



AJR JOURNAL

The Association of Jewish Refugees

Back to school

SHANA TOVA

As millions of students return to schools, colleges and universities this month we look back at the great educators that came to Britain as Holocaust refugees (p.1), and look ahead to how the lessons from the Holocaust might best be taught (p.5).

One great example of Holocaust awareness is a recent event in Swanage, which focused on reconciliation and healing (p.10). This theme also underpins the philosophy of one remarkable AJR centenarian, Kurt Marx, whose life story we share on p.12.

If you are interested in researching your own family story please read our guide on p.15 to the various archives and services available.

Wishing you a sweet, healthy and peaceful new year.



In 2018 the AJR unveiled a plaque at Bunce Court in Otterden, Kent. The event was attended by a group of former Bunce Courtians, from left to right Gabriele Foti, unknown, Heidi Goldsmith, Ruth Danson, Leslie Brent, Karl Grossfield, Susi Davids, Heinz Redwood, Martin Lubowski

David Herman considers the remarkable contribution made to British education by Jewish refugees.

In June the teacher and lecturer Ralph Blumenau died, aged 100. Ralph was born Klaus Blumenau in Cologne in December 1924 but anglicised his name when he came to England as a refugee in 1936. Educated at St. Paul's and Oxford, he went on to teach at The King's School, Canterbury and then Malvern College, where he became Head of History (1959 – 1985). He retired in 1985 and then spent another thirty years lecturing on European History, the History of Philosophy and the History of the Jews at the University of the Third Age.

Leonora Goldschmidt was a prominent Jewish educator and headteacher whose school in Berlin was noted for its progressive teaching. After Kristallnacht,

Goldschmidt was convinced that there was no future for her school in Germany and she managed to get her family to England in time and set her up her own school for Jewish refugees, first in Sandwich and then in the Kentish port of Folkestone.

A former pupil recalled of the school: "The general atmosphere was very congenial, and although there certainly was discipline, it was not obtrusive or draconian. Dr. Goldschmidt, as headmistress, was clearly in charge of every aspect of the school and more than capable of laying the law down when necessary (and it quite often was necessary) but even at the height of the
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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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Back to school (cont.)

storm one was aware of an undercurrent of affection and humour. The teaching was also of a high standard. I remember ... Mr Stadelman (an ex-journalist) teaching German, and Dr Goldschmidt teaching History. There was also Dr Julian Hirsch (French and Latin) and Mr Sawady (religious instruction and, more memorable, music)." After the school closed, Goldschmidt worked as a teacher at several private and state-funded schools in England until 1968.

Another famous headmistress was Anna Essinger, a Jewish-German refugee. In May 1926, she opened a progressive co-educational boarding school in Ulm and in 1933 she left Germany. According to Deborah Cadbury, in her book on Bunce Court, *The School That Escaped the Nazis* (2022), Essinger "resolved to move her entire establishment, lock, stock and barrel, out of Germany, right under the noses of the Nazi authorities". She set off with six teachers and six senior boys and girls to prepare for the arrival of the others. Sixty-five Jewish children followed two weeks later, their destination a manor house in Kent called Bunce Court. Some of the best-known pupils at Bunce Court School included the cartoonist Gerard Hoffnung, the artist Frank Auerbach, the medical pioneer Leslie Brent, and Richard Sonnenfeldt, the chief interpreter for the American prosecutor at the Nuremberg trials. The school closed in 1948.

In a recent article about Bunce Court, Matthew Reisz wrote, "Many of the staff, keen to escape Nazi Germany, were distinctly overqualified: the boiler man had been a director at the Deutsches Theater, while the maths teacher was a distinguished astronomer. And there was also a notable stress on traditional Germanic high culture. The music teacher almost had a fit when pupils suggested a performance of Gilbert and Sullivan."

According to one former pupil, the school was animated by "a complex amalgam of humanism, the Quaker faith, liberal values and Judaism, brought together by the mind of a woman whose one purpose in life seemed to be to serve children".

St. Christopher's School in Letchworth, Hertfordshire, a famous progressive boarding school, took in a number of Jewish refugees, some of who came on

the Kindertransport. Some of the teachers were also refugees. One of the German exile teachers, Kurt Boehm, taught the boys PE but was interned after May 1940. His successor was a Czech exile, a discus thrower, who had swum the Rhine to escape the Nazis.

The headteacher Mr Lyn Harris also assisted at the Leonore Goldschmidt School in Berlin. He and his wife Eleanor were Quakers who ran the co-educational school on progressive lines. The Harris became close friends with Leonore Goldschmidt and it was in Letchworth that the German-Jewish educator went to improve her English. Ruth Jackson née Werner, a Kindertransport child, was a pupil at the school from 1939 to 1943. She published her memoir including being at the school in *Memories of Childhood* in 2004.

The Regent's Park School was founded by Dr Bruno Schindler and his wife, Alma in 1933, mainly for Jewish refugee children from Germany. It was the aim of the Schindlers to make the children as independent as possible as they knew that a number of them would probably never see their parents again. There was a strong emphasis on Judaism and Dr Schindler made it a rule that every Friday evening he would give a talk about the history of the Jews and Judaism. There were also many discussion groups on a variety of subjects led by the matron of the school. The aim of the school was thus to encourage independent thinking, an ability to act independently and a feeling that, despite adversity, it was possible for all to achieve the kind of life and standard of living from which most of the children had come.

Nelly Wolffheim, a Jewish-German educationalist and child psychologist, was born in Berlin in 1879. She trained as a kindergarten teacher at the renowned Berlin Pestalozzi-Froebel House. Unfortunately, she was so often seriously ill that she could not work in her profession. Unable to work, but with much time to think and to read, she began to develop theories and to write about teaching difficult, unstable and psychologically sick children. She spent nearly ten years travelling with her mother from one sanatorium to another, without finding a cure. In 1914, she opened a private kindergarten in her parents' apartment in Berlin and became

interested in a psychoanalytically oriented (kindergarten) education.

In 1933 Wolffheim's book, *Psychoanalyse und Kindergarten* (Psychoanalysis and Kindergarten), was burned by the Nazis. Nelly Wolffheim said, "Suddenly everything was ended, not only my work but also all the ideals which had been important for me. Principles for which I had fought my whole life became invalidated. It was very painful for me to watch as my work became useless."

She emigrated to England in 1939. She had almost no money and felt out of place in a strange environment and culture. Her level of fluency in English was not sufficient to continue her writing. Living first in London and then, for a longer time, in Oxford, she earned her living working as a model for an art institute and by selling homemade toys. After 1945, her work dealt with the situation of traumatised children from concentration camps, then in London at the Hampstead Clinic, led by Anna Freud.

In his acclaimed book, *Jewish Refugees from Germany and Austria in Britain, 1933-1970*, Dr Anthony Grenville writes about two other schools founded by refugees before the war: Stoatley Rough School in Surrey, founded by Hilde Lion in 1934, and Camphill School for children with special needs in Aberdeen, founded by Karl Koenig. "There were also nurseries and kindergartens for younger children," writes Grenville, "of which the best known was Anna Freud's in Maresfield Gardens, Hampstead."

Perhaps the best-known refugee educationalist of all was Kurt Hahn. Born in Berlin in 1886, he was briefly arrested by the Nazis in 1933 and escaped to Britain where he founded Gordonstoun School in 1934, where one of his first pupils was Prince Philip (Charles, Andrew and Edward were all later educated there). Hahn's ideas influenced the Outward Bound schools (1941) and The Duke of Edinburgh award scheme (1956).

These German-Jewish educationalists had an enormous impact on education in Britain from the 1930s onwards, from kindergartens to progressive secondary schools. They left a rich and enduring legacy.

David Herman

HOLOCAUST EDUCATION CONFERENCE

The AJR's next international forum, *Remembering & Rethinking 2025: Teaching & Learning About The Holocaust*, will take place from 17-18 November 2025 in London.

At this critical moment for Holocaust educators, we are very much looking forward to hosting an event where experts and stakeholders in the field can share their expertise and learning. Topics will include:

- New classroom resources and pedagogical approaches
- Using testimony in the post-survivor world

- Holocaust site visits
- Educating about and against antisemitism
- Teaching about the Holocaust through a local lens
- Using art, literature and drama in meaningful ways

We have already confirmed a number of notable speakers from international

REMEMBERING & RETHINKING 2025
TEACHING AND LEARNING ABOUT THE HOLOCAUST

institutions including Yad Vashem, the IHRA, Unesco and the Claims Conference – as well as many other organisations that are leading the way at their local, national or regional level. We will shortly start announcing the names of these speakers.

More details and the registration form on <https://AJR2025.eventbrite.com>

AJR

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Help a Separated Child

Imagine being a child or young person having to flee your homeland because of war, terror, or persecution. Imagine not having your parents with you because they were killed before you left or were unable to leave. Imagine arriving in a strange country, with absolutely nothing.

It's a situation that many AJR members will be able to easily imagine, as they or their parents or grandparents experienced it. Which is why the AJR has chosen **The Separated Child Foundation** for our Mitzvah Day campaign.

The Separated Child Foundation offers emotional, social, financial and physical support to separated children and young people in Britain up to the age of 21. Refugee children arrive in the UK exhausted and dishevelled. There are currently no

other charities or agencies that provide the bare essentials for the first few days of their experience in the UK. The Separated Child Foundation provides an Arrival Pack which is a duffle bag crammed full of toiletries and a towel, socks and underwear, warm clothing, a waterproof jacket, gloves, a hat and a scarf, and other essentials.

It is hard to believe that children today are still suffering the same fate as that experienced by many AJR members, arriving in a foreign country alone and afraid. Unaccompanied children and young people experience the double trauma of separation not only from their homeland, culture and natural environment but also from the adults in their family who gave them love and care.

