.

One requirement is to identify if you have a specific connection to a particular city or part of Germany. Normally this will be where your family last lived before leaving Germany but it might also be somewhere you have lived yourself, for example while working or studying in Germany. Your application is actually made to that electoral registration office in that city or region and they make the decision about whether or not to approve your application.

I am not sure if I am now formally on the electoral register for all elections going forward or if I will have to reapply each time but, either way, I was thrilled to be allowed to vote and consider it a great privilege and a testament to Germany's attitude towards reconciliation.

One last point that I felt was particularly significant was that my voting papers showed my German address as the property that my mother lived in as a baby and had to flee from in 1939. 86 years later my family was finally re-connected to our address in Stuttgart.

*Alan Gavurin, Winchmore Hill, London*

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## ISRAEL & GAZA

I read your Editorial note about Israel and Gaza (May) from my study in Jerusalem and was pained by the remarks you quoted of Dr Julia Nelki, Jim

# Jewish history focus on sunny York trip

Newmark & Anthony Lipman.

I myself am on the Board of numerous institutions, including the prestigious Museum of Islamic Art in Jerusalem founded by Vera Salomons of Salomons House, Tunbridge Wells.

Israel is at war in a conflict it did not initiate. In fact when it was invaded on 7 October 2023 it could well have been destroyed, heaven forbid, as was the plan of Hamas, Hezbollah and Iran. We can thank the IDF and the many who fell that the plan failed.

When Hitler started WW2 Winston Churchill took the reins. England destroyed Hamburg and Dresden to name just two cities where tens of thousands of innocent civilians were killed in bombing raids which made Gaza look like child's play. Sadly this is the nature of war. Ironically we have just honoured the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Final Victory.

I trust that AJR, as it stated on 8 October 2023, has remained a true friend of Israel in its hour of need though we may, as is our democratic right, not support every decision of the Political leadership. But do Messrs Nelki, Newmark and Lipman have a better way to ensure our survival as well as end this conflict?

*Martin Stern, Jerusalem*

I'm aware that Hamas hold hostages and the violence could stop if the hostages were released. But my sense of belonging as a Jewish refugee does not support the violent inhumane conduct of the Israeli government and the withholding of supplies to Gaza.

AJR should make clear to the world that Jewish refugees around the world do not support that.

*John Farago, Deal, Kent*

## ERRATUM – BOB KIRK

We apologise for the error in the Obituary for Bob Kirk that appeared in our May issue. Bob sadly passed away in 2024, not 1924.

**Janet Weston was among a group of 30 AJR members who recently enjoyed five-day trip to the historic city of York.**

Beautiful weather provided a wonderful backdrop to our trip, which began with an introductory talk to Jewish York by community member Ben Rich. He outlined the city's often difficult racial past and its present day situation, as well as the great chocolate makers of the day.

York was founded by the Romans who named it Eboracum. Important Roman milestones plus buildings ancient and modern were pointed out on our bus tour next morning. We explored the Castle Museum – a veritable treasure trove – and Kirkgate, the famous reconstructed Victorian street (in York 'gate' means 'street', while 'bar' means gate). Moving WW1 artefacts are housed in the museum, with another section on the 60s and the Beatles bringing back memories of last year's Liverpool trip.

Some of us climbed Clifford's Tower to admire spectacular views which belie the building's tragic past. In 1190, during a terrible antisemitic massacre, York's entire Jewish community was trapped there by a violent mob. Many committed suicide rather than be murdered or forcibly baptised.

Afterwards a relaxing boat trip along the River Ouse from King's Staith, gently taking in the scenery. Next day we went to the seaside town of Whitby to visit the 13<sup>th</sup> century Gothic Abbey, stroll round the harbour and beach and enjoy fish & chips. En route we visited Goathland, a charming village in the north Yorkshire moorland, best known as the set for *Aidensfield* of the *Heartbeat* TV series and *Hogsmeade Station* in the *Harry Potter* films.

The sun continued to blaze down next day and sunhats and cream were out for our Jewish historic walk round the city, led by two charming and informative university students. They told the story



The AJR group pictured during their walking tour of York



Plaque on the facade of a retail building on Coney Street

of moneylender Benedict of York, and Aaron of York, who became chief rabbi of England but died in poverty after falling out with Henry III. They also drew parallels with Masada and Clifford's Tower.

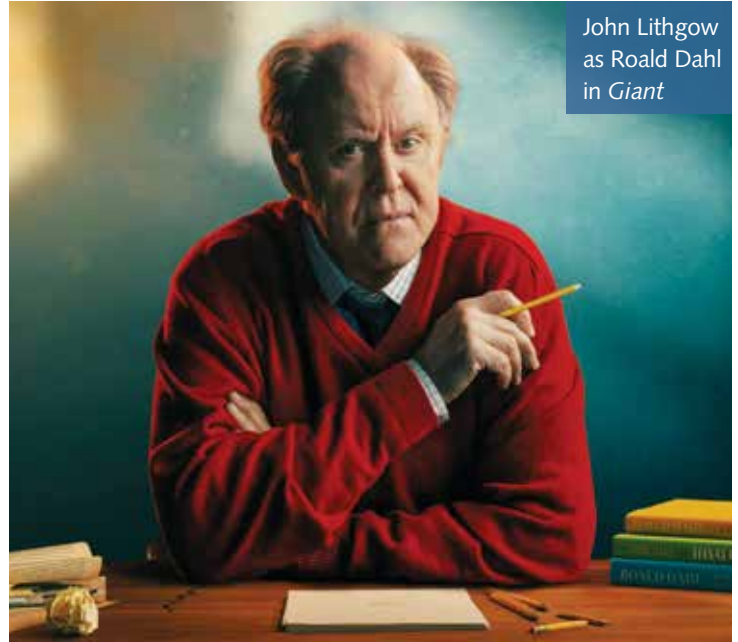
After lunch we headed to the Minster, home to the UK's greatest collection of medieval glass. We admired the multi-million restoration of the East window, the 14<sup>th</sup> century Tree of Jesse window, and the *Blue Peter Man on the Moon* boss designed by six-year-old Rebecca-Rose Welsh.

