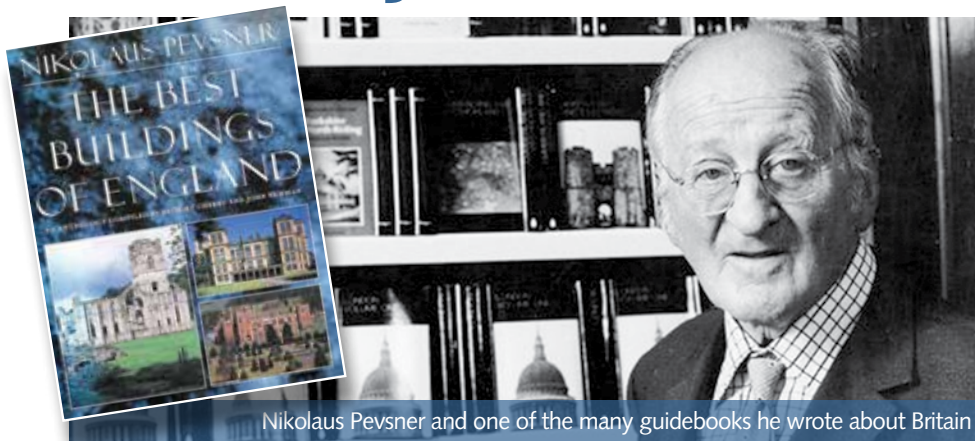




# AJR JOURNAL

The Association of Jewish Refugees

## Opening our eyes to the beauty of Britain



Nikolaus Pevsner and one of the many guidebooks he wrote about Britain

**One of the many Jewish refugees who had an enormous impact on British culture during the mid – and late – 20th century was Sir Nikolaus Pevsner (1902-83), the most celebrated architectural historian of his generation.**

Best known for editing the monumental 46-volume series, *The Buildings of England*, Pevsner helped to highlight every single building of architectural interest across Britain. He wrote 32 of the books himself and ten with collaborators, personally visiting every building. A further four of the original series were written by others. This series became Pevsner Architectural Guides.

He had his critics, of course. John Betjeman famously called him, "that dull pedant from Prussia". But his critics were outnumbered by admirers like the Cambridge critic and historian, Stefan Collini, who wrote of Pevsner, "He became a significant figure in British cultural life between the 1940s and 1970s, not only through his writing for a wide public, but through his membership of committees and commissions ... that profoundly affected the appearance of British cities, the role of industrial design

and the teaching of the history of art and architecture."

Pevsner was born in the Jewish district of Leipzig in 1902. One-fifth of Leipzig's Jews lived there. He was part of a Russian-Jewish family, descended from East European Jews. He was the younger son of Hugo Pevsner (1869-1940), a successful fur trader and his wife, Annie Perlmann. Pevsner's parents migrated to Leipzig some time before 1900. Nikolaus grew up in a *fin-de-siecle* apartment. "Inside the Pevsner flat," writes his biographer Susie Harries, "all was taste and comfort." On the bookshelves there was an extensive library of art books.

His parents were assimilated German Jews who, in 1921, converted to Evangelical Lutheranism ('The act was of course done for me to be normal German [sic]',

*Continued on page 2*

### MARCHING ON

Welcome to our March issue and its mix of news from the AJR and some of our partners, together with emotional first and second hand testimonies from our members.

You may particularly appreciate the speech from our recent Holocaust Memorial Day service (p4-5) by 4th generation AJR member Eddie Caplan, aged 12, comparing his own childhood to that of his great-grandfather, Werner Gluckman.

A different Werner is the hero of journalist Claudia Rosencrantz's article about her uncle's part in the arrest of one of the most notorious Nazis, p12-14.

On a lighter note, on page 7 please enjoy our selection of a just a few of the thousands of letters sent in by you, our members, during the 80 years since the AJR Journal was first published.

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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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## Opening our eyes to the beauty of Britain (cont.)

Pevsner wrote).

Nikolaus was educated at St Thomas's School, Leipzig and at the universities of Leipzig, Munich, Berlin and Frankfurt. In 1924 he completed his PhD on the baroque merchant houses of Leipzig. He then worked as an assistant keeper at the Dresden Gallery (subsidised by his father and father-in-law) and published his first book, *Leipziger Barock*, in 1928. He then became a lecturer at Goettingen but was dismissed from his post in September 1933. In October he emigrated to Britain and soon after brought his wife and children from Germany but his daughter was stranded in Germany during the war and survived thanks to the protection of her relatives.

Pevsner was among the refugees helped by The Academic Assistance Council, which funded a two-year fellowship for him at Birmingham University. He researched into attitudes to industrial design in British industry, later published as *An Inquiry into Industrial Art in England* (1937).

For some years his only secure income came from working as a buyer for Gordon Russell's furniture showroom on Wigmore Street. "Well into his 40s," wrote Collini, "he had no regular employment and no sure way to feed his young family. These were desperate years for the Pevsners, with Nikolaus sometimes living in a dingy rented room, anxiously chasing scraps of gainful employment, while [his wife] Lola scabbled to keep a semblance of normal family life."

In 1936 he published his first acclaimed book, *Pioneers of the Modern Movement from William Morris to Walter Gropius*. Industrial society, he wrote, required entirely new types of building, new approaches to the architect's profession and new patterns of patronage; funding by committee entailed new materials and a modern utilitarian and impersonal style."

In 1940 Pevsner was interned. He later worked as a "Bevin Boy", as a labourer clearing Blitz debris from the streets of London. His father died in 1940 and in 1942 his mother committed suicide to avoid being sent to a concentration camp.

Pevsner's proposal for a multi-volume guide to English architecture, county by county, was rejected by the syndics of

Cambridge University Press.

Then came his breakthrough. First, with the publication of *An Outline of European Architecture* (Pelican paperback, 1943) which went into seven editions, translated into 16 languages). Then, in 1945, Allen Lane Publishers agreed to Pevsner's proposals for a multi-volume history of art (*Pelican History of Art*, 1<sup>st</sup> volume 1953) and, most important of all, a county-by-county catalogue of England's "significant buildings."

For nearly thirty years, from 1946-74, Pevsner worked on the *Buildings of England* series (vol. 46, 1974). He would set out in a borrowed Wolsey Hornet touring the counties of England, starting with Middlesex. He was helped by two refugee German women, succeeded by graduate assistants, who gathered published materials on a county's buildings, then Pevsner's wife drove him around the country to view them. The first volumes were published in 1951. They were, wrote Paul Kennedy in *The Guardian*, "probably the greatest work of individual research and scholarship in the 20<sup>th</sup> century." He also contributed regularly to *Architectural Review* and remained on its advisory board until 1970.

Unlike many refugees "Pevsner was remarkable for the completeness of his assimilation [and] he became fluent as an English stylist," according to the Dictionary of National Biography. "Always an Anglophile," wrote Norbert Lynton, "he developed into an almost perfect Englishman."

Honours poured in. He was appointed Slade professor of fine art at Cambridge (1949-55) and at Oxford (1968-69). He gave the 1955 Reith Lectures on *The Englishness of English Art* (published in 1957) and between 1945-77 he gave 78 talks to BBC's domestic audience and another 15 to its German-language audience. In 1958 he became a founding member of the Victorian Society (and chairman, 1964-76). He was made a CBE in 1955, a Fellow of the British Academy in 1965 and he was knighted in 1979. Like many of the most prestigious refugee intellectuals, he lived in Hampstead.

But despite all these prestigious appointments, wrote Collini in the *TLS* in 2011, "For all his vastly detailed scholarship, Pevsner knew, and sometimes regretted, that he had not had an orthodox academic career; he described himself as a "General

Practitioner", in contrast to the more specialized "Consultants" in the history of art and architecture. His most notable achievement involved an improbable marriage between the austere impulse of *Kunstgeschichte* and the discursive judgmentalism of the architectural or topographical guidebook."

Perhaps, above all, Pevsner brought together a lifelong love of Modernism and a passion for English (sic) architecture. "I was an ardent modern in the 1930s. I still am," he once said. But it was his love of English buildings that won the admiration of so many general readers and listeners.

Eighty years after he embarked on his monumental project on the *Buildings of England* Pevsner remains a national treasure. In 1997-98 BBC2 broadcast two much-acclaimed series, *Travels with Pevsner*, in which ten different celebrities including Germane Greer, PD James, Joan Bakewell and Patrick Wright, presented programmes based on different counties.

David Herman



Goodenough College

**UNVEILING OF  
AJR BLUE PLAQUE**

GOODENOUGH COLLEGE, LONDON  
TUESDAY 19 MAY 2026





Goodenough College was the original site of the British Committee for Refugees from Czechoslovakia. Through the efforts of those who worked at the Committee, from 1938 it saved the lives of those persecuted by the Nazis, including the children rescued on the Kindertransport. In 1939 it became the Czech Refugee Trust Fund.

On 19 May, which coincides with the anniversary of Sir Nicholas Winton's birthday, the AJR will be unveiling a plaque to commemorate the importance of the BCRC to the Jewish refugee community. If you or your family benefited from the help of the Committee, we would be delighted for you to join us for the unveiling of the plaque followed by a reception.