We are asking our members, volunteers and staff to provide toiletries which we will then be packing into washbags to be gifted to young refugees as they begin the next chapter of their lives in the UK. **Donations can be collected at Outreach meetings, brought into Head Office, or purchased through an Amazon Wishlist.**



Here are the items we are collecting:

- Toothbrush (adult size, as most of the children we support are teenagers)
- Toothpaste (again, for adults)
- Shampoo (unisex)
- Roll-on deodorant (unisex, and no glass bottles or sprays, for safety)
- Bar of soap (unisex)
- Wide-toothed comb (so it is suitable for all hair types)
- Notepad (preferably A6 size)
- Ballpoint pen
- Warm hat or scarf (these can be hand-knitted) suitable for a teenager
- Pack of sanitary towels (ideally 10-12 per pack)

We will be holding packing days in London, Manchester and Glasgow – details to follow.

For further information, or the link to our Amazon Wishlist, please contact: michalmocton@ajr.org.uk

MY MUM, HER DOLL AND *THE REPAIR SHOP*

Charlie Fitzgerald always knew her mum's doll, Heisi, was special – but had no idea just how deep her story ran, or how closely it was tied to her mum Ruth Hayter's own past.

Heisi was unlike any other doll I'd seen. With her moulded plaited hair – like Princess Leia from *Star Wars* (or "earphones," as Mum calls them) – her dimples, tiny fingernails, and piercing blue china eyes, she was beautiful, faded, and loved. She was made of hard celluloid, and although when I was a child I made her clothes, nothing ever seemed quite right. She needed something special.

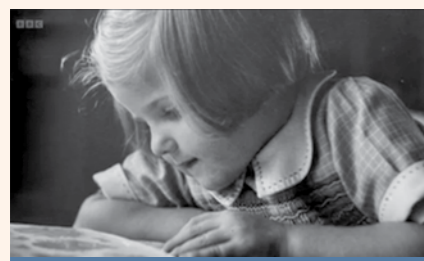
Over the decades Heisi slowly began to deteriorate. Pieces would break off and be carefully kept in a matchbox. Eventually, she lost a whole leg – and when Mum moved to Brighton, next door to me, eight years ago, the matchbox of fragments was lost too.

It wasn't until my late twenties that I learned that Mum had been born in Vienna, smuggled out of Austria as a toddler in 1939 and later adopted into the Raeburn family. I'd had no idea I wasn't blood-related to my cousins – especially the one who looks so much like me that we're often mistaken for sisters. Mum is very private, rarely speaking of her early life.

A few years ago, Austria changed its citizenship laws to embrace descendants



Heisi as she was when she arrived at The Repair Shop



Ruth was just two years old when she and her doll Heisi were smuggled into England

of those persecuted by the Nazis. While going through old documents to apply, I found letters and official papers that brought my mum's incredible journey into focus. I realised how lucky she had been, and how much Dora and Walter Raeburn had done for her. I deeply regret never having the chance to thank them.

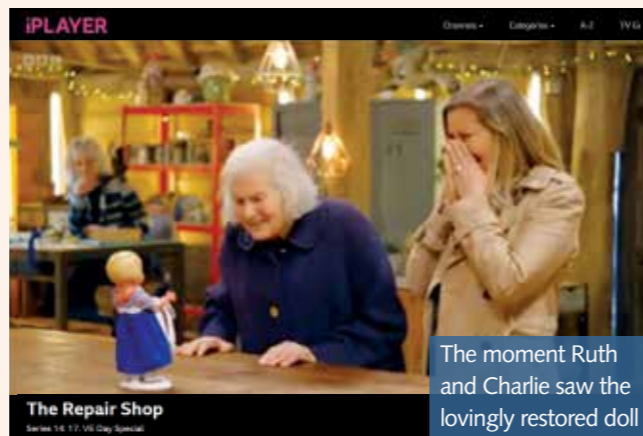
Mum told me that throughout her journey here, she clutched Heisi all the way. That's when I understood: Heisi wasn't just a doll – she was Mum's comfort and her only link to the life she left behind. I knew then that I had to try to have her restored, so I applied to the BBC's *The Repair Shop*.

I sent off the application, not expecting much, and then completely forgot about it. When I got a phone call from 'the repair shop' asking for Ruth, I thought it must somehow relate to a broken vacuum cleaner!

Mum was initially reluctant, but she loves the TV show, and the idea of Heisi being mended won her over. I went with her as a support, but the team were so warm and kind that she quickly relaxed. Julie and Amanda, the 'Teddy Bear Ladies' were utterly delightful and Mum shared her story with clarity and grace.

When we returned to collect Heisi, I was so focused on how Mum would react that I didn't expect to be emotional myself. But when they unveiled her – restored, radiant, dressed in a beautiful Austrian *dirndl* – I was overwhelmed. Her newly blonde hair reminded me of the photo we have of Mum's birth mother. Mum on the other hand was over the moon, so it was good that we weren't both weeping on national TV!

It wasn't until we watched the episode that we realised just how difficult the restoration had been. Heisi's missing leg had been perfectly rebuilt by Charlotte, a celluloid



The moment Ruth and Charlie saw the lovingly restored doll

expert brought in especially. You genuinely couldn't tell which leg had once been broken. It was an extraordinary piece of craftsmanship.

Now, Heisi has pride of place in Mum's front room, safely tucked away from the sun. The whole experience brought so much more than a restored doll. It gave Mum the chance to talk about her past, to honour her story, and the response has been nothing short of amazing.

On *The Repair Shop's* Instagram, the clip of Mum's episode has had over one million views. On Facebook, the video has been seen 4.4 million times and received nearly 13,000 comments. Mum was even stopped in the street by someone who gave her a hug.

We attend the AJR meetups in Brighton and were incredibly touched when co-ordinator Ros Hart asked Mum to talk about this experience and bring Heisi. Mum spent hours writing her speech and, despite being nervous, delivered it beautifully. It was another special moment in this beautiful, healing journey.

We still have no idea of what the name Heisi means, if anything, or even if it is spelled correctly. Mum is (re)learning German aged 88 with the help of *Duolingo* but hasn't yet come across any similar word, so if anyone has any ideas, please let us know!

The full episode can be seen on www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/m002bx11/the-repair-shop-series-14-17-ve-day-special?seriesId=b081581p-structural-14-m0026qhl

OPINION

WHAT WOULD THOSE PIONEERING EDUCATORS THINK OF OUR SCHOOLS TODAY?

The AJR's Head of Education and Heritage, Alex Maws, reflects on progressive educational principles and how they relate to teaching and learning about the Holocaust in 2025.

"The abuses of capitalism have become ever more flagrant down the years," wrote educator Ralph Blumenau – then aged 91 – in a letter to *The Guardian* in 2016, explaining why he had found himself becoming ever more politically left-wing as he grew older. It was Blumenau's recent death which prompted our Contributing Editor, David Herman, to write this month's excellent lead story on the contributions made by Jewish refugees to British education.

As readers will have noted, there was a common thread linking much of these educational contributions, and it wasn't merely the Jewish origins of the people Herman writes about – it was a shared commitment to the principles of progressive education. This child-centred approach to education gained popularity in the first half of the 20th century but fell out of favour amongst policy makers in the century's later years.

I suspect that Ralph Blumenau, Leonora Goldschmidt and Anna Essinger would be dismayed by the British educational sector of 2025, with its league tables, high-stakes tests and emphasis on job skills. This trend towards marketisation in education is the logical result of the "abuses of capitalism" that Blumenau decried.

Why am I writing about this, you may wonder? Fear not, my work as the AJR's Head of Education and Heritage does not have a Marxist agenda. But Holocaust educators must operate within the constraints of whichever educational system they find themselves in, and in Britain, this is the environment that the AJR and our many educational partner organisations contend with. Where does the Holocaust fit into this landscape?

In its teaching recommendations, the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's (IHRA) states, "Teaching and learning about the Holocaust provides an essential opportunity to inspire critical thinking, societal awareness, and personal growth." Meanwhile, the Holocaust Educational Trust states, "by studying the Holocaust, students will grapple with a host of challenging questions about what it means to be human. These questions seldom lend themselves to easy answers but this is one of the strengths of Holocaust education, encouraging students to reflect critically on issues of identity, behaviour and ethics."

How does an exam board assess these outcomes?

Certain challenges are specific to the Holocaust as a subject. Teaching about a topic imbued with moral and emotional complexity is at odds with 21st century British educational norms. In other ways, Holocaust education is not unique; it is just one of many educational aspirations that are competing for time and resources in a sector where both of these are increasingly squeezed.

Teaching effectively about the Holocaust requires specialist training and materials. These are readily available from a number of our educational partner organisations to schools and teachers who want to take up the offer; but considering the wider pressures of the education sector, it's understandable why the issue that is our top priority may not always be their top priority.

The unsustainable pressures placed on teachers explains why vacancy rates in that profession are at a record high. Yet there are reasons for optimism.

The AJR funds several Holocaust-related professional-development courses for teachers through our educational grants programme, almost all of which are held during school holidays. That it is necessary for teachers to give up their own holiday time to expand their expertise is an indictment of the educational system. But the fact that, in spite of everything, teachers are still willing to do it – is inspiring.

The core principles of teaching about the Holocaust – the choiceless choices, the limitations of human languages, the open-ended questions – are intrinsically progressive. So too is the impulse of those teachers who want to improve their own practice, not because they have been told to, but because they want to.

Educational policies, priorities and trends are constantly evolving – and rightly so. Regardless of what changes are in store over the coming generations, the AJR will continue to promote educational programmes which serve to honour the legacy of those pioneering Jewish refugee educators as well as the millions who never had a chance to come to Britain to make a mark on this country.

The AJR will host the international educational forum **REMEMBERING & RETHINKING 2025: TEACHING AND LEARNING ABOUT THE HOLOCAUST** from 17-18 NOVEMBER 2025, at which experts in the field will discuss many of the issues raised in this opinion piece. Read more on page 3.

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.

HONOURING OUR FRIENDS

Am I alone in feeling tremendously grateful for any support that is shown by non-Jews during these very difficult times?

Let me explain. As Jews we face the greatest onslaught of 'Jewhate' since WW2.

The streets of Acton in London were full of car horns hooting and people celebrating on the evening of October 7th. This terrifying and dumb alliance between Leftists and Islamists marching in solidarity with each other began long before Israel lifted a hand in self-defence.