Our last morning was spent at the magnificent Railway Museum reflecting that modern day York was founded on the railways. Its splendid collection includes Stephenson's Rocket, a Japanese Bullet train and a virtual reality tour from London to Edinburgh on the Flying Scotsman. Then nothing better than afternoon tea plus piano accompanist at Betty's Café & Tea Rooms before happily heading home having formed new friendships and acquired new knowledge.

We were brilliantly looked after throughout with a kind and light touch by Karen, Ros and Marilyn, who had thought of everything!

# ARTS NOTES: by David Herman

***Giant* has been one of the most acclaimed plays in London during the last year. It received rave reviews when it first opened at The Royal Court Theatre and won three Olivier Awards: Best Actor in a Supporting Role (Elliot Levey as Tom Maschler), Best Actor (John Lithgow as Roald Dahl) and Best New Play. It has now transferred to The Harold Pinter Theatre in the West End where it continues to receive standing ovations from packed houses.**



John Lithgow  
as Roald Dahl  
in *Giant*

Mark Rosenblatt's play, his first, is about a scorching encounter between Roald Dahl and his British and American publishers who are about to bring out one of his most famous children's books, *The Witches*, when he writes a ferocious attack on Israel in *The Literary Review* in 1983. His publishers try and persuade him to apologise for his alleged antisemitism. Dahl is unrepentant and things quickly heat up.

The reason this is of particular interest to readers of the *AJR Journal* is not just because of the issues of Israel and antisemitism, but because Tom Maschler, Dahl's British publisher, was a Jewish refugee. Born in Berlin in 1933 to Austrian Jewish parents, Rita and Kurt Maschler, Tom Maschler was five years old when his family fled to the UK from Vienna after the Nazi annexation of Austria. Three of his grandparents were murdered by the Nazis, a fact curiously omitted by Rosenblatt.

The play presents Maschler as a rich, non-Jewish Jew, highly assimilated. When the play begins in 1983, Maschler is the hugely successful head of Jonathan Cape, one of the leading British publishers of the time. He is at the height of his career, the publisher of such famous authors as Joseph Heller, Kurt Vonnegut, Martin Amis, Ian McEwan, Julian Barnes and Salman Rushdie, among many, many more. Despite his Olivier Award, Elliot Levey bears little resemblance to Maschler, physically or in any other way. I had lunch with Maschler soon after the events in this play and he struck

me as dynamic, hugely confident and a formidable cultural figure, whereas Rosenblatt's creation is constantly trying to placate Dahl, an appalling antisemite and anti-Zionist.

Maschler was one of that extraordinary generation of Jewish refugee publishers who transformed British publishing after the war and which included Andre Deutsch from Budapest, Peter Owen from Nuremberg, George Weidenfeld, Walter Neurath who co-founded Thames and Hudson, Béla Horovitz and Ludwig Goldscheider (who co-founded Phaidon) from Vienna. Very little of this background is mentioned in the play though we are told a great deal about the tragedies in Dahl's personal life. We are also not told that Roger Straus, Dahl's American publisher, was Jewish though it is made clear that his Director of Sales, Jessica Stone, who has come to try to persuade Dahl to apologise for his very controversial attack on Israel, is Jewish. She is also, crucially, a fictitious character.

We should also remember that Dahl in 1983 was not the huge commercial success we think of him today with successful West End musicals like *Matilda*, films like *The Witches*, *Matilda* and *James and the Giant Peach*. In 2021, for example, Netflix acquired the Roald Dahl Story Company for a reported sum of 'a little over' £500 million. This deal, finalised in September 2021, gave Netflix control over Dahl's entire literary estate, including the rights to his characters and stories for various media. According to *The Guardian*, 'The

family of Roald Dahl has apologised for his antisemitism in a statement buried deep in the author's official website'. The statement read: 'The Dahl family and the Roald Dahl Story Company deeply apologise for the lasting and understandable hurt caused by some of Roald Dahl's statements. Those prejudiced remarks are incomprehensible to us and stand in marked contrast to the man we knew and to the values at the heart of Roald Dahl's stories, which have positively impacted young people for generations. We hope that, just as he did at his best, at his absolute worst, Roald Dahl can help remind us of the lasting impact of words.' This is exactly the kind of statement Dahl refused to make in his lifetime.

When I saw *Giant*, the audience loved it, cheering and giving the actors a sustained standing ovation. But at times it was hard to read their reaction. Were they cheering the writing, the performances and the play's attacks on Dahl's antisemitism? Or opening soon after Israel's attack on Gaza, did audiences find Dahl's attacks on Israel not just more relevant today, but perhaps even justifiable?

***Giant* will be shown at The Harold Pinter Theatre until 2 August.**

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**CONTEMPORARY  
PAINTING AND SCULPTURE**

# SOUTHAMPTON: A PLACE OF REFUGE

The AJR has helped to support a new pop-up exhibition celebrating the remarkable contributions Jewish refugee scholars made to the University of Southampton. Neil Gregor, Director of the University's Parkes Institute, explains.



A Place of Refuge exhibition

The exhibition was initially developed to support the university's application to become a University of Sanctuary. It focuses on the lives and careers of eight refugees from Nazi Germany who came to the UK during the 1930s and built academic careers that brought them to Southampton at one stage or another.

Developed with the generous support of both the AJR and the German History Society, the exhibition tells at least two stories simultaneously. Firstly it shows how, across a wide range of disciplines, Jewish refugees were at the heart of building the University of Southampton into what has become a world-leading institution in a variety of fields.

On the science and engineering side, the exhibition tells the story of Karl Weissenberg (1893-1976), a physicist who worked on the viscosity of materials; of Eric Zepler (1898-1980) who did pioneering work in electrical engineering, particularly on radio design; and of Martin Fleischmann (1927-2012), a leading specialist in electrochemistry. It also highlights the contribution of Leslie Brent (1925-2019) who, as a medical scientist, pioneered work in immunology that made modern organ transplants possible, and of Peter Landsberg (1922-2010), whose distinguished career in mathematics culminated in him serving as Dean of the Faculty of Mathematics at Southampton.

Jewish refugees also made distinguished contributions at Southampton in the Arts and Social Sciences. The only

woman in the exhibition (a reflection of the male-dominated nature of academia for much of the twentieth century), Gabriele Ganz (born 1930), served as Professor of Law during a long career at Southampton; in Politics the university benefitted from the work of Josef Frankl (1914-1989), who was a leading figure in the field of International Relations; last but by no means least Edgar Feuchtwanger (born 1924), my own predecessor in the Department of History, served the university for thirty years as a specialist in both British and German history.