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



Wiener Holocaust Library staff, together with Judy King, proudly receive the Peter Kien collection, including the original suitcase the collection was stored in at Terezin



Portrait of Peter Kien drawn between 1942-44. Artist unknown

# 700 NEW GLIMPSES INTO TEREZIN

**The Wiener Holocaust Library has just received an important donation of artworks created by a young Czech artist, Peter Kien, while imprisoned in the Theresienstadt ghetto. The collection was couriered from Prague in January and received at the Library in the presence of their rightful owner, Judy King, who flew from Florida especially for the occasion.**

Peter Kien was in his early 20s when he was transported to Theresienstadt, by which time he already had a reputation as a prolific artist, poet and playwright. The drawings offer a rare, secretly documented glimpse of life inside the ghetto, including portraits of fellow residents and scenes of cultural life. They are all that remain of a career cut short by the Holocaust. Kien and his immediate family were deported to Auschwitz and murdered in October 1944.

That the drawings survive is down to the remarkable efforts of Judy King's mother, Helga Wolfenstein, who was Kien's girlfriend in the ghetto. Prior to his deportation, Peter entrusted


a suitcase to Wolfenstein containing hundreds of artworks and many of his letters. Helga hid the suitcase in the ward for infectious diseases where her mother worked, assuming rightly that the Germans wouldn't search there for fear of infection. She managed to safeguard the works until liberation. Helga, and subsequently Judy, worked tirelessly to reclaim the collection from the Theresienstadt memorial museum in Prague, after it was usurped from Helga's aunt by the communist Czech authorities in the 1970s.

Welcoming the acquisition Howard Falksohn, senior archivist at the Wiener Holocaust Library, said: "This wonderful collection of original artworks comprising mostly pieces created by Peter Kien but also some other artists, prisoners of Theresienstadt, will be reunited at the Wiener Library with several other important manuscripts produced by Peter Kien. These are the original manuscripts

of the libretto for the opera *Der Kaiser von Atlantis*, two plays (*Der böse Traum* and *an der Grenze*), and some 20 pages of original poetry all written in the barely legible *Frakturschrift*. Together these works demonstrate the prolific output of this talented polymath who tragically died so young".



At the concert by Peter Kien [1942-1944]



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**AJR RAMBLERS CLUB**



**Our next walk will take place on:  
TUESDAY 24 MARCH 2026 at 11am**

Meeting at a London underground station

There is no charge to come for a ramble. There will be a couple of comfort stops and an opportunity to have a coffee/sandwich break.

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

# Bridging Generations



A selection of the media coverage generated by AJR's event

**On 20 January several generations of Holocaust survivors came together for AJR's annual Holocaust Memorial Day Commemoration, centred on this year's theme, Bridging Generations. It was a deeply moving service that brought survivors, their children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren together in shared remembrance.**

The power of this intergenerational gathering resonated far beyond the synagogue, drawing attention from *ITV London*, featuring on the front cover of the *Ham & High*, and being reported across multiple online news platforms. This coverage reflects the wider importance of ensuring Holocaust memory remains visible, relevant and heard.

Held at Belsize Square Synagogue, our programme included a moving candle-lighting ceremony led by Holocaust survivors **Mala Tribich, Ivor Perl, Jackie Young and Joanna Millan**, who lit candles alongside descendants representing four

generations. This was followed by deeply personal reflections from those whose lives continue to be shaped by the Holocaust.

**Joanna Millan BEM, JP**, child survivor and one of the Windermere Children, shared her experience of surviving Theresienstadt and rebuilding her life in Britain: "The children incarcerated in Theresienstadt were put on planes to Windermere in the Lake District. I was one of the six youngest children – three boys and three girls – who were kept together. I knew, even then, that my parents were dead, because everybody's parents were dead. I only found out how my parents perished much later on in life. I wanted to know, so I could tell my children what had happened. It is my fervent wish that by sharing my story with young people, I am helping to bridge generations – so that the Holocaust is remembered not as history alone, but as a warning for the future."

Speaking as part of the second generation, and on how memory is carried within families, **Baroness Ruth Deech** said: "Those of us in the second generation grew up shaped by experiences we did not live but saw reflected in our families. They were part of our everyday lives. Holocaust remembrance is not only about honouring the past — it has to be about protecting

Jewish families and understanding how its legacy continues to affect society today."

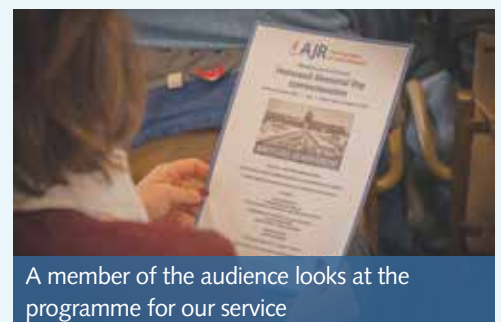
**Sarah Deech**, a third generation reflected on inherited memory and responsibility: "I find myself thinking about my grandparents' Holocaust trauma more as I get older and the atmosphere for Jews becomes increasingly febrile. Being the 'third generation' means we are close enough to know their stories personally, but far enough away to risk losing them. It's so important that the stories of our unique community continue to be heard."

**Eddie Caplan**, representing the fourth generation, highlighted the importance of continuing the chain of memory: "My great-grandfather came to Britain on his own at 15, not much older than I am today. He didn't know where he would live, or if he would survive while I've grown up with safety and certainty. Hearing his story makes me realise that remembering the Holocaust is no longer just something older generations do – it's now my responsibility too."

The service was led by **Rabbi Gabriel Botnick** and **Cantor Dr Paul Heller**, with prayers, readings creating a reflective and dignified commemoration of the six million Jewish people murdered in the Holocaust.



Survivors and second, third and fourth generation descendants lit candles during our HMD service



A member of the audience looks at the programme for our service

©ADAM SOLLER PHOTOGRAPHY

# IN SAFE HANDS

**This inspirational speech, superbly delivered during AJR's Holocaust Memorial Day service by our 4G member Eddie Caplan, proves how some young people are dedicated to continuing the chain of memory.**

My name is Eddie, and I am twelve years old.

Today's theme is *Bridging Generations*. For me, that isn't just an idea – it's my family. I am a fourth-generation Holocaust refugee. My great-grandfather was called Werner Gluckman.

Today, I want to talk about the past, the present, and the future and how one story connects all three.

My great grandfather Werner grew up in Berlin. He had an easy and settled upbringing. A Jewish family but very much assimilated into German society.

Werner's father was the Managing Director of a printing company called Rota Print until the Nazis forced him out of his job.

They were all still in Berlin when Kristallnacht happened. Werner's father was arrested and sent to a concentration camp for a month before being released.

That was the moment his parents realised how dangerous life had become and that their children were no longer safe. So they decided to send their sons away.

Werner's brother left first, in February 1939. Werner followed in June 1939. He was 15 years old.

When Werner arrived in the UK, he went to live with a cousin in Finchley. Later, he moved into a hostel in Ealing run by the local synagogue.

There were about 20 boys in the hostel. Two sisters from Vienna looked after them and helped them find

apprenticeships. Even after the hostel closed in 1942, the boys kept meeting every other Friday night and stayed in touch for the rest of their lives.

Werner trained as a watchmaker. But my grandfather, Michael, believes that if Werner had stayed in Berlin, he would probably have become an academic. He was extremely clever. But history changed his future.

Werner joined the British Army in 1943, became a British citizen, and worked for the rest of his life.

He was quiet, introverted, and very hardworking. He opened his watch repair shop no matter what happened, only ever taking three weeks off a year.

And he rarely spoke about the past.

At the hostel, the boys made a rule: they would not speak German. This was England now. They would move forward.

My grandfather picked up on this and felt there was an unsaid rule: 'Don't look back, only look forward'

When I hear my great grandfather's story, I can't help comparing it to my own life.

I am twelve years old.

I wasn't even allowed to travel on my own until I was 11. If I go out, I have my phone. If I'm late, my parents worry. If something goes wrong, help is always one call away.

Werner had none of that. No phone. No parents with him when he left. No certainty about where he would live, how he would learn the language or even what he would eat!

I worry about school tests. He worried about survival.

I worry if my phone battery dies. He crossed borders alone, not knowing what would happen next.

My grandfather once said he wished he



Eddie Kaplan proudly holding the copy of his grandfather's Kindertransport record, which we presented to him as a surprise after his speech

had asked his father more questions about the rise of the Nazis, and how it affected Werner.

But Werner didn't want to look back, never wanted to talk about it.

So now, that responsibility sits with me.

This is what *Bridging Generations* means to me.

Werner got out of Berlin and so ultimately survived. He stayed silent, not telling his story but he built an honest, quiet life with his Jewish family as his legacy.

My grandfather remembers, and reflects. And now, it's my generation's job to speak, remember, and carry even the little information I have forward.

Holocaust Memorial Day isn't only about the past. It's about what happens when people are excluded. When hatred becomes normal. When silence feels easier than speaking up.

So we come together and tell our stories, each generation after the other, because that's how we make sure we always remember.