In this maelstrom my mum (a Holocaust survivor and Kindertransport child) and myself felt on the edge of a precipice we never thought to experience. For me it was the first time, for her a terrible revisiting of the unimaginable horrors of her childhood.

How did our friends express their solicitude to us? A close gentile friend of my mother (and a Labour Party member) ranted at me about Israel for minutes and when I expressed our fear and reminded her of my mum's background retorted "Don't play that card with me!". That was the last time we spoke to her and the last time we ever will. By contrast another friend living in rural Sussex (also gentile and not Labour) said, "Of course I understand your fears, come and stay with us in Sussex if you want, we will make sure you are safe". She meant it.

This is my private experience. I wonder how much it has been replicated for other AJR readers?

On the world stage we also see a few gentiles (Rachel Johnson and Shelagh Fogarty, for example) taking immense risks to their personal safety by defending Jews and Israel's right to exist against the Iran-Hamas determination to snuff it out.

I wonder whether one day the Jewish community worldwide and Israel in particular might wish to honour such people? I certainly feel like honouring my

friend (now sadly deceased) who stood by us in our need and offered us both refuge and love.

Nick Bernstein, West London

WE ARE NOT AT THE BOTTOM

I imagine that I was not alone in being astonished at Anthony Lipmann's failure to even mention Hamas in his letter (August). Those still searching in the same disbelief can give up now because he doesn't. But this is of course entirely a piece for Israel's "critics" – Hamas gets a totally free pass while Israel shoulders the entire blame for the situation. There is a mealy-mouthed reference to "7 October 2023" as if it was just someone's birthday or dental appointment, but only in order that he can attack what he has decided is Israel's "retribution". And that for Mr Lipmann is it – the possibility that there might be a strategy to finish off once and for all a group that has launched several attacks on Israel, and indeed exists principally in order to destroy her doesn't seem even to cross his mind.

He accuses British Jews of "lacking humanity". How does he know? Jews here as in Israel have a dilemma. They are aware even if Mr Lipmann isn't, that Israel has obviously not been fighting just Hamas over the past few years but Iran (a nation state) and its other proxies. Are Jews in that situation supposed to be indifferent to the world's only Jewish state – one they know from visits or have friends and relatives resident there – quite apart from the country's religious, cultural and historic significance to them? And how certain is Mr Lipmann that it is impossible to be sympathetic to the undoubted suffering on the Palestinian side (another "gift" bestowed by Hamas' actions, on its own people) while still being understanding of Israel's objectives in the war? How many Jews has he spoken to about this? And how exactly is a feeling that the BBC (often accused of bias in many ways) too lacks sympathy for Israel's position "*indelible* (my italics) evidence of a prevailing lack of humanity amongst the Jewish community in Britain" – a truly shocking and illogical statement, and yet again, made worse by the fact that Mr Lipmann cannot possibly know how a

community of perhaps 300,000 people feels generally about the matter.

In conclusion I agree with Mr Lipmann that "Suffering is not a football league table with Jews at the top". I just wish I was more certain that perhaps in the twilight hours over a nice scotch, he doesn't entertain the idea that if there were such a table Jews would be at the very bottom.
Mark Schuck, London N12

CIVIC STRIFE

Your August Letters page contained a protest against what is perceived as Israel's negativity towards Gazans. Yet Israel has urged evacuation of Gazans prior to bombardments; Hamas has kept women and children in those places, with no shelters provided, though deep tunnels would have kept them safe. Israel put in food aid, Hamas withheld it, or it was looted. Israel has been assisting in ferrying Gazans to Israeli hospitals for life-saving treatment. Some of those altruistic souls were among the murdered of the kibbutzim which Hamas invaded, murdered, took hostages, committed torture and generally enacted an ongoing pogrom.

Jews everywhere are hurting. Civil strife among Jews runs counter to our well-being and buys into heavily financed global unrest which serves to distract the democratic countries from their declared purpose of upholding betterment of quality of life everywhere. An uphill Sisiphean task.

Judith Joseph, Birmingham

CHALLENGING READING

I know that AJR members embrace a wide range of opinions on the Israel/Gaza/Palestine crisis. I recently read an article which I personally found very moving, and which might resonate with other readers. Entitled *Silence in the Face of Gaza's Starvation is Absolute Betrayal of Holocaust Victims*, it was written by an eminent Israeli law professor, Orit Kamir, and published in *Ha'aretz*. It's challenging – but isn't that something everyone needs to do from time to time – challenge our deeply held positions, opinions, assumptions...?
Charlotte Reynolds, Cornwall

LOOKING FOR?

LEOPOLD (WERNER) LIEVENDAG / LESLIE LINSAY

Judith Eley is hoping to find information about her father, born Leopold Lievendag in August 1924. His parents lived in Hamburg but he was born in Vienna, with his parents returning to Hamburg within days of his birth. When he was 14 the decision was taken to put Werner (as everyone called him) on a Kindertransport and he arrived at Liverpool Street Station via Harwich in July 1939. He was then sent to Wittingehame agricultural school in East Lothian, on the estate of the Earl of Balfour, where he remained until the school closed in 1941. He then joined the British army, changing his name to Leslie Linsay. Tragically his parents and multiple family members were murdered in the camps.
judith.linsay@btinternet.com

ERICH LUDWIG SAUNDERS

Howard Falksohn, Senior Archivist at the Wiener Holocaust Library, is assisting the German National Library with some research about Erich Ludwig Saunders, born Ludwig Sander in 1894. In particular, they are trying to find out his death date and last town of residence in Great Britain.
halksohn@wienerholocaustlibrary.org

SURVIVORS FROM BERLIN

Philip Armstrong-Dampier is an award-winning TV producer who is currently researching a book/documentary project about two Jewish Berliners who lived in the city throughout the war and who survived. He is very keen to speak to any other survivors who were also in Berlin before or during the war.
philip@pzproductions.co.uk

REICH and/or GUTMANN

Polly Putnam, a Curator for Historic Royal Palaces, is researching the Jewish refugees who lived with Catherine and Sophia Duleep Singh between 1937-8 and 1941. She is particularly keen to learn details about the Reich and the Gutmann families. Rosa Gutmann is known to have arrived in May 1939 and was interned at the Rushen camp and the Isle of Man before going to the Jewish School for Deaf Children in London SW12. Gabrielle Reich was also interned at Rushen and her last known address is 2 Hocroft Road, London NW2.
Polly.Putnam@hrp.org.uk

RAILWAY INDUSTRY CELEBRATES KINDERTRANSPORT



The Kindertransport is a central feature of a new exhibition at Britain's busiest railway station, which is celebrating 200 years of train travel.

The exhibition at London Liverpool Street was originally created for the station's 150th birthday last year and has been refreshed and relaunched for *Railway 200*. It tells the story of the station's history,

including the former Bishopsgate and Broad Street stations, the pioneering Jazz Services of the 1920s and of course the Kindertransport.

Lady Linda Reich, whose late husband Sir Erich Reich is depicted as a little boy in Liverpool Street's permanent Kindertransport memorial, attended the opening event for *Railway 200* along with fellow AJR member Ruth Abrams.

PLEASE STOP

Please stop publishing the 'what about the Palestinians?' letters. Anthony Lipman's letter in the August 2025 edition was a nadir. The title *Is genocide only for the Jews?* was offensive enough.

If this was published in a national newspaper, it would be decried as obviously antisemitic. Having Holocaust survivor ancestors does not give letter writers a free pass for such antisemitism and it should never have been published.

What kind of person reads the newsletter of an organisation that exists to support the Jewish survivors of the Holocaust and is surprised and apparently offended that said newsletter is all about Jews and the Holocaust? Is Anthony writing to SURF complaining that the Tutsi in the UK aren't expressing enough sympathy for the Palestinians? I doubt it.

If such letter writers want Jews to constantly wring their hands about the suffering of the Palestinians, they can read *The Guardian*. It is incredibly offensive to assume that Jews don't care about anyone else because sometimes we just want to talk only about Jewish lives. I read the *AJR Journal* precisely because there are so few places where I can read about Jewish lives and history without the demand of 'what about the Palestinians'. The space these letters take up should be used instead for the Jewish Holocaust survivors and 2/3/4G in Israel, who do not otherwise get a voice in the UK.

Maybe it's time to abolish the *Letters to the Editor* page?

Name and address withheld

Note from editor: Rooted in delivering social welfare to Jewish victims of Nazism, the AJR keeps the memory of the Holocaust alive by galvanizing descendants in the UK and funding Holocaust education. This provides the focus for all of our activities and for the contents of this Journal. Like the majority of Jewish organisations in the diaspora, we are constantly mindful of and concerned about the fast-moving situation in the Middle East and have regularly published commentary from our members and readers in these pages. We will continue to do so, while retaining our focus on the core remit of our own charitable organisation.

ART NOTES: by Gloria Tessler

Ageing and physical impairment feature in the themes chosen by the prize-winning artists in the National Portrait Gallery's Herbert Smith Freehills Kramer Portrait Award 2025.

In **Moira Cameron's** First Prize winning self-portrait, *A life Lived*, the older woman slumped in an armchair is certainly exhausted, her face distant and reflective, but the colours around her, the vivid emerald dress; the patterned cobalt blue armchair, indicates a vivid life in memory. Cameron has captured the spent look in her face – something many of us can identify with after years of work, child rearing, love and disappointments – it's all there in the tension with the drooping mouth and tired eyes.

What makes this non naturalistic painting in thick impasto particularly captivating is that Cameron first painted the selfie 40 years ago but in this new version it evolves

into the new woman she has become. It is not a one dimensional portrait of an older woman, but the reflection of a complete life observed. There is a convoluted energy in the linear, abstract forms around her hands which could indicate the drama of earlier life. Cameron has exhibited her work all around the world, from Japan to New York and Switzerland.