However, the exhibition tells at least one other story – that of the remarkable diversity of European Jewish life itself before 1933. The figures represented here came, variously, from Germany, Austria, the present-day Czechia, present-day Poland and present-day Ukraine. Some of the refugees came from highly urbane backgrounds, while others came from small town and village homes. Some were highly observant orthodox Jews, others came from backgrounds in which religion played little, if any role, and some were practising Christians, their families having converted a generation or two back. What unites their stories, above anything else, is the fact that they lived ordinary, happy, uneventful lives until a regime of hateful antisemitism suddenly forced them into exile.

The exhibition has been shown at the University's Arts and Humanities Day and its Science and Engineering Day – two open days in which the public is invited to explore different facets of the university's work – and has been taken into a local sixth form college where

it was met with great interest by the students. It was a particular privilege to show the exhibition in person to Edgar Feuchtwanger, who was welcomed to the university as part of his 100<sup>th</sup> birthday celebrations, and who was interviewed by *ITV Meridian* for a news feature on the exhibition.

We have been really pleased with the impact of the exhibition in the wider community, and hope to show it on other occasions. But perhaps the most important resonance has been in the university itself. Few of us knew just how important the refugee scholar generation was to our own university until now, and the interest colleagues have shown has been immense. We hope to expand the project into consideration of other refugee academics who came to the university at one stage or another. There is, for example, a strong connection between the university and refugees from Apartheid that is similarly unexplored. We would also be fascinated to know how far the Southampton story is typical of other provincial British universities.

I'd like to thank the AJR for its support, which means a great deal to us.



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# Commemor



Members of the First Generation assembled in front of a Spitfire for a hero shot

**On 6 May the AJR held a special gathering of Holocaust refugees and survivors and their descendants at London's RAF Museum, to mark the 80th anniversary of VE Day and the liberation of Europe from Nazi tyranny.**

Over 150 guests came together against the backdrop of iconic WW2 fighter aircrafts, such as the Spitfire, to honour and celebrate those who took up arms and who fought against their fellow countrymen and their countries of birth.

Dan Fox, National Chairman of AJEX, explained how around 10,000 German and Austrian refugees joined the British armed forces from 1939 to 1945, becoming known as 'The King's Most Loyal Enemy Aliens'. On pages 12-13 you will find a summary of Dan's speech, which was followed by a moving account from historian Helen Fry

about the women who took part.

One of those inspirational brave hearts was Veteran Henny Franks, who turns 102 this month. Henny came with her younger sister via Kindertransport to stay with cousins. Their father was murdered at Sobibor but their mother survived. Aged 19, Henny joined the Auxiliary Territorial Service (ATS), transporting ammunition in Westcliff-on-Sea. She told us: "I love England very much. I felt so proud to be in the army. I did my bit. I was one of the lucky ones. I want people to know that Jewish people did their bit to fight back."

Addressing guests at the RAF Museum, AJR CEO Michael Newman said: "Today we give special recognition to the brave endeavours of the Jewish refugees, who escaped Central Europe and joined the British War effort, having experienced the horror of Nazi terror first hand. Over the years, the AJR has been honoured to count many members as Veterans, including those who worked at

Bletchley cracking and deciphering Enigma and some as Secret Listeners, eavesdropping on conversations of German POWs. All of which helped shorten the war. For this community, VE Day was – and remains – a paradox of celebration and realisation. Of bunting and smiles, and of heart-wrenching desperation that the fate of loved ones was in stark contrast to their own."

AJR guests enjoyed a private tour of RAF WW2 fighter aircrafts, followed by entertainment from a swing band and traditional 1940's-style sandwiches and cakes. Guests of honour included the MP for Hendon, David Pinto-Duschinsky, and Sally Sealey, Chief of Staff to the UK Envoy for Post-Holocaust Issues.

As well as being greatly enjoyed by all, the event attracted extensive media attention, including broadcasts on ITV News and a double page spread in *The Times*.

**Gemma Blane**



# Stray Jews: refugees a



Krystyna Skarbek



The 2nd Polish Corps or 'Anders Army', was named after its General Wladyslaw Anders and included 5,000 Jews



A recent image of Jiri Kafka, who came to the UK as one of the Winton children and now, aged 101, is the last surviving member of the RAF's 311 (Czechoslovak) Squadron

**The road to VE Day was paved by millions of allied servicemen and women. Dan Fox, National Chair, AJEX The Jewish Military Association, thinks it is particularly poignant for us to consider the contribution of Jewish refugees.**

In North Africa, the ground for the defeat of Rommel was laid by three irregular fighting units, which included men like Jack Mann. Born in Cairo, his war started in the Royal Signals before being selected for special operations in the Long Range Desert Group, a forerunner to the SAS, which carried out reconnaissance and raids against Axis forces. Jack also saw action in West Africa, the Aegean and Greece.

Maurice Tiefenbrunner had fought with 51 Commando, made up of 300 Palestinian Jews, against the Italians in Eritrea and Abyssinia, and was mentioned in Dispatches. 51 was disbanded after the disastrous Greece campaign in 1941, but many of its members were re-formed into the Special Intelligence Group, to carry out commando and sabotage operations in the Western Desert. In December 1942, Maurice was captured and spent the rest of the war as a PoW in Italy.

No 1 Demolition Squad was known as Popski's Private Army (PPA) after the nickname of its founder, Major Vladimir Peniakoff, a Belgian Jew of Russian descent, who had fought with the French in WW1. Never more than about three dozen personnel, its initial formation was to destroy fuel supplies but its role soon expanded to all forms of clandestine activity. After North Africa, it redeployed

to Italy and held a sector of the depleted Allied front line by zipping around in jeeps to fool the Germans into believing that they were opposed by much larger units.

Also joining the allies in Italy was the 2<sup>nd</sup> Polish Corps or "Anders Army", named after its General, Wladyslaw Anders. It numbered 70,000 including 5,000 Jews. At the end of 1942, it left the Soviet Union for Palestine, with families of the soldiers and groups of Jewish children, war orphans, joining en route. Julian

**"This is a ridiculous scheme anyway and it is not going to do the Jews any good to strut about in uniform and wave a Jewish flag in an occupied Germany."**

Bussgang, born in Lwów, Poland, had fled to Palestine in September 1939, and deployed to fight with the Polish as they became involved in the Italian campaign. At the end of fighting in Italy, Lt Gen Richard McCreery, the British 8<sup>th</sup> Army commander, paid tribute to the Corps, saying they had faced three of the Germans' best divisions and had pushed them back.