# 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. Please address any letters to [editorial@ajr.org.uk](mailto:editorial@ajr.org.uk).

## PROUD TO BE IN CORNWALL

**NOTE FROM EDITOR:** As well as hosting our own Holocaust Memorial Day event (see report on previous pages) AJR attended many other HMD events around the country. One example was at Truro Cathedral, where Niki Goorney, our Volunteers Co-ordinator for the south of England, manned a stand with the help of local volunteer Michele Jowett, who writes:

I was delighted to meet so many representatives of Cornwall's vibrant Jewish community, including some Holocaust survivors and descendants. Some are already members of the AJR while others expressed keen interest. It was wonderful to meet the inspiring former Kind Renata Collins and her son, whom I look forward to visiting imminently. This remarkable survivor also spoke on the local BBC news later that day.

Several other Jewish charities were in attendance, as well as other organisations who advocate inclusion and diversity in the face of escalating antisemitism, racism and blatant discrimination. It was uplifting to see so many school children in attendance, several of whom expressed sadness at an era in history that defies their imagination.

A powerful introductory talk was given by the barrister and TV personality Robert Rinder, underscoring the imperativeness of

bridging the generations so that the Shoah remains starkly visible in the minds and hearts of the world. Heartbreaking stories were shared passionately by 2G descendants whose loved ones were murdered, their words bearing the imprint of unrelenting grief, anger, and abject horror.

One speaker shone a light on the devourment of the Roma at the bloodied hands of Nazism, while a member of the LGBTQ community called for greater diversity and inclusion. Powerful poems were shared, including one by sixth formers who each recited a stanza in measured tone, their faces reflecting the profundity of the words articulated. The service ended with the traditional Jewish prayers and the lighting of six candles.

I was honoured to volunteer alongside Niki at the event and meet so many kind, inspirational, enlightened, giving people. It feels pertinent to end on Elie Wiesel's wise words: *"I believe firmly and profoundly that whoever listens to a witness becomes a witness, so those who hear us, those who read us must continue to bear witness for us. Until now, they're doing it with us. At a certain point in time, they will do it for all of us."*  
*Michele Jowett,*

## TANTE MARTHA

Your recent article about Martha Steinitz of Leeds (January) brought back fond memories. Countless refugees were helped by her before and during WW2, including myself.

I arrived in this country aged 11, knowing very little English. This meant I had no chance of passing the 11 Plus. Someone introduced me to Miss Steinitz and she used her contacts and influence to enable me to receive an adequate education (which eventually led to a university degree). One of the first things she did was to introduce me to one of her friends, a retired English teacher, Miss Dixon, who instructed me in the basics of the language. This lady not only taught me grammar and syntax but also enabled me to absorb some of the subtleties of the English Character. One day

she said to me "Rachel, why don't you smile more often? You look much prettier when you smile." Until then no one had ever told me that I ought to smile or look pretty. In fact my grandmother used to say "Viel Schmechel – wenig Sechel" (Many Smiles – little Sense).

As well as being highly intellectual there was also a very kind and caring side to Martha. She was the youngest of eleven children, one boy and ten girls. When she found out that I was an only child with no extended family she decided that she would be my aunt. From then on I was to call her Tante Martha.

*Rachel Mendel, Leeds*

**NOTE FROM EDITOR:** Our translation of the Yiddish phrase "Viel Schmechel – wenig Sechel" comes courtesy of one of the producers of the Cockney Yiddish Podcast, which explores the unknown Yiddish popular culture of London's East End. See <https://cockneyyiddish.org/>

## ERRATUM

In our introduction to the article *The Words spoken by Pictures* (February) we stated that the family of William Baginsky, the author of the article, once owned a hotel in the city of Kaunas (Kovno) in Lithuania. This is incorrect as William's family had no connection with Lithuania until 29 November 1941 until they were deported to Kaunas along with almost 2,000 other people from Vienna and Breslau.



## LOOKING FOR?

### KASPEROVITCH

Danielle Meier is researching the history of a military operation that took place in Vosges in France in 1944. She is keen to trace any descendants of Boris KASPEROVITCH, aka King, who was killed during the operation while serving with 2SAS.

[daniellemeier246@gmail.com](mailto:daniellemeier246@gmail.com)

# From our OLD Postbag...

During our recent *AJR Journal* 80th anniversary event the audience was entertained with the reading out of several Letters to the Editor received over the decades. We hope you also enjoy this selection.

*AJR Information did not have a regular Letters page in its early years, but the occasional article was printed in the form of a letter, usually because it was written in a very personal manner such as a cry for help. Letters from members started to be introduced more regularly in the 1970s but were still very much in the way of advertising to or communicating with other members, rather than a means of voicing one's opinion. This changed in the late 1980s when Richard Grunberger took the helm, when a monthly column was introduced to facilitate a lively exchange of views between members, often in response to articles in the Journal.*

## MARCH 1954

We should be most grateful if you would allow us to appeal through the medium of your paper to your readers to give us any unwanted baby scales with continental weights. These are urgently required by the O S E's baby homes, convalescent homes, creches, etc, in Israel, and we shall be very pleased to ship any scales in working order to Israel, where they will be very much appreciated.

*Mrs. L Seligman,  
Secretary, British OSE Society*

## APRIL 1966

As the result of an advertisement in your paper, we have been able to establish a lively group of middle aged couples with wide interests meeting informally to overcome the isolation of suburban life.

*Mr. And Mrs. Leslie Corey, Edgware*

## MARCH 1968

For many years, Great Britain has been leading the world in the development of sport for the paralysed and other severely physically handicapped, such as blind, amputees, spastics, Polios, etc. After protracted negotiations with the Ministry of Health and the Oxford regional hospital board, this fund has received permission to build an indoor sports stadium at Stoke Mandeville, which will be the first international sports stadium for the disabled. The project is entirely outside the

health service, and the sum of £350,000 has to be raised. I appeal to my fellow refugees to give all the help they can to this unique venture in sport and humanity.

*Professor Sir Ludwig Gutmann,  
Chairman of the executive committee of  
The Paraplegic Sports Endowment Fund at  
Stoke Mandeville hospital.*

## APRIL 1984

The AJR lunch service is gaining momentum. It opened last May for members of the AJR serving lunch on Wednesdays from noon till 2pm at the Hannah Karminski house in Adamson Road, a stone's throw from Swiss Cottage. It offers soup plus the main course for only one pound, or an extra large portion for an extra 25 pence, and a sweet or fruit salad for 25 pence. An orange drink is also available. Members who find pop music in restaurants rather painful can have a lunch here without that nuisance.

*H Morton, Joe Rose and E Crofton*



## MARCH 1989

The Cunard liner QE2 has a small but fully equipped synagogue on board for the annual three months round the world cruise. A rabbi sails with the ship, but on shorter journeys, anyone who is available can take services, as I did.

When the sea is rough and the ship sways, I usually recommend the congregation to remain seated and to stand only for very important parts of the service. If they then remain perfectly still, the ship's movement will produce the shokeling.

*Rudi Leavor, Bradford*

## OCTOBER 1996

It is debatable whether, as A W Freud suggests, we should be grateful for any compensation received. They stole our property, our chances, our youth, and in many cases, our lives.

Some while ago we were burgled. In the unlikely event of the thief returning some of the loot, do I really have to feel grateful?

*Robert Miller, Great Bookham.*

## SEPTEMBER 1997

AJR Information is always a pleasure to read with its blend of information, comment and entertainment. Your article Grand Mother Tongue evoked many memories.

*Novaragasse* was close to the home of my maternal grandparents whom I visited routinely, once a week. As a child, I was mystified by my grandparents' embarrassment whenever I casually happened to mention this rather unremarkable thoroughfare.

Some day, much later, my father informed me that the *Novaragasse* was the habitual haunt of ladies of the night. To make matters worse, these were rather second class, far removed from their luxury trade sisters in the elegant environment of the *Kärntnerstrasse*.  
*CP Carter, Richmond*

## APRIL 1998

Avid reader who would like binders for this revered publication will find that it is too small for A4 by 22 millimeters and too large for A3. However, a standard so-called Bankers Box, a sturdy, folded open cardboard contraption from any office supplier, is at least the right depth, and has done sterling service for my invaluable collection since I joined in April 1992. One box holds 70 issues tidily. Unfortunately an index has not been so easy to come by.

*Frank Bright,  
Martlesham Heath, Suffolk.*

# ART NOTES: by Gloria Tessler

Boxing may be an unusual subject for the Ben Uri Gallery to feature, but *The Art of the Ring* showcases the work of the polymath and highly athletic Jewish artist Sam Rabin. Rabin was also an operatic baritone on radio during the 1940s – praised for his Russian gypsy and robust *Leider* work – and an Olympic athlete who won a bronze medal for wrestling in the 1928 summer Olympics in Amsterdam.

His athleticism can be seen in the direct energy of his paintings of boxers pulling their punches in the ring. The apparent simplicity of style reveals the vitality of the work but also the tornado of ambitions within the artist himself. His draughtsmanship comes before everything, as the colour virtually flies through the compelling physicality of his figurative work, in which two boxers confront each other in the ring.