Tim Benson's Second Prize winning painting, *Cliff, Outreach Worker*, focuses on facial differences. Cliff Dobbs' jaw was broken when he was a child and had never been reset. The painting is courageous and dramatic in over life size scale, using thickly applied paint in deep reds, ochres and greens. It does not shy away from showing the disfigured jaw and exposed teeth in full prominence, but also the deeply expressive eyes and solid strength – demonstrating the artist's intention to destigmatise facial differences, and celebrate their beauty, while also suggesting deprivation and isolation.

Benson, an award-winning painter, has

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CONTEMPORARY
PAINTING AND SCULPTURE

won international commissions and was previously selected for the Portrait Award in 2012, 2020 and 2024.

My personal choice goes to the Third Prize winner, **Martyn Harris**, for his sensitive, Super Realism portrait, *Memories*. His subject is Gillian, a woman he saw from his studio and with whom he became friends. In this painterly and delicate portrayal, we see her wispy grey hair, hands clasped before her, her face red, bloated and tense, her body encased in a thick black woolly jumper. Her sense of nostalgia and fragility invokes our compassion, but there is also calm acceptance as she appears to look back on her life. The painting recalls Rembrandt in its almost otherworldly attention to light and shadow. Harris became a full-time artist eight years ago and frequently exhibited for the Royal Society of Portrait Painters' annual exhibition.

The Young Artist's Award went to a representational work by the American artist and IT engineer **Michelle Liu**, for *Kofi*. She portrays a deceptively sullen faced young man with a mop of dark curls and a goatee beard. You cannot deny the attractiveness of this portrait; it is youthful and engrossing, but the model's mood, on closer inspection, may not be sullen at all, but deep and introverted, carrying the burdens of the world that the older models described have long abandoned. This is an emotional aspect that the artist has delivered with great sensitivity.

Liu studied fine art at the Otis College of Art and Design in Los Angeles, and has exhibited at London's Wimbledon Art Fair and the Chelsea Arts Society. She worked on her subject, a life model at the Big Turtle Studio over three consecutive sessions, in a communal space with other artists. The competition was judged by a panel including Maggi Hambling CBE; art historian and academic at The Courtauld Institute of Art.

The 46 artworks in the competition can be seen free of charge at the National Portrait Gallery until 12 October.



A Life Lived, 2024 by Moira Cameron

SPOTLIGHTING

HELMUT RUHEMANN

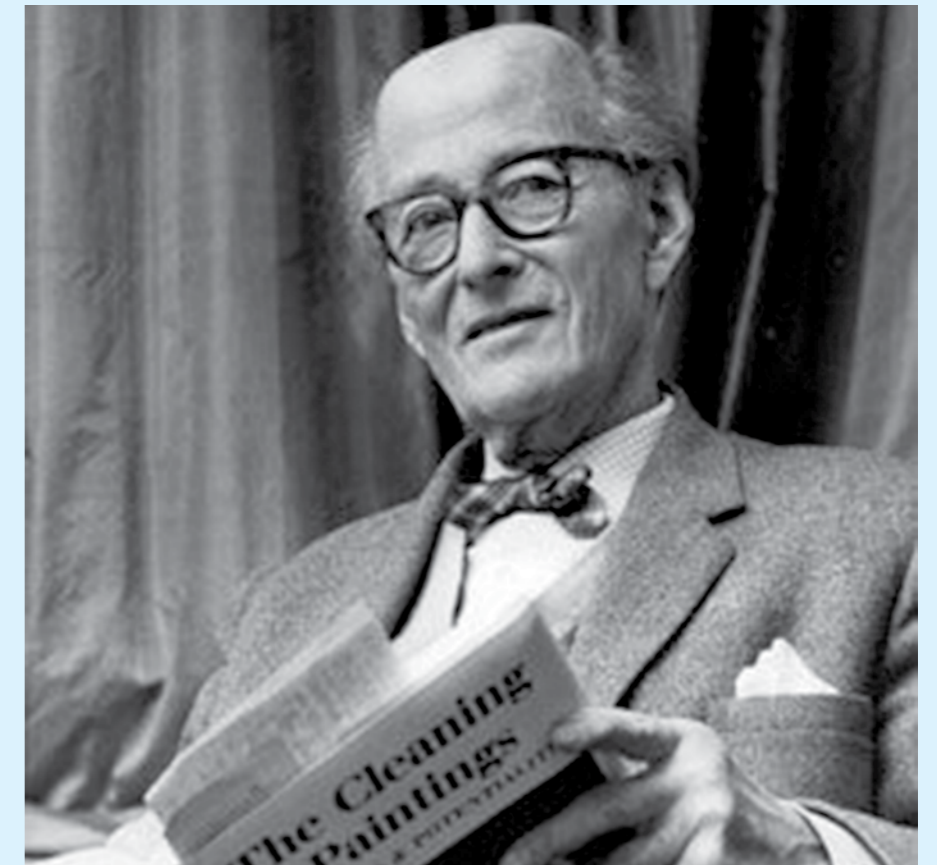
The Ben Uri Research Unit is recording the émigré contribution to British visual arts and culture since 1900. It has already published some 3,300 profiles, with hundreds more under research. Here we share their profile of the leading picture restorer Helmut Ruhemann.

Helmut Ruhemann was born into a Jewish family in Berlin, Germany in 1891. He studied painting in Karlsruhe, Munich and Paris and, during WW1, at the Prado in Madrid. He practised as a freelance picture restorer from 1921 before becoming Chief Restorer at the Kaiser Friedrich Museum, Berlin in 1929. There he promoted the use of X-rays as an analytical tool and favoured the complete removal of old varnish in cleaning pictures, in contrast to the more conservative approach of some of his contemporaries. Ruhemann also acted as an expert witness in a major art fraud trial and through this and subsequent work became an acknowledged expert in the detection of art forgery.

In 1933, following Hitler's accession to the Chancellorship in Germany and the introduction of antisemitic legislation, Ruhemann was dismissed from his post and, later that year, brought his family to England, where he already had clients among the leading London art dealers. His brother, architect Fritz Ruhemann, also re-settled in England and became an active member of the Free German League of Culture.

Helmut was assisted by a number of refugee organisations, including the German Refugees Hospitality Committee and the Jewish Refugee Committee who wrote to influential contacts at the Royal Academy and National Gallery to try to obtain him a position (Blewett 2019).

By 1934 he had set up a successful studio in Golden Square, Soho and was employed to restore paintings for the



National Gallery. A photograph from Lady Ottoline Morrell's album (c.1934, National Portrait Gallery), shows Ruhemann with the painter Mark Gertler, Gertler's wife Marjorie, and Philip Hendy (later Director of the National Gallery) taking tea together in the garden. Gertler also made entries in his 1937 notebook citing his discussions about technique and choice of materials with Ruhemann, who briefly had an active influence upon his painting.

Following the outbreak of WW2 in 1939 and the introduction of internment for so-called 'enemy aliens' in June 1940, Ruhemann was declared exempt and became naturalised the same year. Early on in the war he worked on the many paintings from the National and Tate Galleries which were sent to Wales for safekeeping and was highly regarded by Kenneth Clark, but after concerns were raised about his German origins, Ruhemann was replaced in that post in 1942, and instead appointed restorer at the Glasgow Art Gallery, a position he kept until 1944.

From 1944 he lectured at the Courtauld Institute of Art, where he was also in charge

of the Technology Department between 1946 and 1951. He was appointed Consultant Restorer at the National Gallery in 1946 and Chief Restorer until 1972 under the Directorship of Sir Philip Hendy.

At several points in his post-war career – especially 1947 and 1963 – his approach to restoration was challenged, particularly his practice of complete removal of varnish and the brightening of the restored painting. These controversies did not detract from his highly successful career and he wrote many articles for *Conservation and History of Art* journals and published two books: the first, *The Artist at Work*, written in collaboration with Ellen Kemp and published in 1951, was widely read outside his profession. The second, his more substantial technical work, *The Cleaning of Paintings*, was written towards the end of his career and published in 1968; the following year he was awarded a CBE.

Helmut Ruhemann died in London in 1973. His full profile and thousands of others can be seen on www.buru.org.uk.

BUTTERFLIES IN SWANAGE

Elaine Merrikin Trimlett
Glover shares an account of a remarkable day that took place this summer in the heart of Dorset, on the Jurassic Coast.

On 14 May 2025 the seaside town of Swanage became a stage for one of the most moving commemorations in its history. At the Bandstand, second and third-generation descendants of the Kindertransport gathered to honour their parents' survival and the heroes who saved them from near-certain death in Nazi camps.

With voices of remembrance, gratitude, and reconciliation, attendees told stories of hope born from horror. Butterflies were handed out – a touching nod to Pavel Friedmann's poem *The Butterfly*, which mourns their absence in the ghetto. In Swanage, however, chrysalis turned to butterflies – a living symbol of transformation, freedom, and remembrance.

A legacy revisited

Among the guests was Paul Walder, who travelled from Chile with his children Valentina and Bruno. They came to see the statue of Trevor Chadwick, sculpted by Swanage artist Moira Purver. Paul's father, Peter, was one of Chadwick's rescued children brought to Forres School in 1939. Seeing Paul beside the statue was a moment of extraordinary continuity between generations and miraculous.



Paul Walder with daughter Valentina and his son Bruno, by the statue of Trevor Chadwick sculpted by Moira Purver

Another touching connection came through Craig Saul, who had discovered my book, *Swanage Kindertransport and the Bournemouth Refugee Committee Connection*, on eBay. Inside the book there is a photo of Roger Brown, who had cared for Craig's father, Gary, upon his arrival in Swanage via the Kindertransport and who became a lifelong friend to his family. Craig's story added an unexpected layer of personal history to the gathering.

Attendees were surprised and moved when Bill Nankivell and his wife Lesley appeared, revealing a family link to Florence Nankivell, who coordinated the first Kindertransport from Berlin in December 1938. That same train carried Alfred Batzdorf, who had sent his memoirs to Elaine before his passing, and Irma Zanker, Elaine's distant ancestor, who served as a child escort.