5,000 Jews from Palestine and other parts of the Middle East were recruited in September 1944 to form a Jewish Brigade. Despite vociferous opposition from the

Foreign Office whose view was that:

*"We should not encourage or even allow the recruitment of stray Jews all over the world. They will only enlist as a means of getting into Palestine and will be of no practical use. Diversity of origin will magnify language difficulties and make for less efficiency and security.*

*"In particular, the Jews in Persia, Iraq and Syria have a very oriental outlook and... are not trustworthy..."*

*"If Jews cannot make up a Brigade group...drop the idea and reduce it to a battalion recruited from all sources that will not bring discredit on the Jews and on ourselves..."*

*"This is a ridiculous scheme anyway and it is not going to do the Jews any good to strut about in uniform and wave a Jewish flag in an occupied Germany."*

The brigade served with great distinction in Italy in the remaining year of the war, under the command of Ernest Benjamin, a Canadian-British Jew. It took part in the Spring Offensive of 1945 and during its 54 days of operations suffered 30 killed and 70 wounded.

Two days after the liberation of Rome, D-Day got underway. Much of the preparation for the operation within France had been carried out by the Special Operations Executive, including by Britain's first longest serving agent, Krystyna Skarbek, who also undertook missions in her native Poland, Hungary and the Middle East; and Vera Atkins, originally from Romania, who had carried out espionage for Churchill even before the

# and the Victory in Europe



Vera Atkins, née Rosenberg and originally from Romania, is regarded as the greatest female secret agent during WW2



Maurice Tiefenbrunner



The plaque at Germany's Becklingen War Cemetery for Capt Kurt Joachim Glaser, known as Keith James Griffith, who served in the 'X' Troop

war and had helped smuggle the Polish Enigma code-breakers out to England.

Some of the first on to the beaches on 6 June 1944 were 44 commandos from "X" Troop, made up nearly entirely of Jewish refugees. Capt Kurt Joachim Glaser, known as Keith James Griffith, became commander of the troop after D-Day. He was killed in April 1945, crossing the Aller Bridge in Germany and his temporary grave was mistakenly marked with a cross, his comrades even then not knowing his background.

Many of X Troop's members had been drawn from a group known as The King's Most Loyal Enemy Aliens: 10,000 Jewish refugees including 1,000 women who had mostly been interned at first as 'enemy aliens'. Eventually released into the Alien Pioneer Companies, they were then deployed throughout the armed forces.

Many ended up in the Intelligence Corps, eavesdropping on captured Axis officers who were left to their own devices and a false sense of security in the country-house settings of the Combined Services Detailed Interrogation Centres (CSDICs). They amassed more than 74,000 transcripts from 10,000 prisoners. The CSDICs' commanding officer, Thomas Kendrick, described the work "as important as firing a gun in action or fighting on the frontline."

Susan Cohn was born in Breslau in 1921 and fled to England in July 1939. In December 1943 she joined the listening operation. There she met and eventually married Fritz Lustig (their son is BBC broadcaster Robin) who had also arrived from Germany in 1939.

Another 'alien', Peter Stevens, was a German-Jewish teenage refugee who committed identity theft to join the RAF in 1939. He completed 22 bombing missions before being shot down and taken prisoner in September 1941. Despite being recaptured several times, he remained an active participant in several major breakouts, including the Great Escape. After liberation, he was awarded the Military Cross and served in British espionage at the beginning of the Cold War.

**"As important as firing a gun in action or fighting on the front line."**

These aliens remained citizens of their own countries and if their real identities had been discovered after capture, would have faced execution and worse as traitors.

Ken Adam applied several times to serve as a fighter pilot but was knocked back as the RAF did not want Germans to serve in the prestigious role. Ken started dating the daughter of the commandant at his Alien Pioneer Corps camp. When the commandant found out, his transfer papers to the RAF were signed the next day. Ken's squadron flew the Hawker Typhoon, initially with long-range bombing missions and later in support of ground troops, including at the decisive battle of the Falaise Gap, in Normandy. After the war he became an Oscar-winning set designer.

Now 101, Jirí Kafka is the last surviving member of the RAF's 311 (Czechoslovak) Squadron. He and his brother Felix arrived in Britain in 1939, aged 15 and 14, as two of the 669 Jewish children saved by Sir Nicholas Winton. Three years later, Jirí joined 311 as a radio-operator gunner. The squadron flew medium and heavy bomber patrols over the Atlantic and Bay of Biscay, targeting Axis ships and submarines. Its last operation was over the Norwegian coast and the Baltic as the allies closed in on victory.

The Home Front also saw great endeavour. Hennie Franks arrived in Britain on the Kindertransport aged 15 and as Pte Greenbaum served in the ATS, driving loader trucks in munitions factories. Sgt Ruth Bendix (now Brook Klauber), arrived in London in 1933 from Frankfurt, aged nine. She served for four years in the RAF as a mechanic on Lancaster, Wellington and Blenheim bombers.

With the mass of story-telling, both fictional and documentary, that has arisen out of WW2, it is easy to think of the eventual allied victory as somehow inevitable, as the happy ending that we expect our heroes to get. But there was nothing inevitable about it. So let us end with the words of Churchill on VE Day 1945, recognising the global enormity of what had been achieved: *"In the long years to come not only will the people of this island but of the world, wherever the bird of freedom chirps in human hearts, look back to what we've done and they will say 'do not despair, do not yield to violence and tyranny – march straight forward and die if need be, unconquered.'"*

# THE ROAD TO SHANGHAI

**Debra Barnes recently visited China's biggest city and found it rich with memories of Holocaust refugees.**

When I couldn't book a direct flight from London to Tokyo, a friend suggested travelling via Shanghai. I didn't need persuading! I had wanted to visit the Shanghai Jewish Refugees Museum since I met their representatives at the 2024 World Federation of Holocaust Survivors & Descendants conference, where I shared the stage with Jerry Imas, a Chinese Jewish 3G, grandson of a Polish Jew who found refuge in Shanghai during the war: and I also met Chen Jian, director of the museum.