For the Ben Uri Gallery this represents the biggest collection of Rabin artworks gathered from private and public collections since the artist's major retrospective at

*Toledo Massacre*, by Sam Rabin



Dulwich Picture Gallery in 1985. It also features a major recent find that was believed lost forever since 1928.

After finishing art school in 1928 Sam Rabin wanted to become a full-time sculptor but his childhood ambition was also to be the strongest man that ever lived! In order to fund his sculptural commissions he became a professional wrestler, resulting in his Bronze medal win, his first and only Olympics.

Back in Britain he was commissioned to carve one of the four classical mythological winds for the new headquarters of the London Underground. As WW1 receded in time, it was intended to express the modern age, banishing the remnants of Victoriana.

The gallery's major find is Rabin's bronze head of fellow artist, Barnett Freeman, which he reworked many times to achieve perfection. It was bought by the Contemporary Art Society CSA and stored in the Tate Gallery basement.

But the sculpture was lost in the 1928 storm which engulfed London cellars and basements, and in which 14 people were tragically drowned. Many artworks stored in the Tate's basement, situated dangerously close to the Thames embankment, were never recovered.

But surprisingly, the bronze, which shares the intense physicality of Rabin's paintings, was recently discovered in Doncaster Museum 96 years after it was lost, and features in the exhibition alongside Rabin's paintings. It was newly titled *Barnett Freedman* by Sam Rabin.

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## HERBERT BIER & THE ASHMOLEAN

Herbert Bier was a successful art dealer who, after being forced to flee Germany in 1936, set up business in London's St James's.

Herbert Bier in 1929 with the Dome Reliquary (Cologne, ca. 1185), part of the Guelph Treasure



After the war he became one of the main suppliers to leading museums in the USA and in Australia. He also worked closely with several private art collectors and UK public institutions in the UK, including the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford, and London's British Museum and Wallace Collection.

On **Wednesday 25 March**, at the Ashmolean Museum, his daughter Marion Davies, an award-winning fine art documentary photographer, will discuss the life of her father. She will recount his story from being forbidden as a Jew to work as an

art dealer in Frankfurt, to his experiences as a refugee art dealer in Britain.

In particular Marion will reference his professional and personal relationship with Ashmolean Keeper Sir Karl Parker and the works Bier enabled the Ashmolean to acquire between 1942 and 1962.

This event takes place at **2pm** in-person in the Headley Lecture Theatre and online via Zoom. Tickets are £8 each. Booking is essential.

[www.ashmolean.org/event/herbert-bier-and-the-ashmolean-collection-talk](http://www.ashmolean.org/event/herbert-bier-and-the-ashmolean-collection-talk)

# Scottish school adopts *My Story*

**Glasgow-based AJR volunteer Francis Samuels is helping to ensure that local schoolchildren can learn about the experiences of Holocaust refugees.**

Eastwood High School in Newton Mearns, East Renfrewshire, now has six copies of the AJR's *My Story*, by Sidney Mayer in its library – a book which Francis himself helped bring to fruition.

Sidney Mayer shared a close friendship with Francis' late father, Bertie. "They played golf every Sunday at Bonnynton Golf Club, near Glasgow, with some other pals. So when it came to writing Sidney's life story it felt natural that I would work with him," Francis explains.

Francis is also the connection with Eastwood High School, having been an examination invigilator there since 2021. He worked with its senior staff to introduce Sidney's book into the school.

Sidney's early years were spent in the German village of Bochingen, where his family had lived since the 13th century. His parents had a farm with cattle, chickens and goats. All were stolen by the Nazis.

In January 1939 his parents ensured his survival via the Kindertransport. They took him to Ludwigshafen to board a train to the Hook of Holland. From there Sidney, aged 13, took a boat to Harwich.

He arrived at Dovercourt on the Friday and by Sunday was on his way to Ben and Annie Goldwater's home in Nether Auldhouse Road, Glasgow.

After the war he discovered his parents had been murdered in Auschwitz in 1942.

Sidney left school at 14 and got several jobs before running Ben's tool shop on his own, aged just 15. A couple of years later he became an ambulance driver, then returned to the tool shop, then became a travelling salesman.

In 1952 he married Mae Cohen, settling in Giffnock. They had two children,



Francis Samuels together with staff and pupils at Eastwood High School

Lorraine and Alan, and Sidney joined Bonnynton Golf Club, where he won several competitions, eventually being awarded life membership.

In 1952 Sidney, tired of travelling, set up his own business manufacturing and selling raincoats, S Mayer and Company, with his brother-in-law Hymie. Business was good and in the early 1960s their biggest customer, MacBean, paid them £27,500 for their shares, worth over £800,000 at today's rates.

Hymie went off to do his own thing while Sidney continued with MacBean. But all good things come to an end and eventually MacBean terminated his contract. Sidney's next venture was a clothing factory in Ayrshire which, at its peak, employed 80 people. But in 1995 tough conditions forced Sidney to shut up shop.

Meanwhile Mae had passed away in 1971, after a short illness and aged just 42. Sidney married Marlene a couple of years later, only to tragically lose her to a traffic accident. Despite these heartaches, Sid was able to find happiness with his family, five grandchildren and five great grandchildren.

Francis remarked: "What highlights this particular story, notwithstanding the amazing character of the man, is that Sidney was just a young teenager when he arrived in Glasgow, and worked, married and had a family here, making his story very relatable to today's local secondary school pupils. His *My Story* book is poignant, warm and memorable, and a fitting tribute to his life and times.

"Sidney passed away in September 2020 and is much missed by all who knew him."

Eastwood High takes part in the Vision Schools Scotland Programme (VSSP), a partnership between the University of the West of Scotland and the Holocaust Educational Trust which promotes excellence in Holocaust teaching by supporting primary and secondary teachers and facilitating a network of teachers in Holocaust education in Scotland. History teacher Yvonne Bell, who is the VSSP lead at Eastwood, is proud that the school has attained the programme's Level 1 status since 2022.

Welcoming the copies of Sidney Mayer's *My Story* book, Eastwood Head Teacher Kate Sinclair described them as an invaluable part of the school's learning resources, supporting meaningful discussions and reflections across S1-S6 year groups. "We are sincerely grateful for this contribution and the opportunity it provides to honour memory, promote understanding and inspire our pupils," she said.

The school regularly addresses issues such as antisemitism, racism and discrimination, embedding them within its whole community. As part of its commitment to Holocaust studies, Eastwood High recently invited two of its pupils to visit Auschwitz.

**If you know of any schools or universities who would benefit from copies of the *My Story* books please email [debra@ajr.org.uk](mailto:debra@ajr.org.uk) and we will see if we can help.**

# Klara's Story

**Laurence Tiger, whose parents were both refugees, recently helped his American cousins, Sharon and Erica Karp, to write a biography of his late aunt Klara by piecing together dozens of notes she had scribbled on scraps of paper and left in bags and old cases. This extract, which gives an almost unbearable insight into life in Austria between March 1938 to March 1939, is just one chapter of a remarkable biography.**



Laurence Tiger's Aunt Claire, aka Klara

In March 1938, the Anschluss took place. German forces, consisting of Wehrmacht soldiers, storm-troopers donning helmets and jackboots and black-uniformed SS divisions, were all welcomed "home" in a sea of swastika flags, with church bells ringing and enormous crowds giving the Nazi salute. This had been carefully orchestrated in advance in all seven provinces of Austria by underground Nazi Party members, who in turn were funded by the Nazi regime in the German Reich.

After the Anschluss it became impossible for Jews to exist in Austria. Our cosmetics store was looted and then closed down. My family and I had never asked for charity and always worked hard to pay our way, but this was the first time father had to queue up at the Jewish People's Kitchen, where they served either cooked lentils, beans, soup, or whatever there was for his one meal a day. He would return with an empty pot, because the SA would barge into the kitchens at noon, take the pots out into the street and empty them all in the gutter.

On 10 November, the second night of Kristallnacht, I found myself in my parents' apartment in the Webergasse (XXth district), which I had to move to after having been evicted from my own home by my "kind" landlord because of my faith. My parents' apartment, which they had always rented, and in which their last two sons were born, was then handed over, virtually overnight, to a Nazi Party official, who, as it turned out, was the boyfriend of my parents' cleaning lady.

At that point, I decided I had to take my elderly parents, who were homeless and destitute, abroad. We left Vienna without any authorisation. We each had passports, but no visas for any other country. We embarked on the long train journey through Nazi Germany to Karlsruhe, close to the French border where, we had been told, the customs office might assist people trying to cross the French border by night. Naively I hoped that the fact that my youngest brother, Emil, and his wife had found sanctuary in Paris in 1936, might possibly count in our favour. But no sooner had we stepped off the train, four tall Gestapo men in their black SS uniforms with long capes and glittering helmets arrested us. They escorted us to their car and drove us to a castle where they accused us of attempting to avoid customs. We repeated, over and over, that it was the customs office we had been looking for, but our words fell on deaf ears.