Voices of reconciliation

Anita Grosz, archivist and daughter of Hanus Grosz, a Winton and Chadwick child, shared his story and also spoke about her own



2nd Generation Kindertransport Paul Walder, Anita Grosz and Craig Saul with his wife Carol

work tracing the lives of Nicholas Winton's Kindertransport children and preserving them for future generations.

One of the most profound moments came when Pastor Werner addressed the crowd. His father, SS officer Wilhelm Oder, had committed horrific atrocities during the Holocaust, using Jews for live target practice. Pastor Werner now dedicates his life to peace and reconciliation, working with Holocaust survivors in Israel and supporting healing efforts in Ukraine. His presence was a reminder that the ripple effect of trauma can be answered with humility and hope.

This extraordinary day in Swanage blended history, healing and heartfelt storytelling. It was not simply an event, but a reckoning with the past, a tribute to resilience and a promise to remember.

Elaine's book *Swanage Kindertransport and the Bournemouth Refugee Committee Connection* is available from Amazon and other online retailers.



Lesley and Bill Nankivell, relatives of Florence Nankivell, with Craig Saul whose father Gary was on Florence's Kindertransport, 1 December 1938



Elaine, Paul Walder, Pastor Werner Oder and Bishop Adrian

Exodus: it's in our bones

AJR member Michael Saunders is concerned that rising antisemitism might give rise to a new wave of Jewish refugees.



Michael Saunders

We automatically think of 'Jewish Refugees' in reference to 1930s Europe, WW2 and escaping the Shoah. The heroic, beautiful and tragic human stories of Jews and others escaping persecution. The horror they left behind.

But I suggest it is time to reframe this. To understand that right now, in September 2025, many Jews across the world are considering leaving their homes, starting again somewhere new. Yes, they mostly won't escape with just the clothes on their backs or their silver wrapped in a bundle, but there are increasingly large neighbourhoods in Israel where French is the first language. This reflects the growing antisemitism around the globe where France leads the way with a surge in Islamic immigration and a Left leaning government heavily influenced by a Populist EU.

The UK is not far behind, with its uncontrolled southern border, the BBC with its anti-Israel stance, the new narrative at educational institutions which openly allow hostility and antisemitism wrapped up in a pro-Palestinian cause, two-tier policing...I could go on.

We all feel it. I have sat my family down and had 'the talk'. The same talk my grandparents had, their grandparents had. The talk where I explain it is my responsibility to state where I feel Jews are as a people, a collective, a culture and a voice in the UK today and how I foresee UK society in the near future. Quietly, without alarm, Jews in the UK and further afield are having 'the talk'. Looking at options, putting things in place.

Am I being alarmist? My journey is mine, yours is yours, but this much I know; there is a disturbing mirroring of pre-war Germany. The 'just cause' for antisemitism, the media, the radicalising of the youth, institutions not protecting, boycotting of Jewish stores or goods, a knock on your door late at night for something you said

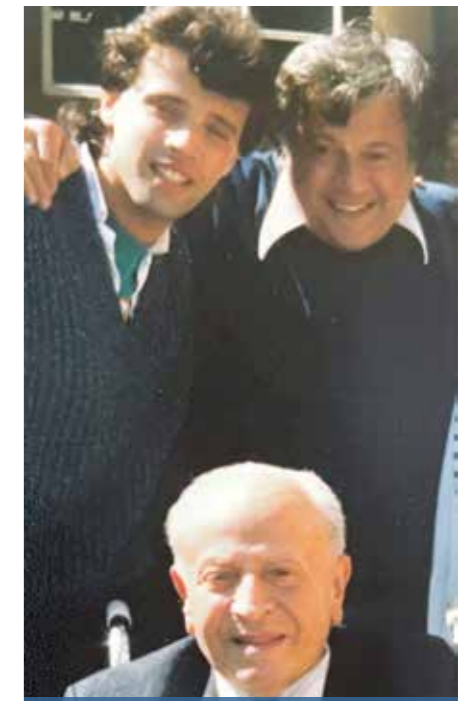
or wrote, attacks for being Jewish in culture or sport – this is today, September 2025.

After all, the somatic memory in our bones goes back 3500 years: the second book of the bible, after Genesis creation, is EXODUS.

My personal experience the past few years has included my oldest son being screamed at in the cafeteria while at university in London for having a different point of view on Gaza, then being sidelined. My younger son being at a party in Willesden where everyone started chanting 'free free Palestine'. He left the party with his best friend. I attended my daughter's graduation at Manchester University and had to watch student after student accept their graduation wearing keffiyeh scarves, some delivering vitriolic anti-Israel speeches. I complained, which was a waste of time.

Six months ago, at one of the targeted weekly pre-Shabbat hate demos by the pro-Palestinian lot at Swiss Cottage, I made leaflets that mocked Hezbollah and the use of pagers. Cheeky but nothing too offensive. I checked with the demo head police officer if I could hand them out, he said best not, to so I gave them to him to throw away. An hour later I was arrested and spent 12 hours in jail. Four months later, the 'case' was dropped by the CPS.

All these things add up. The night of the October 7th massacre people climbed the bridge in Golders Green and wrote 'Free Palestine' across it both sides. To their credit, after being harangued by me, Barnet Council painted over it within four days. But if they wrote that the night of



Michael when he was younger, with his father Bob and grandfather Kurt

October 7th in Golders Green, 'they' are here and are highly organised.

I sound like Mr Alarmist, and maybe to some I am, but the stories which regularly feature in this publication are of those who took action, escaped or were helped. My father got out of Vienna, at one year old, in 1939, and only just. I am conscious, that goes all the way back to the Bible. Exodus – it's in our bones...

Do you feel it?

The AJR is partnering with Unesco, the Claims Conference and other organisations to create a classroom resource for secondary schools that uses first-person homemade video testimonies to educate about the impact of antisemitism on real-life Jewish people. Do you or someone you know have a story to tell about your first experience with antisemitism? We are looking for people of all ages to share their stories. Read more about it – and submit your video – here: <https://form.jotform.com/arpsupport/antisemitic-experiences>

“Please don't hate”

David Herman looks at the life of AJR member Kurt Marx, who celebrated his 100th birthday last month.

One of my favourite AJR events every year is the tea party after the annual Kristallnacht service at Belsize Square Synagogue. The service is always deeply moving and the tea party offers a chance to actually meet Jewish refugees from Europe. At my first such tea party I met Kurt Marx, then in his nineties. He was born in Cologne in 1925 and told me about his schooldays. I pricked up my ears. Just a few weeks before, I had interviewed a retired history teacher, Ralph (born Klaus) Blumenau, also a German refugee in the 1930s, also from Cologne. Did Kurt by any chance know Ralph? His eyes lit up. ‘Of course,’ he said. ‘We were at school together.’

Kurt has just celebrated his 100th birthday. He was the only child of Siegmund and Irma Marx. His mother worked for an haute couture company (Hirsch & Cie) as a dress designer in Cologne and his father was the manager of a men's outfitters store (Rubens & Co. in Brückenstr. 17). He remembers a happy childhood in Cologne with a large extended family.

Although his family wasn't observant he attended a Jewish primary school and later the Jawne Gymnasium. During Kristallnacht, the synagogue where he had celebrated his bar mitzvah was

destroyed. His headmaster, Erich Klibansky, started organising to get Jawne students on the Kindertransport to England. Kurt remembers saying goodbye to his family in the belief that they would soon be reunited when his parents got the necessary documentation.

In a speech to Jewish Care in 2023 Kurt described leaving his parents: ‘My parents were like so many other Jewish parents forced to make the unimaginably difficult decision of putting me, their only child, on a Kindertransport train at the age of 13. I was just a boy, and when I kissed my beloved parents goodbye in 1939, I could never imagine that I would never be coming back to my home town, and that this would be the last time we ever saw each other.’

Together with about 40 children from his school, he arrived in England on 18 January 1939 and stayed at a hostel in North London, sponsored by Walm Lane Synagogue. After the beginning of the war, he was evacuated to Bedford where he was taken in with another boy by a British family. After he finished school at the age of 15, he started repairing radios in a music shop in Bedford and earned extra money as an usher at BBC Symphonic Orchestra concerts (stationed in Bedford during the war), bringing cups of tea to performers. He thinks this developed his love for classical music, which started with opera visits in Cologne and continued later in London where Kurt learnt how to build instruments. He helped with the war effort on a farm in Buckinghamshire until the war ended and



Kurt recorded his testimony for the AJR Refugee Voices archive in 2019

then started to polish diamonds in Hatton Garden.

On 19 July 1942, he received his last letter from his father who signed off the letter, ‘We're just leaving, don't forget us.’ He never saw his parents again.

He met his wife, Ingrid, an Auschwitz survivor, at Bar Kochba, which he joined as he felt Maccabi was not keen on Continental Jewish members. Ingrid and Kurt married in 1948 in the Dollis Hill United Synagogue and in 1955 they moved to Africa for Kurt's work, evaluating and sorting diamonds, which were mined there. He remembers a diverse expat life in Africa. Shortly after the birth of his only son, Michael, the family returned to London where Kurt worked for the Tanzanian government in the diamond industry until his retirement.

After the war he tried to find out what had happened to his parents. Many years later he found out that they were deported to Minsk and shortly after murdered in the forests of Maly Trostenec, a Nazi extermination site in Belarus. According to Yad Vashem, 65,000 Jews were murdered in one of the nearby pine forests, mostly by shooting. Stephan Lehnstaedt, a German historian, the author of *Occupation in the East. The daily lives of German occupiers in Warsaw and Minsk, 1939–1944*, believes the number is higher, writing that at least 106,000 Jews were murdered at the location.

Kurt is the only survivor of his maternal family but he later managed to reconnect with paternal relatives who are scattered all over the world. The first time he returned to Cologne was in 1954 to see his uncle. He returned years later to meet someone who organised Kurt's trip to Maly Trostenec.



Kurt when he was young

He never thought that he might be able to speak with Germans after the war, but has returned to Cologne to speak at local schools about his family's experience. In 2021 he was awarded the Cross of the Order of Merit of the Federal Republic of Germany in recognition for his services to Holocaust education.