I was already somewhat familiar with the museum having worked with the late Kurt Wick on his *My Story* book. Kurt returned to Shanghai in 2019 after 71 years, having found refuge there after leaving Nazi-occupied Austria. On revisiting the Ohel Moishe Synagogue he had attended with his parents and brother Sigmund between 1939 and 1948, he discovered not only had it been transformed into a museum (in 2007), but the surrounding area was now in the final stages of an expansion and renovation project including a new, albeit rather empty, library.

In Kurt's own words: "I never smoked or played golf; books were my passion. I must have bought 50,000 in my lifetime! As I toured the museum, I noticed they hardly had any books. After visiting Shanghai I arranged for 8,500 of my collection – mainly books about Jewish history and the Holocaust – to be shipped to the museum. The library was opened in October 2020 in the name of my parents, Mortiz and Josefina Wickelholz."

Sadly, Kurt died in 2024. One of the things that struck me during my visit to the Shanghai museum, was the beautiful tribute to Kurt in the library. He left a wonderful legacy, and it was my pleasure to add a copy of his AJR *My Story* book to the collection.

When I contacted the museum about my



planned visit, I agreed to speak to their staff about Kurt and making his *My Story* book. I assumed an informal chat with a couple of people so imagine my surprise when I walked into a conference room ready with eager audience, videographer, photographer, stage, microphone and so on! And this was just the first of many pleasant surprises about the museum.

I have visited my fair share of Holocaust museums, but this one really was the most beautiful I have seen. The Ohel Moishe Synagogue stands proudly overlooking the Wall of Names: a unique memorial in the way that it represents salvation and survivors rather than victims. Over 18,500 of the 20,000 Jewish refugees who sought shelter in Shanghai during the 1930s and 1940s are engraved on the wall, and there is a blank space left to record those names yet to be discovered.

The museum galleries inside the renovated historic residences hold over 1,000 artifacts donated by former refugees and their descendants which tell their stories from the journey to Shanghai, life when they first arrived and the new lives they made for

themselves, and finally what happened after the war. As Kurt Wick said, "Shanghai was always a place of refuge, not a place of settlement."

Walking from room to room, one can see how the refugees' lived, the children went to school, the adults made a living, weddings were held and life went on surrounded by Chinese neighbours under Japanese rule. It really is a fascinating museum and well worth a visit, as are other buildings in Hongkou such as the White Horse Viennese Café across the street.

The museum is keen to make contact with descendants of the Shanghai refugees. You can email them on [info@shjews.com](mailto:info@shjews.com) and do make yourself known if you visit. You can be sure of a warm welcome, just like the Chinese offered the Jewish refugees over 80 years ago [www.shhkjrm.com](http://www.shhkjrm.com)

To order a copy of Kurt Wick's *My Story* book please email [debra@ajr.org.uk](mailto:debra@ajr.org.uk) or read it free online [www.ajrmystory.org.uk/people/kurt-wick](http://www.ajrmystory.org.uk/people/kurt-wick)

# Memorial Gestures

**This month Holocaust Centre North – housed at the University of Huddersfield – unveils *Memorial Gestures*, the culmination of a three year creative arts residency.**

Contemporary artists have created new artwork in response to extensive archival collections, survivor testimonies, and objects bequeathed to Holocaust Centre North by 150 Holocaust survivors and their families who made new lives in the North of England.

Over the past three years, fourteen artists – **Jordan Baseman, Laura Fisher, April Lin 林森 Maud Haya-Baviera, Irina Razumovskaya, Matt Smith, Ariane Schick, Tom Hastings, Rey Conquer, Hannah Machover, Laura Nathan, Chebo Roitter Pavez, Sierra Kaag, and Nathalie Olah** – have participated. The residency has enabled them to immerse themselves fully in Holocaust history by talking with survivors and their families, participating in bespoke workshops, and learning from historians and the Centre's dedicated archivists.

The result is a remarkable, unique and intimate body of work – incorporating works in textile, video, installation, photography, drawing, etching, ceramics, print, translation, found objects, and text. Created by a diverse group of artists who between them represent multiple nationalities, experiences and identities, the exhibition brings history to life. Artists were drawn to participate through personal connections to the Holocaust, through ongoing research disciplines in the subject, or from their own lived and familial experiences of oppression, discrimination, loss, hope and migration.

Featured works include large-scale woven blankets by textile artist Laura Fisher that reproduce in detail family messages from the Holocaust, including a final telegram

For artist Laura Fisher, it was learning of West Yorkshire's rich textile heritage that led her to create a number of tactile objects for the exhibition, including blankets and a felt book. Stitched into her colourful cotton knitted blankets are reproductions of handwritten words, sent in letters from men imprisoned in concentration camps to their loved ones in the outside world.



sent to the family of Michelle Green from her Viennese grandmother who was killed in a concentration camp. Michelle's family materials are held for posterity at Holocaust Centre North. Artist Matt Smith's ceramic tiles and photographic collages bring attention to the marginalised subject of LGBT+ experiences of the Holocaust – a subject often overlooked and underrepresented in Holocaust history. Sheffield artist Maud Haya-Baviera draws parallels in her final pieces between her own family history as political refugees and letters held at Holocaust Centre North written by Rachel Mendel and sent from 1930's Germany, urging her parents to flee the country. Textile artist Laura Nathan, herself a granddaughter of Holocaust survivors, explores the experiences of Jewish mill workers in Yorkshire, including at Kagan Textile Works, reflecting on familial trauma, migration and the making and unmaking of fabric and family histories.

Alessandro Bucci, Director of Holocaust Centre North, said: "Memorial Gestures is our response to some of the most pressing questions facing Holocaust memory today as we move further from living memory: such as how do we continue to remember the Holocaust with depth and relevance? How do we engage audiences with original materials while also honouring what was lost, destroyed, stolen, or never took an archivable form? And how do we foster a responsible culture of care when working with stories of persecution, forced displacement, murder, and loss – as well as trauma, intergenerational

memory, and the complex relationships between local histories and global events? These questions are not fixed, nor are the answers exhaustive – but they have offered a framework for the artists involved, many of whom carry Holocaust histories in their own families, to explore and respond to this story on their own terms. In doing so, Memorial Gestures – both the residency and this subsequent exhibition – contributes to an ongoing and vital conversation about the role of memory in the present day – how we might keep it alive, resonant, and relevant for generations to come. I am very proud that we, at Holocaust Centre North, have created this programme to keep those questions and conversations going."