My mother and I were separated, together with the other women. We had to sleep on the cell floor on damp mattresses and received only one meal a day, consisting of a ladle of soup, salty water, that made you cough, and a slice of bread. A dustbin served as the toilet. Some women were suffering from dysentery, and others were unable to make use of it. It was incredibly degrading and made us all feel sick. I remember mother saying, "I'll never come out of this alive. I only pray to God that father and you can make it out." Every day we had to undergo interrogations. I can still hear the interrogator screaming at my father with the words, "this little book we found in your pocket contains secret information for the French. If you'd managed by chance to reach France, – rest assured, we'll be there very soon – you'd certainly be arrested and imprisoned by us over there." The little book he referred to, which father always carried on him, was a Hebrew prayer book.

I was, by now, thirty-six. One morning in January 1939, when numerous Jews were being sent to concentration camps, one of the SS men called me into his office, where we had often been interrogated before, and said, "I've decided to let you and your parents go, but you have to return to Vienna. If ever you are caught at any border station again, you will never see the light of day again". By now, we had no money, no decent clothes or shoes, but found ourselves standing outside the huge prison gates in the snow and ice, which stretched endlessly in front of us. It was bitterly cold. I told my parents, "They're convinced we'll turn back, or if we don't, we'll perish out here". Father said, "don't worry, God will help us".

We walked for ages without meeting a living creature. Suddenly, a woman came towards us, her face almost hidden under a big blanket. As we got closer, we saw that tears were streaming down her face and she seemed completely at her wits' end. "They've taken my husband and son away and I believe they've come this way." We tried to comfort her and told her that she was walking straight towards the prison, where she herself might get locked up, and that she could do much more for them were she to remain free. So we followed her to her home, where she had two empty beds. The poor kind woman gave us food and shelter and then took us the next day to a Jewish committee, which helped us

*Continued on page 11*



# POST CORONA DIARY

**AJR member Judith Moller, who was just a toddler when she was hidden with a Christian childless family on a farm on the outskirts of Budapest, has just published a second volume of poetry.**

Judith, who was born Grossman-Binet, turned to poetry during the Coronavirus pandemic, when the isolation gave her the opportunity to reflect on her childhood.  
[judith.moller@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:judith.moller@yahoo.co.uk)

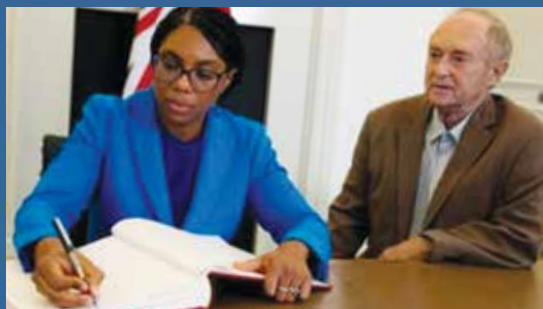
## Klara's Story (cont.)

get to Stuttgart. Once there, we sought out another such committee, where they gave us food and paid our rail fare for Munich. Another committee there fed us and gave us shelter and paid our rail journey to Vienna.

By now it was the end of January 1939, when Jews in Vienna were being arrested in numbers in the streets and, like pigs, were being goaded around to the amusement of the crowd. I even heard a Viennese Catholic woman whom I recognised, call out, "that's not enough," when witnessing one of these shocking spectacles. I felt my legs beginning to give way, yet I knew that had I collapsed and drawn everyone's attention to me without the vile party swastika badge in my lapel, they would have mishandled me in exactly the same way.

## THE DAY KEMI MET MARCEL

**This Holocaust Memorial Day Kemi Badenoch, the leader of the Conservative Party, met with AJR member Dr Marcel Ladenheim to hear his story.**



Marcel, who now lives in Surbiton, was born in 1939 to Austrian parents, who had fled to Paris in 1938 after the Anschluss. Hidden by two sisters for most of the war, young Marcel was happily unaware of most of the dangers that faced him.

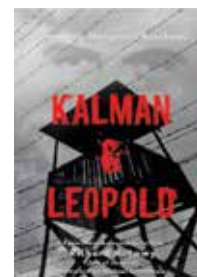
His father was killed in Auschwitz, but his mother survived. However, after a short period together Marcel's mother was unable to care for her boys and in 1948 Marcel and his younger brother moved to Manchester to live with their aunt.



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### AN EVENING WITH RICHARD K. LOWY

TUESDAY 10 MARCH

Join us for a special evening at South Hampstead Shul with Richard K. Lowy, producer of *Leo's Journey* and author of *Kalman & Leopold: Surviving Mengele's Auschwitz*.

The event will begin with a screening of *Leo's Journey: The Story of the Mengele Twins*, narrated by Christopher Plummer. The documentary recounts the Nazi's T4 Eugenics programme and the eyewitness account of Leo Lowy, who survived Mengele's experiments. In 2001 the film premiered on Israeli TV, triggering one viewer's extraordinary realisation that reunited him with 'his Lipa' (Leo) – the sixteen-year-old boy who had protected him in Auschwitz, for whom Kalman Bar-On had been searching for 56 years.

After the screening, Richard, Leo's son, will discuss this remarkable story in conversation with Rabbi Shlomo, followed by Q&A.



[www.southhampstead.org/events/](http://www.southhampstead.org/events/)

# MY UNCLE WERNER AND R

**The award-winning journalist Claudia Rosencrantz was the Controller of Entertainment for ITV for over ten years. She is also a second generation Jewish refugee who is proud to share an amazing chapter of her family history, which took place exactly 80 years ago this month and resulted in the high-profile arrest of one of the most notorious Nazi criminals.**

My uncle, Werner Haas, was an extraordinary man. Extraordinary for reasons that many people would never know and which I will attempt to explain.

After my mother died and their lifetime of corresponding came to an end, he became my pen pal, which I loved. We wrote to each other every few weeks for over a decade and we developed our own special rhythm. I have a collection of letters which I treasure. Letter writing was the medium he felt most comfortable with and even though he lived in Dorset we never spoke on the phone but always wrote to each other. Via our letters he answered so many questions that I had about my mother, who he had loved, and about my grandmother, who was a much trickier subject. Sometimes he revealed things about his early life which he had never discussed

I decided one day to ask him if he would be happy for me to send him questions about my mother and her early life in Berlin. For sad and tragic reasons her childhood was not spent with him or their mother, she had been adopted by family friends. In fact, she had no idea she and my uncle were related until she was safe from Nazi Germany and living in England. And once she discovered the truth, she was the person who told him that they were brother and sister. They loved each other and had a wonderful relationship. My uncle replied that he was happy for me to send him any questions I had. I would never have sent him the questions without asking first. Over months and years, I would send him questions as they cropped up, about things I really wanted to know, and he would answer some in careful detail, and explain that he didn't know the answer to others.

One day a photo arrived in a letter – he said that he had decided it was time for me to have this photograph that I had never seen. It was a photo taken in his garden in Berlin in the 1930s. A group shot of two women and two children. Him as a small boy and my mother

as a young girl three years older than him. Standing behind them is their mother and grandmother. I stared at this photograph for hours. Two children who had no idea they were related, my beautiful mother unknowingly surrounded by her blood family

In our letters Werner and I often discussed the books we were each reading. His were always German books he was re-reading or the entire oeuvre of Jung, and his letters came alongside his thoughts and commentary. He also wrote about the music he was listening to and occasionally something interesting he had watched on television

He knew my taste in literature was more contemporary, which amused him. Hemingway, for example, was way too modern for him and, in any case, he was no fan of American literature when there was so much great German literature to be read or re-read

My uncle was a very modest and private person who lived his life exactly the way he felt gave it true value. He was by no means shy but his need for people was very measured.

The values by which he lived were centred around his love for nature and for walking in it.

Once, in response to a letter in which I had told him about my nephew living near a forest that he walked in daily, my uncle wrote how he wished that the thousands of miles he had walked in this country had been walked in Germany, the country where he was born and from which he escaped on one of the very last Kindertransport at the end of August 1939.

This was a rare expression of emotion by him. I found his observation deeply revealing and profoundly moving

My uncle was also extraordinary in rejecting the conventional career that his enormous brain was more than qualified for, instead pursuing a life that allowed time for his passions: walking and nature and music and reading. He married a wonderful wife and they had three daughters.

He was probably one of the most intelligent people I have ever met but his brain was only available for his own interests, like the pursuit of medieval and 20th century German literature, on which he was an expert.



The troop which was responsible for arresting Rudolf Hoess. Werner's handwriting is on the back of the photo

# UDOLF HÖSS

He had strong views about many things, for example convinced that carrying as little body weight as possible was the secret to longevity. He was light as a feather and was vegan. It turns out he was 100% right in his longevity hypothesis as he lived to the age of 99 in pretty much perfect health.

He was, however, capable of eating more food at one sitting than I have ever seen. When we last met up with my cousins, Naomi and Becky, we watched in amazement as he demolished everything in front of him, including a huge selection of delicious vegan brownies that I had ordered from my local bakery.

He was great fun, with a wicked sense of humour, but was also a stickler for factual accuracy. For example, one day I mentioned a particular book I had read. I knew that he had joined the British army once he was old enough and had returned to Germany with his troop post war, where his fluent German was obviously an asset. So I thought he might enjoy reading a book about the arrest of Rudolf Höss on 11 March 1946, called *Hanns and Rudolf*. I posted my letter to him and forgot all about it.