Kurt told a recent interviewer that he identifies as British and Jewish and thinks the trauma of childhood shaped him but didn't stop him from living his life and having a positive outlook towards life. I was struck by his warmth and kindness. However, he worries what will happen when living witnesses have gone and a younger generation might stop being interested in ‘these old stories’. He also fears antisemitism is returning and the only way to fight it is through education. He hopes that people will learn to live in peace together and be tolerant because we are all the same: human beings.

In the same speech to Jewish Care he said, speaking of the murder of his parents, ‘These are things of course that never leave you, and they can define you in life, destroy you if you let it, but it is very much my belief and my message to you “Please don't hate. In the end hate destroys yourself more than anybody else. Be tolerant to others, be kind to others. Do good”’.

For photographs of Kurt and his family and for a summary of his interview with Bea Lewkowicz for *Refugee Voices* in 2019 see <https://www.ajrefugeevoices.org.uk/RefugeeVoices/kurt-marx>

Ralph Blumenau (1925-2025) died on 20 June at 100.

Investitures

The AJR wishes a hearty mazeltov to four of our long-standing friends and colleagues who were formally presented with honours this summer, at Windsor Castle.



ELEANOR ANGEL and FRANK HARDING, who both retired as Trustees of the AJR last December, were presented with MBEs for services to Holocaust Memorialisation.



GILLIAN CARR, Professor of Conflict Archaeology and Holocaust Heritage at the University of Cambridge, received her OBE for services to Holocaust Research and Education.

DR TOBY SIMPSON, Director of the Wiener Holocaust Library, was presented with his OBE for services to Holocaust Memorialisation

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(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.

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Long forgotten, but now remembered

Twenty-five years ago Judie Cole began researching her family heritage, discovering some fascinating details.

Like many other refugees, my parents – who both came over, separately, in 1933 – never spoke about their past. I knew that my father came from Berlin and my mother from Nuremberg, but I never thought to ask more. In fact, until they died – my father in 1986 and my mother in 1997 – I had not even bothered to look at any of the many files which I knew were in the loft, forgotten.

In 1996 a book was found in another loft, in a house in Kew where my father's sister had lived until the 1960s. It encompassed a diary, *Erinnerungen*, which had been written by my grandfather in 1899. As a picture of a lost culture, social and historical, it made extremely interesting reading and made me think I should dig deeper into my heritage. I began to look through the piles of documents in my parents' loft, at which point my interest was truly piqued.

I discovered that my grandmother, Olga Hirschfeld, had written masses of letters from Berlin to my father and aunt. From these letters it is clear she was on holding on to her very comfortable lifestyle without seeming to realise the full danger around her.

The family had been extremely comfortably off, living until the mid-30s in a large villa in the fashionable Fasanenstrasse. My grandmother received a visa to come to the UK just before the outbreak of war. She was awaiting an operation in Berlin at the time, so decided to wait and have that done before coming over: sadly, by then it was too late. Her letters tell of numerous attempts at leaving Berlin after September 1939, making sombre reading. She died in the Jewish Hospital in Berlin in November 1942.

My father's sister, Leonie, by then



Olga Hirschfeld, Berlin 1911, c. 45 yrs old

widowed with two sons, was also desperate to leave but despite constant applications to people she or my father knew here in the UK, found it very difficult. The quotas were full, despite her experience in nursing. For her elder son, Thomas, aged 15, she managed to secure one-year's education at Bryanston School, in Dorset and a similar arrangement at nearby Claysmore School for his younger brother, Dicky, who travelled via Kindertransport. Several of his father's family, the Tietz family (of the department store Hermann Tietz), were already in London. Dicky only came at the last moment as he was awaiting an appendix operation. Somehow or other Leonie also managed to get out just at the last moment.

The documents in the loft also included an issue of the German magazine *Die Woche*, from 1868. Looking through it I realised that it contained an article on my great grandfather, David Hirschfeld, who was treasurer of a non-denominational homeless hostel for both men and women in Berlin and had sent out pre-printed postcards requesting sponsorship for the home. He had kept some of the returned cards, full of acrid antisemitism. I presume the writers assumed that the hostel was only for Jewish people.



Olga Hirschfeld, Berlin c. 1931

My parents' loft also contained several files on restitution claims made by my father during the 1950s and 1960s.

A large amount of the documentation is now in the archives of the Jewish Museum in Berlin where it is available for anyone to look at.

EVERYTHING WE LOST IS IN MY HEART

On 21 October a special event at London's JW3 will draw on personal stories and voices from the world of restitution, to ask: What does it mean to have your personal belongings taken, misplaced, or repurposed by history? What efforts were made to restore what was lost, and what barriers still remain? How are these losses still being felt across generations? Use the discount code 'AJR' to get tickets for £10 instead of £15.

www.jw3.org.uk/whats-on/everything-we-lost-my-heart

TRACING YOUR FAMILY HISTORY

Debra Barnes, AJR's Next Generations Manager, introduces the different archives and services available to anyone who is interested in researching their family's Holocaust story.

Every day the AJR receives requests for help with family research, unsurprising when *Genealogical Research* was the area of most interest to descendants according to the results of our 2021 Next Generations survey. Some don't know where or how to start their research, while others may be looking for that one final piece of information to complete the jigsaw.

Our team at the AJR prides itself on being able to signpost individual enquiries to the most appropriate Holocaust archive or other source of information.

Most frequently, we direct most people to one or more of three organisations: World Jewish Relief, The Wiener Holocaust Library, and the Jewish Genealogical Society of Great Britain. We were therefore delighted that these three organisations agreed to join us at Belsize Square synagogue on a sunny Sunday afternoon in August to help us *Unearth Holocaust Archives*, in front of a 100-strong audience.

Also taking part were the AJR's own Dr Bea Lewkowicz and Dr Amy Williams – the latter via video link from Amsterdam – who collectively introduced the AJR's own resources: the Refugee Voices video testimony archive, the Holocaust UK Testimony Portal, and the recently discovered Kindertransport lists, as well as the *AJR Journal* archive of 80 years of monthly publications.

The event began with an introduction from each archive about the information they hold and how it can be accessed, followed by the opportunity for individual consultations with the archivists.

We hope to run a similar event online later this year. In the meantime, here is some further information about the Holocaust archives and how to contact them.

World Jewish Relief (WJR) was established as the Central British Fund for German Jewry in 1933 to help refugees from Nazi-Europe and succeeded in bringing around 65,000 Jewish refugees to safety. For decades, WJR's Case Files were lost and forgotten, until a chance discovery revealed a treasure trove of documents detailing the extraordinary help the charity gave to Jews fleeing Nazi persecution. Now they are returning these documents to families, revealing fascinating details of their family history. The WJR archive holds the names of over 315,000 people, as well as records for the 65,000 refugees they supported in the 1930s and 40s. www.worldjewishrelief.org/what-we-do/archives-your-family-history/

The Wiener Holocaust Library (WHL) is the sole point of access in the UK to a full digital copy of the International Tracing Service (ITS), a remarkable archive of over 30 million pages of Holocaust-era documents relating to the experiences of over 17.5 million people. The physical version of the ITS, known as the Arolsen



The audience were told how they can access over 30 million records held by the International Tracing Service through the Wiener Holocaust Library

Archives, is held in Germany and opened to researchers in 2007. It includes documents on incarceration in concentration camps, ghettos and prisons, forced labour, Displaced Persons camps and emigration, and Jewish and other victims of Nazi persecution.

WHL has dedicated staff to support research in the ITS archive, which is often vast and complex to navigate.

<https://wienerholocaustlibrary.org/what-we-do/research/its/>

You can also directly search within the ITS yourself via

<https://collections.arolsen-archives.org/en/search>

The Jewish Genealogical Society of Great Britain (JGSGB) promotes and encourages the study of and research into Jewish genealogy. This is a membership organisation which offers unique databases, one-to-one mentoring, an education programme, special interest groups, conferences, meetings and discussion groups and a library & resource centre in central London. www.jsgsb.org.uk

The JGSGB was represented at our event by Jeanette M Rosenberg OBE who kindly prepared a handout of three pages of useful links and information <https://wp.me/p3cjNY-k0>

And we must mention the AJR's own historians and archivists. Dr Bea Lewkowicz introduced the recently launched **Holocaust Testimony UK portal** which works with partner institutions across Britain and beyond to share interviews with Holocaust survivors and refugees from Nazism, rescuers and liberators. This initiative of the UK Government and the AJR was created to advance Holocaust education by providing user-friendly access to thousands of recorded interviews, and to honour the legacy of the Holocaust survivors and refugees who have courageously shared their testimonies with different institutions over the last 45 years. This incredible resource currently holds 2368 interviews – www.holocausttestimony.org.uk

Dr Amy Williams, AJR's Kindertransport Historian in Residence, showed examples of the numerous types of material recently uncovered as part of her work to build a comprehensive, searchable digital platform that unites newly discovered and existing Kindertransport records, Amy can be contacted via enquiries@ajr.org.uk

REVIEW MODERNIST MARVELS IN YORK

York Art Gallery is currently staging two major exhibitions, both of which showcase the incredible expertise and modernist design talent brought over from the continent by Jewish refugees fleeing the Nazis.

The exhibitions *Not a Pot* and the *Wall of Women* include works by Lucie Rie, one of the most admired and respected potters of the 20th century, and her one-time pupil Hans Coper. Both potters are now world renowned, with their work selling for eye-watering sums at auction. Also featured is work by the lesser known but gifted and Bauhaus-trained Grete Marks.

The *Wall of Women* display opened on International Women's Day (8 March) in the Centre of Ceramic Art, to celebrate the innovation of women working with clay from the early 20th century to the present day. Containing around 250 works, the 17-metre-long showcase includes ceramics by Alison Britton, Carol McNicoll, and Kerry Jameson – many of which have not been on display before.

The *Not a Pot* exhibition showcases the wide range of sculptural pottery in York Art Gallery's collection. Alongside works by Hans Coper it features work by several other renowned ceramicists including Ewen Henderson, Gillian Lowndes, Richard Slee, Bernard Leach, Ruth King, Ben Arnup and, of course, the influential potter Gordon Baldwin, who passed away earlier this year.