As well as visual art, the work of resident writers and translators form part of the exhibition. Writers Tom Hastings, Rey Conquer, Sierra Kaag and Nathalie Olah were commissioned by the Centre and will share works in progress of their forthcoming book-length projects.

Holocaust Centre North will also programme several accompanying public and private events, talks, and tours at Sunny Bank Mills – engaging diverse communities with fine art and narratives of migration, trauma, survival, persecution, and resilience.

***Memorial Gestures* runs from Friday 6 to Saturday 28 June 2025 at The 1912 Mill at Sunny Bank Mills, Farsley, Pudsey, West Yorkshire.**

# REVIEWS

## THE TEACHER OF AUSCHWITZ

Wendy Holden  
Bonnie Books UK

Even in the darkest situations a ray of light and goodness can shine through and heroes are created. This book is based on an inspiring true story as author Wendy Holden tells of the life of children's champion Fredy Hirsch. He dedicated his life to helping youngsters on the sports field and later in concentration camps. The book intersperses descriptions of his early life with vivid accounts of Fredy's tireless struggles in Terezín and later Auschwitz to save and preserve the children under his care.

Born in 1916 Fredy grew up in in Aachen, the westernmost city in Germany, son of a master butcher who expected him to take over the business. But Fredy was unhappy at the prospect and preferred an outdoor life. He loved hikes in the forest with his synagogue's youth association or cross-country runs along the banks of rivers and lakes where his stamina outshone other boys.

But as civil unrest grew and the country's problems were blamed by the Nazis on communists, socialists and Jews, Fredy was shocked at rising antisemitism. Business also fell off as his father became ill and died. Fredy immersed himself in sport, music and drama as well as tending the school garden. Itching to leave home he took a job with a youth group of Jewish Scouts in Dusseldorf combining forces with the Maccabis, a Zionist group from Czechoslovakia and thence to Frankfurt, all the time working tirelessly with young people to bring out their sporting prowess.

With life becoming ever more difficult under the Nazis as a Jewish young gay man he fled to Czechoslovakia in September 1935. Here as a youth leader he trained a large group of boys and girls for the Maccabiah Games in Slovakia. But after Hitler invaded the country in March 1939 his days of freedom were numbered, conditions worsened and hopes of reaching the

Holy Land faded. By December 1941 he was in Terezín ghetto.

As always his natural talent with children was recognised and he opened the first of the kinderheims (children's houses) and later established a dedicated block. He instigated a strong sense of discipline, exercise and vigorous hygiene to help stave off disease and improve morale. He also convinced SS guards to grant privileges including exemption from deportation and extra rations, saving the children's lives at least temporarily.

Although still a brutal camp, conditions were relatively favourable at Terezín but things became much worse after deportation to Auschwitz in September 1943. Here Fredy who was always meticulous about being well-presented stood up to the SS and begged for better provisions and was able to scrape together rudimentary toys. He tirelessly improvised, teaching in a wooden hut where walls were painted with cartoons and he secretly gave lessons. Here in the shadow of the chimneys traumatised children sang, staged plays and wrote poetry. But the greatest lesson of all he taught was equipping them in the fight for survival.

This heart-rending story is extremely well brought to life by Wendy Holden who was inspired by extensive interviews with world-renowned musician Zuzana Růžicková. Zuzana became a celebrated harpsichordist but had worked with Fredy as a teacher's assistant and credited him for saving her life. Movingly before her death in 2017, she unveiled a memorial plaque to him in Terezín.

Janet Weston

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## GRACE FEUERVERGER WINTER LIGHT: THE MEMOIR OF A CHILD OF HOLOCAUST SURVIVORS Amsterdam Publishers, The Netherlands: 2024

*Winter Light* is an incredibly elegiac book. It is about Grace Feuerverger's life first growing up in Montreal as the daughter of two very traumatised parents. As working-class Jews from Poland, they were survivors of the concentration and labour camps in the 1940s. They lost everything – family, friends, home and

livelihood – in the Holocaust, managing to escape Europe for refuge in Canada in the early 1950s.

As Grace mentions in a note at the end of her book, a little-known fact is that Canada wanted to be seen as a great peace maker. Two social researchers – Irving Abella & Harold Troper – at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE) University of Toronto, published a book in 1982 entitled *None is Too Many*. This referred to a letter, that the two had uncovered, in which a Minister in the Canadian Government in the 1940s had displayed vicious antisemitism. He had written that 'even letting one Jew into the country would be too many'.

Coincidentally, I had been teaching summer school in OISE when that book came out and I witnessed the uproar it caused in Canada. I was a regular academic visitor to OISE in the 1980s and 1990s and became very enamoured of the scholars and students that I encountered. Grace has become a particular favourite of mine.

Her book has opened my eyes to the enormous minutiae of pain caused by the Holocaust to an array of different Jewish families. Hers is a love story of sorts – to her husband Andrey – also the son of Holocaust survivors – whom she met through a mutual friend. She travelled 3000 miles west to meet him, as young people often did in the heyday of the radical and liberation movements. After graduation at McGill University in Montreal, Canada with a circuitous journey via Perugia to learn Italian, she intended to study at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. In 1971, she took a summer trip to Berkeley to meet Andrey and found herself staying and changing tack. Eventually, she became an academic teacher of teachers. She delights in storytelling as a way of teaching.

This book exudes the love of stories and learning, and she offers us her tremendously difficult childhood of trauma as a lesson in how to recuperate and not only survive but become creative, able to impart her impulses to other students. From her childhood in a poor area of Montreal, Grace blossomed through her education and demonstrated

a love of languages and literature. She weaves her stories of love and loss into a beautiful tapestry. She also invites the reader to share her love of stories to enter into her world and engage with her knowledge of cultures as diverse as forms of Judaism, Christianity and other religions. This book opens our eyes to how intergenerational trauma can be overcome and contribute to new ways of being. It invites you the reader to enter this wonderful world of creativity.