The next letter from him was unexpected, fascinating and historic.

The book had made him very angry. He explained that Hanns Alexander (the *Hanns* of the title) could not write about Höss's arrest as he had not been present. He then revealed that he knew this as an iron clad fact (remember he was military in his respect for factual accuracy) because he himself HAD been there and was thus a firsthand eyewitness to the actual events. It was his troop under the command of Captain Cross, of which he was a very junior member, that had tracked down Höss and arrested him.

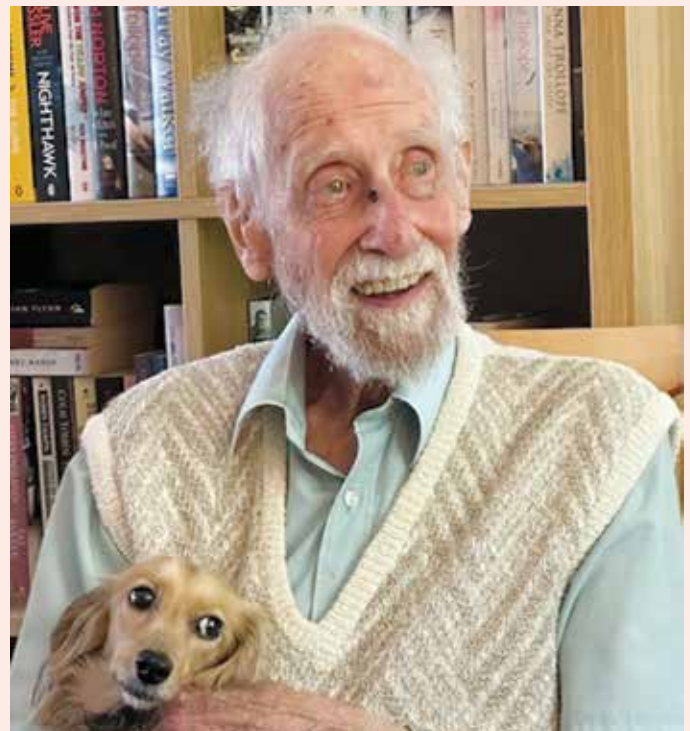
This was a revelation that neither his daughters nor I had ever known.

He was cross. Crosser than I had ever known him to be and determined to set the record straight. To this end he sent me a handwritten report which I share with you.

He also had a photograph of his troop taken at the time of Höss's arrest which had the name of each member of the troop written in his neat tiny handwriting on the back. He is directly behind the man with the Alsatian dog.

In the memoirs that Höss himself wrote while awaiting trial, he claimed that the whole troop were Jews and therefore hated him. That is not correct. They were not all Jews. But he was probably right about the latter, as the British army and indeed the whole world was by then very aware of the mass exterminations he had presided over as the camp commandant of Auschwitz.

My friends Daniela Volker, Wendy Robbins and Gloria Abramoff were scheduled to visit and interview my uncle in the months before their masterpiece documentary *In the Commandant's Shadow* came out. He was very much looking forward to their visit, but he very



Claudia's Uncle Werner, taken the last time she saw him. He was 99 in this photo and bravely holding her dog who allowed him to pick her up

sadly died the week before.

This is the report that my uncle sent me, asking me to publish it. So it is an honour for me to do so to mark the 80th anniversary of Höss's arrest.

**"I joined 92 Field Security Section towards the end of September or beginning of October 1945. By that time Mrs Höss had been interrogated repeatedly for about two months. She was living quite openly under her own name and made no attempt to deny that she was the wife of the former Kommandant of Auschwitz.**

**But she maintained that [her husband] had been killed during the retreat from Poland and doggedly stuck to her story. Somehow our chaps did not believe her and suspected that not only he was still alive, but that she was in touch with him. The interrogations carried on for some months, during which she was hauled in repeatedly at any time during the day and night and all tricks of the trade were used to break her story.**

**Finally – I think it was early in February 1946 but I am not certain about the date – she gave up and told us that he was living as a farm labourer near Gottrupel under the name of Franz Lang, a former naval rating. She was immediately placed under close arrest and we got ready to travel north that evening. There were 19 members of our team, an army doctor and the military governor of Meldorf, who had been very helpful to us during the interrogations.**

**On the way, as a matter of courtesy, we picked up the commanding officer and two sergeants of the FSS in whose area Gottrupel lay because we were technically poaching on their territory. We got there late at night and left our cars in a lane some**

*Continued on page 14*

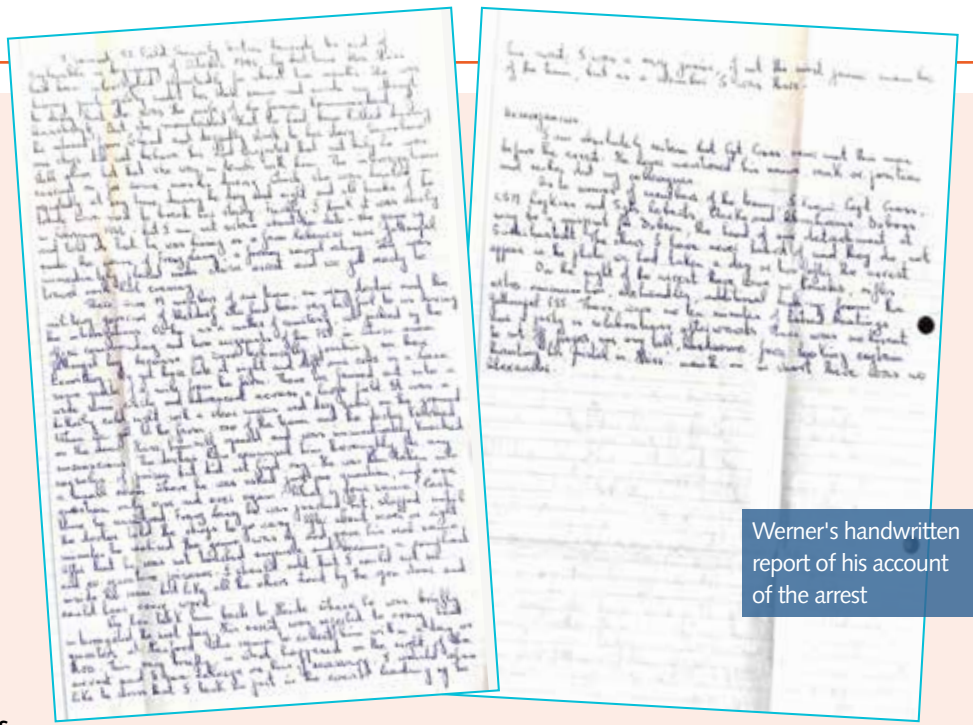
## My uncle Werner and Rudolf Höss (cont.)

quarter of a mile from the farm. There we fanned out into a wide semi-circle and advanced across a large field. It was a bitterly cold night with a clear moon and deep snow on the ground.

When we got to the farm one of the team and the doctor knocked on the door. Höss himself opened and was immediately knocked unconscious. The doctor then examined him thoroughly for any capsules of poison but did not find any. He was then taken into a small room where he was asked just one question, and one question only, over and over again: What is your name? Each time he answered 'Franz Lang' he was punched, hit, slapped until the doctor told the chaps to go easy. After about seven or eight minutes he realised the game was up and gave his real name. After that he was not touched any more and became a compliant and cooperative prisoner. I should add that I could not see inside the room but like all the others stood by the open door and could hear every word. We then took him back to Heide where he was briefly interrogated the next day. His arrest was reported to army headquarters at Herford who came to collect him within a day or two.

This very briefly is what happened on the night of the arrest and I can enlarge on this if necessary. I would also like to stress that I took no part in the events leading up to his arrest. I was a very junior, if not the most junior, member of the team, but I was there.

I am absolutely certain that Captain Cross never met this man [Hanns Alexander] before the arrest. He never mentioned his name, rank or position and neither did my colleagues. As to the team members listed in Hanns Alexander's book, I only knew Capt Cross, CSM Rajkins and Sgts Roberts, Clarke and Abrahams. Dobons may be a misprint for Dobson, the head of our detachment at Süderhastedt. The others I have never heard of and they do not appear in the photo we had taken a day or two after the arrest. On the night of the arrest there were no trucks, rifles, extra ammunition, axe handles, additional backup from the Gottrupel FSS. There were no ten minutes of hatred beatings, nor a



Werner's handwritten report of his account of the arrest

party or celebrations afterwards. There was no threat to cut off fingers nor any tall, handsome, fierce looking captain thrusting his pistol in Höss's mouth – in short there was no Alexander.

Werner told me that Mrs Höss was a very tough cookie. Much tougher than her husband was his view, which I found fascinating. He said that it was only the absolute belief by his commander that she was lying that made them invest months interrogating her until she broke and proved him right

My uncle would never have mentioned his link to this historic moment were it not the sheer chance of me raising the book and the subject with him.

The one thing that continued to bother him was how Hanns Alexander knew so much detail about the Höss arrest. Shortly before he died in 2024 he discovered that Alexander had been the captain who came to collect Höss from his troop after the arrest. So he would have been given their full report.