Coper – now considered one of the most influential artists of the time – learned his craft from his mentor in Rie's London studio at 18 Albion Mews near Hyde Park where she was based from 1939 until her death in 1995. Strikingly it was fitted with the interiors of two rooms from her apartment and studio in her native Vienna where she enjoyed an idyllic childhood before studying at the Kunstgewerbeschule.

In 1938, a year after winning a silver medal at the Paris International Exhibition – the show for which Picasso painted *Guernica* – she was forced to flee to England. To make

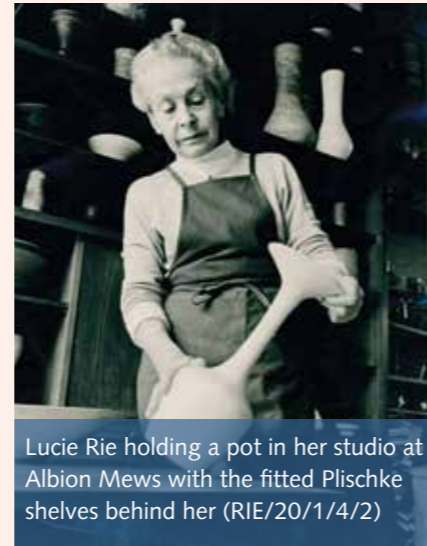


Lucie Rie and Hans Coper in a studio, probably Albion Mews, 1955 (RCC/3/4)

ends meet, she made ceramic buttons and jewellery for couture fashion outlets. Exactly matching ceramic buttons to the clothing colours stimulated Rie's experimentation and accuracy with glazes. The gallery has an extensive collection of hundreds of her buttons. Dr Helen Walsh is Curator of Ceramics for York Museums Trust which operates the gallery and has been involved with the artists' work for many years. Admiring Rie's expertise she said: "Dedicated to creating art and functional pots of the highest standards through her innovative use of materials and finely honed skills, she produced an astonishing array of work throughout her long career ... The modernist tableware she designed and produced with Hans Coper ushered in a new look for British homes in the 1940s and 1950s, while her later bowls, bottles and vases reveal her eye for elegance as she harmoniously married form and surface decoration."

At first Coper's work was considered shocking but for many his vision and style was regarded as inspirational. Born in Chemnitz, Germany, he came to the UK in 1939 but was arrested as an enemy alien and held in Canada for two years. A conscientious objector, he joined the British Army's Peace Corps and returned to the UK. After the war he joined Rie's studio which he continued to share until 1959.

Hans Coper would characteristically throw his work on the potter's wheel, then alter and assemble pieces by hand to achieve the finished form. Although made on the wheel, his work has a sculptural quality but is always functional. The *Not a Pot* exhibition features Hans Coper's pottery wheel which he built from scratch in 1959 after moving to his own Hertfordshire studio. It was constructed to suit his personal requirements based on one he had used at his mentor's. He used



Lucie Rie holding a pot in her studio at Albion Mews with the fitted Plischke shelves behind her (RIE/20/1/4/2)

the wheel for the rest of his career and many of the pots in the gallery's collection were created with its help.

Grete Marks, whose work is also featured in the *Wall of Women* exhibition, was born in Cologne. She studied at Bauhaus Weimer but left because of what she perceived as sexual inequality. Together with her first husband, Gustav Loebenstein, she established a factory selling her designs and when he died, leaving her with two young sons, she took over running the business. It became very successful, selling to Heal's and Liberty and further afield in the USA. As a single Jewish mother associated with the left-leaning art school her designs were branded 'degenerate' by the Nazis and her firm forcibly sold. After arriving in England in 1936 she struggled to find recognition for her work which was regarded as avant-garde and at odds with British consumers more interested in floral china.

In recent years York Art Gallery has acquired a collection of her mosaics that reveal her full scope as a tableware designer, sculptress, business woman and female cultural figure.

The *Wall of Women* is now semi-permanent while *Not a Pot* runs until the end of September 2026.

Janet Weston

All photos are from the collections of the Crafts Study Centre, University for the Creative Arts.

THANKS 'STEVE'

The AJR was very sad to learn of the recent passing of Dame Stephanie Shirley, a former Kind who became a visionary philanthropist.

Stephanie was born Vera Buchthal in Dortmund, Germany. She was just five years old in 1939 when, clutching the hand of her nine-year-old sister Renate, she said goodbye to her mother and boarded the Kindertransport from Vienna. Like all the other 1,000 Kinder on board, the sisters didn't know if they would ever see their parents again.

Interviewed in 2016 by Natasha Kaplinsky for the UK Holocaust Memorial Foundation, Dame Stephanie recalled virtually itching for the train to leave so she could open the present that her mother had given her: "two little Scotty dogs; you know – one black, one white – tied together with a red ribbon that I could put round my neck. It was absolutely a dream present for a five-year-old."

Vera and Renate were raised in the West Midlands by loving foster parents, and although they had contact with their mother and father from time to time, the relationship had been put under impossible strain. Understandably, this wrenching separation and relocation was life defining for Vera, equipped her with fortitude at a very young age.

She told Natasha Kaplinsky: "I'm quite sure that my Holocaust experience has driven my life... I think my guilt about surviving the Holocaust gave me a strong urge to succeed, to prove that my life had been worth saving."

By the early 1960s, now a British citizen



Dame Stephanie's identity card from her Kindertransport journey



Dame Stephanie 'Steve' Shirley

and scientific civil servant and married with a new name, Stephanie Shirley was becoming frustrated with the inequality that women faced in the workplace. She decided to start her own software company, Freelance Programmers. It was staffed by women working from home, blazing a trail for flexible working practices for women with caring responsibilities. 297 of the first 300 staff were women. At the time, when a woman couldn't open a bank account without her husband's permission, it was revolutionary.

Sadly, the industry was not so forward-thinking, and people either laughed at the idea or were openly hostile. Many of Stephanie's business development letters were simply ignored. At her dear husband Derek's suggestion, Stephanie began signing her letters using the family nickname 'Steve', which helped her get a foot in the door. Over the following decades the business flourished, with Dame Stephanie being known widely as Steve ever since.

By the year 2000, the company that had begun as Freelance Programmers was valued at almost \$3 billion and, due to Dame Stephanie's co-ownership structure, had made millionaires of over 70 of its staff.

Since retiring in 1993, Dame Stephanie's life was dedicated to venture philanthropy in the fields of IT and autism. Her late son,

Giles, was severely autistic with very complex needs. When caring for him at home became no longer possible, Dame Stephanie worked relentlessly to find a safe environment where he could thrive. Determined that Giles should not live his entire life in a hospital environment, in 1994 she founded Kingwood, a residential home for autistic people, now known as Autism at Kingwood. Giles was its first resident.

Dame Stephanie went on to establish The Shirley Foundation, one of the top fifty grant-giving foundations in the UK. With every new donation she became more strategic in her giving, seeking out projects with a clear sense of mission, priorities and focus. This included establishing two further significant autism charities: Prior's Court School for young people with complex autism, and Autistica, the UK's national autism research charity. During her later life she donated well over £70 million to these and other charities.

Her story is explained in detail in her 2012 book: *Let It Go: My Extraordinary Story – From Refugee to Entrepreneur to Philanthropist*, while her 2016 interview with Natasha Kaplinsky can be watched in full via the comprehensive portal recently launched by the UK government and the AJR, www.holocausttestimony.org.uk.

OBITUARY

Ulrich LOENING

Born: 18 June 1931, Berlin
Died: 10 July 2025, East Lothian



Ulrich was the only child of Erich and Lilli (Cohn) Loening.

He could not have known that two years later, exactly to the day, a little girl (Francesca née Franziska) would be born in the same Le Charite hospital, and that they would meet 22 years later in England and remain together until he died in July.

Ulrich lived the greater part of his life in Scotland. He and Francesca moved to Edinburgh in 1959 when he became a junior lecturer in the Department of Zoology of Edinburgh University. It was an exciting time in the scientific world and he made important contributions to the newly developing science of Molecular Biology. Ulrich always viewed his molecular research in the wider context of the environment – animal, plant and human life, particularly organic agriculture which he felt passionately about. In the 1970s he became increasingly involved with environmental issues and in 1986 he became director of the Centre for Human

Ecology at Edinburgh University.

The Loenings had been a respected Jewish family in pre-war Berlin. Ulrich's grandfather and great grandfather managed the bronze foundry Gladenbeck, which cast the equestrian statues at the corners of the Hohenzollern bridge in front of Cologne Cathedral. The family name at that time was Levi but was changed to Loening before WW1, a step taken by many assimilated Jewish families. Ulrich's father was an acclaimed photochemist who developed some of the technology later used for making computer chips. He was also a keen cellist, a talent that was passed on to Ulrich.

While still at school Erich joined a string quartet, forming lifelong friendships with the other players. Their families also emigrated to England where the quartet continued playing, a musical legacy they would pass into the next generations.

The Loenings arrived in London in 1937 and in 1938 Ulrich's grandparents joined them in Gerrards Cross where they were

then living. 'Opa' became a great inspiration to Ulrich in all things technical. 'Komm, Opa komm' was young Ulrich's constant refrain and he kept Opa's wooden tool box his entire life.

In 1940 Gerrards Cross became out of bounds to 'enemy aliens' and the family had to move again. They found shelter in the nearby Quaker village of Jordans, staying throughout WW2 and beyond. Ulrich's lifelong interest in green issues undoubtedly stemmed from then. Having never before used a spade, Ulrich's father set about growing vegetables. He soon became the Jordans gardening club secretary with Ulrich as his assistant.

Living within a Quaker community, Ulrich respected the fact that most were conscientious objectors who also made a huge contribution to medical care in the war. He attended many Quaker meetings and was guided by their ethos and morals all his life.

With a lifelong thirst for learning and curiosity for how things work, Ulrich thrived at Gayhurst School in Gerrards Cross and Merchant Taylors. He read Biochemistry at Oxford, gaining a D.Phil in 1958. He met Francesca, who played violin, at a string quartet rehearsal. They were to spend almost 70 years together, including renovating several derelict buildings at Ormiston Hall in East Lothian which is still the family home.