Miriam E. David

**I SEEK A KIND PERSON: MY FATHER, SEVEN CHILDREN AND THE ADVERTS THAT HELPED THEM ESCAPE THE HOLOCAUST**

By Julian Borger  
Other Press

After Hitler invaded Vienna in March 1938 life was torn apart for the Jewish population. Seeing the dreadful deterioration of their lives some unselfish parents sent their children to safety by advertising for new homes for them in England. The Kindertransport which saved about 10,000 Jewish children from Austria, Germany and Czechoslovakia is well known. But Julian Borger discovered that his father Robert and other youngsters were rescued by another route provided by readers of a newspaper advert in the *Manchester Guardian*.

Eighty-three years later Julian, a distinguished *Guardian* journalist came across the cutting requesting help for Robert, including pleas from other frantic parents trying to save sons and daughters. These sat alongside radio programme listings, crosswords and appeals for RAF pilots. Robert ended up living with loving foster parents in Caernarfon, north Wales and his mother Erna accompanied him on a domestic visa although they were not allowed to live at the same address. But the long shadow of the Holocaust caught up with him in the end.

The majority of Jews in Austria lived in Vienna but before the Anschluss comparatively few took the opportunity to emigrate. Afterwards things rapidly became desperate as they were made to scrub pavements, children were forced out of school and their fathers arrested

and sent to Dachau. Robert's parents had a prosperous shop selling radios and musical instruments which was ransacked on Kristallnacht and later forcibly sold for a derisory sum.

His father Leo also eventually got out so on the face of it Robert was comparatively lucky but nevertheless kept the advert a secret. Starting with nothing but that page, Julian later traced the remarkable stories of his father and other advertised children and their families against the background of a world at war. Robert was described as "an intelligent Boy, aged 11, Viennese of good family". Directly below was fourteen-year old Alice Hess's advert "well educated Jewess: very fond of children: good sewing, household help."

The moving account details heart-rending sacrifices and unbearably sad goodbyes parents bade their children at Vienna's Westbahnhof Station, sometimes forever. Some were eventually able to escape themselves, flat broke, by taking on domestic and menial work. It tells of Robert's complexities and the incredibly different and fascinating stories and tragedies which overtook other advertised children and their families. It takes the reader through the Shanghai ghetto where most Jews survived although very thin, concentration and internment camps, smugglers saving Jewish life in Holland and the improbable workings of a French resistance cell. By the time of Julian Borger's investigation all but one of the children had died but at last he found Lisbeth Weiss. She was thriving in the New York area and her account is uplifting as are so many stories of strangers who helped the children.

The story's framework is based on the author's knowledge through the children's own memoirs and interviews with their families. His idea is original and work painstaking, reflective and thorough. His wider family includes so many interesting characters including his grandparents Leo and Erna referred to affectionately as Omi. She tries valiantly but unsuccessfully to restore the business after the war, loves continental food, wearing boots "whatever the season".

Janet Weston



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

**THURSDAY 19 JUNE 2025**  
11AM-12.30PM

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# OBITUARIES

## Eva KUGLER BEM

Born: 12 January 1931, Halle an der Saale, Germany  
Died: 23 April 2025, London



**Eva Kanner was the middle of three daughters in a Jewish family that owned a department store. During Kristallnacht her father, Salomon, was arrested and sent to Buchenwald; their store was destroyed and their home ransacked.**

After securing forged visas, the family fled to Paris in 1939, taking only one suitcase each and 40 Deutschmarks which was the maximum allowed under Nazi restrictions.

Following the German invasion of France, her father was interned as an enemy national and the children were placed in care under the Jewish welfare organisation Ouvre de Secours aux Enfants. In 1941, when the United States issued a small number of visas for Jewish children in France, Eve and her sister Ruth took the place of two girls who had fallen ill.

Upon arrival in New York she was placed in three successive foster homes. "I did not believe that I would ever see my parents again... But the guilt I felt for securing a place of safety at the expense of a sick child never left me."

Her sister Lea had survived in hiding with the help of the French Resistance. Both parents endured four French concentration camps and were twice narrowly spared deportation to Auschwitz. The family was reunited in 1946.

Eve studied at the University

of Pennsylvania and worked as a journalist. She later married Simon Kugler and moved to London in 1991. Together, they had two children, a son and a daughter.

It was in adulthood that she began actively piecing together her early life. The memoirs of her mother, Mia Kanner, published in the book *Shattered Crystals*, helped fill in the gaps. Eve became a regular speaker on the Holocaust, addressing schools, synagogues and civic groups in the UK and abroad, and was a frequent participant in the March of the Living.

Eve recorded her testimony for AJR Refugee Voices, helping to preserve the record of the darkest period of Jewish history and shine a light on its universal lessons.

She was also a regular contributor to the *AJR Journal* including, in March 2022, providing a moving account of her return to the building in Halle-Salle where her family experienced Kristallnacht. Eve wrote: "I thought of my mother walking up these very steps the day after Kristallnacht, seeking news about my father who had been taken during the night. I was so proud of her immense courage, prepared to face the Nazis, perhaps the same men who had arrested her husband or who had ordered her to sweep up the broken glass and for two long hours watched her until there was not a sliver left."

Eve was awarded the BEM in 2019 for her contribution to Holocaust education. She continued speaking publicly well into her 90s and maintained a website

[www.shatteredcrystals.net](http://www.shatteredcrystals.net)

## George SUMMERFIELD

Born: 3 June 1933, Berlin  
Died: 31 March 2025, London

**Heinz Günther Sommerfeld was just six when he and his twin brother Peter and parents Margot and Frank escaped on one of the last trains from Berlin to the UK in August 1939, thanks to the help of their non-Jewish caretaker.**

After an initial period in London the family went to Eastbourne. Shortly after that George's father was interned on the Isle of Man and the twins and their mother were forced to return to London. They lived in a room in Chalk Farm and spent every night in Tottenham Court Road underground station because of the Blitz.

They twins began attending the Hall School in Swiss Cottage, where they were offered two places for the price of one school fee. The Summerfield family joined Belsize Square Synagogue, where George and Peter were the only two children of that age in the community. The gregarious duo would perform for members of the synagogue, the Blue Danube Club and for American troops by singing and tap dancing.

After attending William Ellis Grammar School, George and Peter both received scholarships to study at the University of Oxford (Pembroke College). Before going to Oxford they completed their National Service, seeing active duty in Egypt (Suez) and Malta. They often reminisced about their Passover in Egypt.