Höss was transported to Nuremberg to testify and submitted a detailed affidavit regarding his role in the mass extermination at Auschwitz. Following his testimony, he was handed over to the Polish authorities in May 1946 to stand trial on Polish soil. He was held in Warsaw prison before his trial, which began in March 1947. He was sentenced to death and was hanged on 16 April 1947 at the site of the Auschwitz concentration camp, almost exactly a year after his arrest.



**GLYNDEBOURNE OPERA**  
**ARIADNE AUF NAXOS**  
**BY RICHARD STRAUSS**  
**WEDNESDAY 12 AUGUST 2026**



It is 10 years since we unveiled our AJR Blue Plaque commemorating Rudolf Bing at Glyndebourne. To celebrate this please join us to see this wonderful opera-within-an-opera, set to one of Richard Strauss's most luscious scores, with Robin Ticciati conducting the London Philharmonic Orchestra.

Grounds open at 2pm with the opera starting at 4pm. There will be the option of a group meal during the 90 minute interval, or you are welcome to bring your own picnic.

Tickets are priced between £145 and £180 per person and are in the upper circle, which is accessible by lift. Transport is not included.

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



**SPRECHEN**  
**SIE DEUTSCH?**

If you would like to practice your German conversation skills please join AJR online any Monday morning between 10 – 11am.

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

# SURVIVING ST OTILLIEN



St Ottilien monastery in Bavaria

**Last month the Northern Holocaust Education Group (NHEG) hosted an online event with Rachel Kovacs about the Displaced Persons camp set up in 1945 in a Benedictine monastery in Upper Bavaria. Conditions at the camp were less than ideal, as the NHEG's Judith Hayman reports.**

After the malnourished, starving and traumatised inmates of the concentration camps were liberated, they hoped to be cared for and nurtured. Tragically, these walking skeletons were sometimes subject to 'genocide by neglect' by the victorious army who were meant to be caring for them at the displaced persons camp housed in a former German military hospital in the Benedictine monastery of St Ottilien, Bavaria, southern Germany.

St Ottilien was turned into a hospital and rehabilitation centre for 6,100 Jewish camp survivors from April 1945 until May 1948. American lecturer in communications, Rachel Kovacs, became fascinated by the callous treatment of the former camp

inmates by the GI liberators running the camp, as documented in Robert Hilliard's book, tellingly entitled, *Surviving the Americans*. Hilliard and fellow decorated Jewish GI, Ed Herman, saw the neglect of the Jews in the DP camp and did everything in their power to remedy it. Kovacs says: 'Hilliard told me that these ragged starving Jews were treated abysmally. People were dying and there was abuse of women, but there was no direct support from the army.'

During her talk Kovacs – who was at university with the wife of NHEG trustee Leah Burman – revealed that Hilliard and Herman reported that the camp inmates were insensitively housed at St Ottilien with their Nazi persecutors. Seeing that many inmates were dying of neglect, they intervened by commandeering food from the army store.

They persuaded an empathetic German pastor to print letters to send to family members and sympathisers in the United States, begging for aid. Shockingly, when supplies of food for the starving DPs arrived, the American army stopped them at the docks. Hilliard and Herman persevered. As Kovacs says: 'Hilliard and Herman saw these people come out of the camps and be put back behind barbed wire. The soldiers regarded these disease-ridden victims as

sub-human.' She says Hilliard was not a religious Jew but asked, 'How could this happen to our own people?' Jews worshipping on Yom Kippur even had their service violently broken up by American Military Police. In many cases inmates still wore their tattered striped camp uniforms.

Shockingly, Hilliard and Herman were ordered to cease their relief activities and were threatened with disciplinary action if they continued to expose the inhuman conditions at St Ottilien. They ignored this threat even though it came from the American military authority under Eisenhower's overall authority in Europe.

Kovacs told us: 'Here we have a decorated American soldier doing what a victorious army should have been doing: coming to the rescue of people'. However, she also acknowledged that the American soldiers at St Ottilien were 'battle-weary' and brutalised by the fighting they had been through.

Had it not been for the bravery of Hilliard, Herman, and the German pastor and survivor-physician Dr Zalman Grinberg, who ran the hospital at St Ottilien, many more Jewish lives would have been lost. They also organised cultural activities for DPs and even established an orchestra.



Patients receiving treatment at St Ottilien



Jewish refugees gather in the snow at St Ottilien

PHOTO COURTESY OF DR ALEK SWIENCY

# Remembering the Łódź Ghetto

**AJR volunteer Michele Jowett, who is not Jewish but who feels "...a tremendous gravitational pull to this tragic era of history", has recently finished reading a book which provided her with unparalleled insights into the unbearable experience of life in a ghetto, and a reminder of why it is so important for us all to make sure that 'never again' really is never again. She explains here.**

I volunteer for the AJR out of deep love and respect for Jewish people and, as someone who isn't Jewish, hope that it might in some small way be reparative. My thirst to learn more about the hardships of the Łódź ghetto emanates from the knowledge that a client's mother, younger brother and wider family members were imprisoned and possibly died there. This remarkable lady is very special to me and still doesn't know how her family perished after being deported to Łódź. I am in the process of helping her to find out.

*The Diary of Dawid Sierakowiak* is the harrowing and devastating first-hand account of an inspirational teenage victim of the Łódź ghetto and brutal Nazi regime. Spanning four gruelling years from 1939-1943, Dawid conveys with beautiful and arresting penmanship, the horrors of ghetto life at the bloodied hands of the Nazi occupation.

The five notebooks detailing his perilous trajectory of life in the ghetto were found after the liberation by a Polish gentile, the former inhabitant of the apartment Dawid and his family occupied. They were piled expectantly on a stove in preparation for fuel for heat. That the fifth notebook ends abruptly leaves the reader bereft as we champion his fight for survival and take this remarkable, spirited and intelligent young man into our hearts and mind. In small print, under the last diary entry of Thursday 15 April 1943, we learn with profound sadness that Dawid tragically died four months later of ghetto syndrome: tuberculosis, starvation and exhaustion as so many did before and after him. Of the 200,000 Jews forced within the impenetrable walls of the Łódź ghetto, more than 60,000 Jews perished inside, with an estimated 130,000 deported to an inconceivable death at Chelmo and Auschwitz. Only an estimated 877 were still alive at the time of the Red Army's long-awaited liberation. Dawid's fight for survival was spectacularly valiant and the legacy he left behind through the written word, a gift

to humanity in which we come to appreciate the sanctity of life in all its richness and brilliant simplicity. Through the hardships Dawid's pen articulately conveys, a wisdom blossoms that belies his young years.

The first notebook starts in June 1939, detailing 15-year-old Dawid's exploits in southern Poland where he enjoys the summer at a Jewish youth camp in the High

**The Soviet Red Army entered the Łódź Ghetto on 19 January 1945, the same day that Auschwitz was liberated. They discovered that almost all of its Jewish inhabitants had already been deported. The 877 Jews remaining were those whom the Germans had commanded to remove, and crate for shipment to Germany, the belongings of those who had already been sent to their deaths.**

Tatras. His joie de vivre and spirited energy are palpable. He is a young man eager to embrace all that life has to offer, an embrace he was cruelly denied. Returning to Łódź as Poland stood on the precipice of German invasion, tension spikes the air as mobilisation creates devastating scenes of farewell and food becomes scarcer. When Germany declares war on Poland, the decline into abject and widespread hardship is captured in each daily entry, providing an open window into the deprivations and depredations that we experience with all the senses such is the power of his writing. Regrettably, those early diary entries from the first few months in the ghetto, sealed on 1 May 1940, two months after its formation, went unread, due to the notebook that housed them not being recovered.

Fast becoming a slave colony, the Jews worked exhaustively on very few calories in various enterprises of war, whose goods were shipped back to Germany, rendering a net profit of over 50 million Reichsmarks. Dawid and his family toiled to feed themselves and survive, with Dawid working in workshops and offices whilst simultaneously tutoring children before and after school. School was fodder for his brilliant, hungry mind and he laments when schooling is compromised by the Nazi regime. Books become a satiating substitute for food, filling him with knowledge and providing vital distraction from the relentless hunger that gnaws at his stomach and the abhorrent deprivations of the ghetto. He studies Hebrew, French, German, and Latin, and revels in the works of Schopenhauer, Galsworthy, Thomas Mann, Ibsen and Strindberg. His wish to evolve intellectually is evident throughout all five notebooks until exhaustion claims his exceptional mind.

Dawid's decay of the ghetto's class division is palpable, denigrating the 'big shots' with 'connections' who feed on other's misfortune. He is astounded at the dietary abundance of families whose children he tutors and aggrieved at the mere bowl of watery soup he receives in return. As president of the gymnasium student council, he rallies his fellow council members to campaign for better nourishment and obstructs the school administrators' efforts to silence him. A sceptic politically and intellectually, he keeps a firm grip on reality, recognising the tug of war between life and death as the Germans seek to annihilate the Jewry of Europe. Privy to the city's German newspaper and hearing news reports by clandestine radio listeners, he does not indulge in self-deception and his indefatigable fight for daily survival never wanes. An active member of an organised underground committed to revolutionist Communist ideology, its members encourage him in their attempts to organise resistance,

Photo © USHMM

## The Łódź Ghetto



Photo © USHMM

## Deportation from the Łódź ghetto in 1944 (photo taken secretly by Jewish prisoner Henryk Ross).



pledging his life to their cause of fighting oppression and annihilation, but he refuses to become a 'professional revolutionary'. Unable to offer total commitment, they shun him for his 'bourgeois optimism' but he remains true to his stance.