Although not formally religious, Ulrich was always aware of his Jewish roots, delighting in a Shabbat evening with his family and much enjoying the AJR Journal, which made the family rounds.

He is survived by Francesca, his three children Gica (Angelica Lilli), Adrian, Nicolas, seven grandchildren, and two great grandchildren.

Gica Loening



Ulrich aged around 5 on the steps of his home in Kanzer Strasse, Berlin



NOTTINGHAMSHIRE TUESDAY 16 SEPTEMBER 2025

There will be a coach from London picking up in Stanmore

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DAY TRIP TO HARWICH MONDAY 8 SEPTEMBER 2025



Join us by train from Liverpool Street, to view the historical sites of Harwich and see the Kindertransport statue.

The trip will include a fair amount of gentle walking, lunch and some free time.

karendiamond@ajr.org.uk



OLD JEWISH QUARTER 2 hour London walking tour TUESDAY 9 SEPTEMBER 2025 STARTING AT 2PM



Join us for a 2 hour active walking tour of London's Jewish East End

roshart@ajr.org.uk



DAME LOUISE ELLMAN, MANCHESTER

TUESDAY 16 SEPTEMBER 2025



Dame Louise Joyce Ellman DBE (née Rosenberg) was the Labour MP for Liverpool Riverside for 22 years. She served as Chair of Labour Friends of Israel until 2020 and was Honorary President of the Jewish Labour Movement and Vice-President of the Jewish Leadership Council.

Hear her in conversation with AJR Trustee Jim Selman during a delicious lunch in central Manchester.

michalmocton@ajr.org.uk



WEDNESDAY 29 OCTOBER 2025



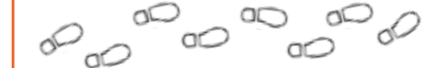
Please join us to view this special major exhibition featuring more than 350 objects, including precious jewels, historic gemstones, iconic watches and clocks, that chart the evolution of Cartier's legacy of art, design and craftsmanship since the turn of the 20th century.

Special AJR group ticket price
Limited tickets available – apply now!

karendiamond@ajr.org.uk



AJ RAMBLERS CLUB



Please join us for our last ramble of 2025
MONDAY 29 SEPTEMBER 2025 at 11am

Meeting at a London underground station
This is a FREE activity!

karendiamond@ajr.org.uk



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

THURSDAY 18 SEPTEMBER 2025
11AM-12.30PM

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

All welcome but booking is essential!

julia@ajr.org.uk

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Chaos Conqueror

07905 581 794 jo@josovin.com
www.josovin.com

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 OF DAY	AREA	CO-ORDINATOR
Tuesday 2 September	Morning	South London	Karen Diamond
Tuesday 2 September	Lunchtime	Enfield	Ros Hart
Wednesday 3 September	Lunchtime	Sheffield	Michal Mocton
Thursday 4 September	Afternoon	Pinner	Karen Diamond
Monday 8 September	All Day	Harwich Outing – see advert on p19	Karen Diamond/ Ros Hart
Tuesday 9 September	Afternoon	Old Jewish Quarter Walking Tour – see advert on p19	Ros Hart/Karen Diamond
Monday 15 September	Lunchtime	Leeds, with guest speaker Dan Cohen, Lord Mayor of Leeds	Michal Mocton
Monday 15 September	Lunchtime	Muswell Hill	Ros Hart
Tuesday 16 September	Lunchtime	Edinburgh	Agnes Isaacs
Tuesday 16 September	Lunchtime	Manchester with Dame Louise Ellman – see advert on p19	Michal Mocton
Wednesday 17 September	Lunchtime	Liverpool	Michal Mocton
Wednesday 17 September	Lunchtime	Edgware/Stanmore, with Bob Sinfield speaking about The Great Unwatched: Wit and Wisdom on the Wireless	Ros Hart
Wednesday 17 September	Lunchtime	Glasgow	Agnes Isaacs
Monday 29 September	Morning	Ramble – see advert on p19	Karen Diamond/ Ros Hart

CO-ORDINATOR DETAILS

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Michal Mocton
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07966 886 535

ZOOMS AHEAD

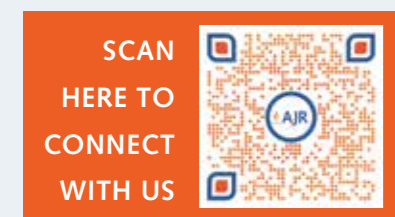
Details of all meetings and the links to join will appear in the e-newsletter each Sunday.

Monday 1 September @ 4pm	Beszéljünk Magyarul ! Hungarian speaking group https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/81283655188	Meeting ID: 812 8365 5188
Wednesday 3 September @ 4pm	David Barnett – Fortnum and Mason to Selfridges: the story of London's oldest department stores https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/82117097597	Meeting ID: 821 1709 7597
Monday 8 September @ 4pm	Jane Wynick – Voice from the Heart: one Jewish women's perspective of life after October 7th. https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/88276760535	Meeting ID: 882 7676 0535
Monday 29 September @ 4pm	Marjorie Downward – Susi Lachman: one of Europe's finest violinists and teachers https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/87557551897	Meeting ID: 875 5755 1897
Tuesday 30 September @ 4pm	Pam Fox – Nostalgia: The Blooms Story https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/85139227177	Meeting ID: 8513 922 7177

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



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For press enquiries please contact: gemma@ajr.org.uk
For AJR Journal enquiries please contact: editorial@ajr.org.uk

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Dr John Henry GOLDSMITH

Born: 1 May 1924, Oberkassel
Died: 17 July 2025, Liverpool

John's father was a grain importer and his mother was a dental surgeon from the University of Cologne. At the age of seven, his parents divorced and his mother married a fellow dentist.

John attended a small Jewish school near the Dutch. In May 1933 his stepfather, who was known for his left-wing political views, was first imprisoned. He was quickly released but a few days later was taken away again, this time by four masked men. Two days later his tortured and shot body was found in a reservoir.

The British Government allowed a small number of German and Austrian dentists to settle in the UK without having to requalify and John's mother was one of these fortunate few. She was introduced to the Cambridge mathematician Charles Burkill, whose wife (an immigrant from Odessa) worked tirelessly on behalf of Jewish immigrants. She negotiated John's admission to The Leys, a public school in Cambridge, and helped his mother open a dental practice.

On John's 16th birthday he was interned on the Isle of Man as an 'enemy alien' and then sent to Canada for nine months. On return to the UK, he completed his School Certificate at The Leys, which had been evacuated to the beautiful Atholl Palace Hotel in Pitlochry, and was accepted at Guy's Hospital in London to study medicine. This stood him in good stead when he volunteered for the Royal Army Medical Corps and was posted to Egypt.

After discharge he took up a post at Great Ormond Street Hospital for Children which became the launch pad for a career specialising in Nephrology (diseases of the kidneys). In 1961 he was appointed Consultant to the Artificial Kidney Unit at Sefton General Hospital in Liverpool, which later merged with the New Royal Hospital. In the 1980s he was appointed General Manager of the hospital until his retirement in 1989, when he was proudly installed as a Life Member of the Liverpool Medical Institution.

John, who leaves behind three children and nine grandchildren, loved Liverpool and spent much of his life there, becoming an active voice in local Holocaust education. He was also a stalwart member of the AJR and we were delighted to provide him with a computer and a regular computer volunteer.

We are also grateful to have had the opportunity to capture John's testimony as part of our **Refugee Voices** archive. We are honoured to hold this record of his remarkable life and the contribution he made to his adopted home.

Jo Briggs



Gisela FELDMAN BEM

Born: 18 September 1923, Berlin
Died: 30 June 2025, Manchester

Gisela Feldman née Knepel was born to parents of Polish origin.

Her father was one of eight, her mother one of four. Her father had moved to Berlin when he was 15, eventually opening a grocery store Reichenberger Strasse. In 1920 he married Chaya, who helped in the shop, and they had Gisela and, almost three years later, Sonja. They lived in a second floor apartment on Liegnitzer Strasse, which was not a Jewish area, and attended the state school. The family attended the Kottbusser Ufer Synagogue and kept an orthodox home. All Gisela's friends were non-Jewish and they played well together.

Gisela's first experience of Nazism came with the May Day March in 1933, when she saw someone being shot. At first her teacher told the class to treat Gisela the same as before, but at age 11 Gisela was sent to the Jewish school. The family's Catholic neighbour's house was daubed for being friendly with them and eventually her father was forced to close the shop. Gisela left school and studied dressmaking. Then in October 1938 her father was arrested and sent over the Polish border as a Polish national. The morning after Kristallnacht Gisela walked over glass to see if her aunts were alright.

Her mother obtained visas for Cuba and tickets for the *St Louis*. Arrangements were made for her father to follow. But the drama started when they were not let off the ship in Havana. Eventually they docked in Belgium, after England, Holland, Belgium and France had each agreed to take one quarter of the refugees. Gisela, who had studied English for four years at school, volunteered them for England. They were put on a cargo boat to Southampton and then on a train to London where they stayed near Bloomsbury Square.

Gisela was sent as a cleaner to a convalescent home in Broadstairs, then became an au pair with a Jewish family from London until they evacuated in 1940. Renting a flat with her mother and sister, first in Highbury and then on the Finchley Road, she worked making soldiers' uniforms, then gun powder bags, then children's coats.

Gisela felt a sense of freedom in England. She joined the Czech Club and went to cafes, dances and the cinema in between the air raids. She kept a diary. In 1942 she met Oscar Feldman from Crakow and they married in February 1943.

In November 2023 Gisela celebrated her 100th birthday with a party at the Belong Morris Feinmann care village, south Manchester, where she spent her final years. Speaking of the secret to a happy life, she candidly said: "A drop of whisky every night!"

Along with younger sister, Sonja, Gisela dedicated her life to Holocaust education and both sisters were awarded a British Empire Medal (BEM) in the 2020 New Years Honours list.