In the late 1950s George met his wife Giselle, who was just 18. They married at Belsize Square and had two children, Jacky and Michael.

The brothers' careers at first developed in parallel. Both initially worked as lawyers until George, who spoke six languages, went into tourism and later become an educational psychologist and career consultant. In 1960 he set up Career Analysts with his Cambridge graduate friend Joshua Fox, where he connected with people from all walks of life.

George was a very open and welcoming



person, who practiced inclusivity before it was a thing. Staff in his office came from all walks of life. The family home was always full of people and George and Giselle regularly threw fantastic parties.

After Giselle died in 1991, George remarried Marion and enjoyed spending time with her, his brother Peter and his wife Marianne.

In 2021, George and Peter's story was featured in the BBC film series *Saved by a Stranger*, in which they reconnected with the family of Rolf Schädler, the caretaker who played a crucial role in their escape from Nazi Germany.

George dedicated much of his later life to Holocaust education, sharing his testimony and experiences with school pupils in the UK and in Germany. The AJR is proud to have captured his testimony as part of AJR Refugee Voices Archive.

George is survived by his twin Peter, his two children and four grandchildren – Jonluke, Nathan, Raphael and Lotte.



## H. Michael ROSENSTOCK

Born: 7 August 1935, Berlin  
Died: 10 April 2025, Toronto

### Michael was the only child of Werner and Susanne Rosenstock. Werner Rosenstock was the founding secretary of the AJR.

The family had managed to obtain sponsorship in the USA and were making their way there via England in 1939. A move to the USA proved impossible though and they remained in England as refugees.

Like many other London children, Michael was evacuated to Wales for part of the war. While there, he won a Welsh speaking contest. He was a marvel with languages and was taught Russian during his national service. This would have been considered useful during the Cold War. After his national service he attended Cambridge and went on to study at the School of Librarianship and Archives at University College, London.

Michael eventually found his way to the University of California, Los Angeles, where he married the late Janet Rosenstock (née Stearns). They had their first child, Eva, in 1963. Michael went on to work at the University of Accra, Ghana, and then returned to UCLA for another year. He was then offered a job at the University of Toronto, Canada, and they moved to Toronto in 1966 where their second child, Ruth, was born. He later divorced Janet but remained life-long friends with her until her passing in 2023.

He headed the Collection Development Department at the University of Toronto Libraries from 1966 until his retirement in 2001. This was a period of great expansion in graduate studies at the University and Michael played a key role. After retirement he volunteered in the library's used book room, the proceeds of which go into the library development fund.

He loved cinema, theatre, classical music, opera and travel and he felt deeply connected to his German Jewish roots. He was a kind, caring man who donated to many charities. He considered himself so fortunate to have ended up in England and then Canada and told his daughters often that he had a full and happy life.

He will be sorely missed by his two daughters, Eva (Harvey Sahker) and Ruth, grandsons David and Sam, his extended family, friends, and former colleagues.

**Eva Sakher née Rosenstock**



## VISIT TO THE SCULPTURE PARK, FARNHAM

– Surrey's hidden gem

MONDAY 28 JULY 2025



This visit to the enchanting arboretum and ever-changing sculpture park includes lunch at the nearby Bel & The Dragon, a boutique country inn.

Return coach travel from/to Edgware is optional.



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



## A DAY IN BRIGHTON WITH A JEWISH TWIST

WEDNESDAY 30 JULY 2025



Including a guided walking tour through the streets and 'twittens' of central Brighton, with stories about 250 years of local Jewish life.

Followed by a fish & chip lunch (optional)

Meeting at Brighton Station



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

## CHAOS CONQUEROR

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Impeccable references provided

## 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 4 June	Morning	Wanstead	Karen Diamond
Thursday 5 June	Morning	North London	Ros Hart
Thursday 5 June	Afternoon	Pinner	Karen Diamond
Monday 9 June	Morning	North Manchester	Michal Mocton
Monday 9 June	Lunchtime	Brighton	Ros Hart
Wednesday 11 June	Lunchtime	North Lancs	Michal Mocton
Wednesday 11 June	Lunchtime	Muswell Hill	Ros Hart
Thursday 19 June	All Day	Outing to Sandwich, Kent – please see advert on page 3	Karen Diamond or Ros Hart
Monday 23 June	All Day	Lady Aurelia Young in central London	Karen Diamond or Ros Hart
Tuesday 24 June	Morning	South London	Karen Diamond
Wednesday 25 June	Lunchtime	Bristol	Ros Hart
Wednesday 25 June	Lunchtime	Summertime BBQ Glasgow	Agnes Isaacs
Monday 30 June	Morning	Edgware	Ros Hart

### CO-ORDINATOR DETAILS

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07966 886 535

## ZOOMS AHEAD

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

Wednesday 11 June @ 4pm	<b>Denise Fluskey &amp; Neil Herrington – Stanislaw Brunstein: the artist and his life</b> <a href="https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/85667109551">https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/85667109551</a>	Meeting ID: 856 6710 9551
Monday 16 June @ 4pm	<b>AJR QUIZ</b> <a href="https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/86021321146">https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/86021321146</a>	Meeting ID: 860 2132 1146
Wednesday 18 June @ 4pm	<b>Book Discussion (no speaker) – The Casual Vacancy by JK Rowling</b> <a href="https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/84937107241">https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/84937107241</a>	Meeting ID: 849 3710 7241
Tuesday 24 June @ 4pm	<b>Michael Shaw – The Palestine Patrol which prevented immigration from Europe to Israel immediately after WW2</b> <a href="https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/89580444480">https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/89580444480</a>	Meeting ID 895 8044 4480
Wednesday 25 June @ 4pm	<b>Dr Gregory Chamitoff – A Jewish astronaut in space: My two missions to the International Space Station</b> <a href="https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/81389851665">https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/81389851665</a>	Meeting ID 813 8985 1665 (NB this talk will not be recorded)
Thursday 26 June @ 3pm	<b>Kinder Contact Project</b> <a href="https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/84753469229">https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/84753469229</a>	Meeting ID 847 5346 9229
Monday 30 June @ 4pm	<b>Enzo Ferrari: his life, his cars, his legacy</b> <a href="https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/86135056384">https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/86135056384</a>	Meeting ID: 861 3505 6384

## 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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