Food weaves a persistent and dominant thread throughout the notebooks, as hunger torments, challenges and demands attention. It is both hero and enemy, preserving life yet unashamedly and unmercifully stealing it. Rations are met with hopeful anticipation yet followed by devastating despair as they refuse to satiate and hunger demands ever more forcefully its fill. Elation is an extra bowl of watery soup, and his joy is euphoric when he learns – as the diary abruptly breaks off – that he will be working for three months in the bakery, where hunger can be gratefully pacified. As we journey through the diary, we become not only an uncomfortable witness to the stealthy diminishment of body, mind and soul as privations abound at the murderous hands of the Nazis but, through the stark candour of Dawid's hand, we experience it viscerally and primally. Food is the fuel of life and Dawid's diary is emphatic in its communication of this basic, life preserving requisite.

Some of the most poignant entries are the grief he experiences following the death of his beloved mother, who was asphyxiated in the gas vans at Chelmno. His heartbreak at her loss remains a mournful heartbeat

throughout the remainder of the diary. He rages at his father, whose fight for survival blinded him to paternal and marital responsibility to his children and wife, stealing their share of the rations and adopting a lackadaisical approach to finding work. His father died in the ghetto, five months prior to Dawid's own tragic death,

**Dawid Sierakowiak's final diary entry: "In the evening I had to prepare food and cook supper, which exhausted me totally. In politics there's absolutely nothing new. Again, out of impatience I feel myself beginning to fall into melancholy. There is really no way out of this for us."**

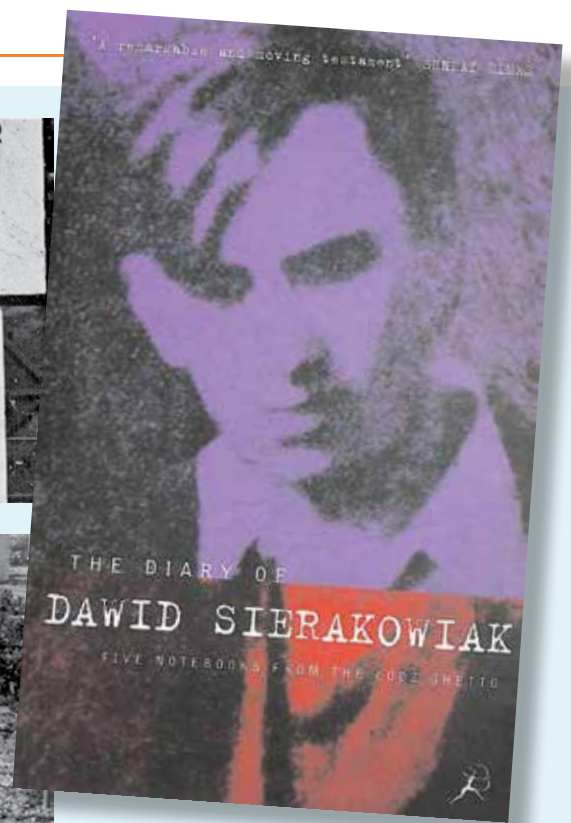
and alongside more than a staggering and sobering 60,000 Jews. Dawid's sister, Nadzia, survived the barbarities of the ghetto until the final deportations of August 1944 when she was sent to Auschwitz and, accordingly, to her death.

Exhaustion fans the flames of approaching death, depriving Dawid of escape through the pages of his cherished books. Ghetto disease extends its vice like claws. As shortness of breath, feverish sweats and chills torment him, and scabies and lice ravage his emaciated body, he valiantly clings to life, his fighting spirit refusing to

capitulate to the bowels of untimely death, fuelled by the fierce and tempestuous rage that simmers perpetually inside him. Hunger, the Nazis' weapon of mass destruction and annihilation in the ghetto, and the thief of a young, extraordinary and remarkable young man, is the indefatigable and ruthless conqueror of life.

Reviewing this book felt important so that we might honour this exceptional, brilliant young man whose diary is an unparalleled gift to the world. Through his honest and courageous penmanship, we do not only learn of the bestial savageries, hardships and privations of the ghetto, but are reminded of the loss of a collective intellect and spirit that would have contributed monumentally to the world. I am often struck how the hardship of life in the ghetto bore no disparity to life in the concentration camps and how the meaningless deaths were as inconceivably abundant. It felt important to give voice to and honour that recognition. I also wanted to honour our members whose own lives and families were victims of ghetto imprisonment, indescribable austerity, savagery and murder, and to ensure, above all else, that Dawid Sierakowiak's bequest is widely read, his spirit celebrated and that we recognise and appreciate the luxury and richness of life.

***The Diary of Dawid Sierakowiak* was edited by Alan Adelson and translated by Kamil Turowski. It was first published in 1997 by Bloomsbury Publishing.**



# OBITUARIES

## Eva EVANS MBE

Born: 9 March 1924, Berlin

Died: 3 April 2025, London



**Eva Klopstock was the youngest of three children, both siblings over a decade older than her.**

**Her father was a successful doctor, and they lived a comfortable, fully assimilated life in German society.**

Young Eva was carefree, happily playing in the 'Shrebergärden' (allotments) opposite her apartment and enjoying the fresh air. But with the rise of Nazism, life became stifling. Her parents became increasingly preoccupied by the 'winds of war'. They shielded their concerns from her but, in her memoirs, *Once a Refugee Always a Refugee*, Eva recounts sensing the tensions at home and feeling alone, particularly when her brother emigrated to America and her sister to Palestine. Her loneliness extended into her school life, where she was one of the last Jewish girls left as her father had been awarded an Iron Cross 1st Class during WWI. Socially ostracised, she buried herself in schoolwork. Throughout her life she never shook off those feelings of estrangement, but more than compensated for them, as her later life showed.

On Kristallnacht, Eva witnessed her father's arrest. He was taken to Sachsenhausen but, through her mother's determination, freed three weeks later. With a visa obtained by their relative, the eminent lawyer, Sir Otto Kahn Freund, they escaped to England in January 1939. They initially settled in Belsize Park and Eva attended Camden School. After two terms, the family were evacuated. Her father was determined Eva continue her studies so they moved where schools followed that curriculum, initially to Torquay

and then – after Torquay was declared a 'Protected Area' unsuitable for 'enemy aliens' – to Ilfracombe, which soon became 'Protected'. Despite her poor English and regular upheaval, Eva passed her Cambridge Certificate within a year. Her father had been interned in Huyton and, after his release, they moved to Barrow-in-Furness where her father was at last allowed to practice as a doctor.

At eighteen Eva was called up for the war effort, working for local shipyard Vickers Armstrong, and later as a firewoman in Preston. After the war Eva gained

**Her greatest joy was holidaying in the Austrian Alps where she always determined to reach the peaks. She also did cross-country skiing, swimming and yoga. Family photos show her standing on her head aged ninety!**

a degree in Modern Languages from University College London, working for a while at Dawson's Rare Bookshop. She married Robert Evans, a fellow refugee from Vienna, in 1952, and they had three children. Robert was a restaurateur, co-owning Dukes and Hill House Hampstead, for which Eva baked desserts. Her morello cherry and lemon meringue pies became legendary.

Eva became private secretary to the renowned art historian, Professor Sir Ernst Gombrich. In 1974 she was appointed Administrator of University Association for Contemporary European Studies and later Administrator of United Kingdom Association for European Law. At the pinnacle of her career, in 1995, she was awarded an MBE for her work promoting European Studies. That same year, during an AJR trip to Berlin, she stepped off the

plane, proudly wearing her MBE medal.

Eva's accent and connection to her refugee background did not stop her from being staunchly patriotic and grateful to Britain for giving her refuge. Yet she also felt proud to be German. Once, when she had rebooked an entire party of conference delegates at short notice, due to a train strike, a German colleague told her: "Only a Berliner would have the energy to achieve this feat".

Eva loved reading, theatre, visits to museums and art galleries. She always looked impeccable, tastefully adorned with her jewelry that she loved so much. Even after her retirement, in 2009, she volunteered at the Jewish Museum in Camden and, aged 99, with my help, she published her memoirs and began speaking to German school children online about her life. She was an instant hit, speaking fluent German. One head teacher paid tribute, admiring her emphasis on education and how she quoted Goethe, 'Man should be noble, helpful and good'. Throughout her life, she followed this adage.

Eva's legacy can be found in words and film. She was interviewed for AJR's Refugee Voices, the Shoah Foundation and several German television documentaries. Interviewed by the *Ham & High* on her 100<sup>th</sup> birthday, she said she had simply swapped the Alps for Primrose Hill. Pragmatic as ever, at the grand old age of 100, climbing Primrose Hill was as ambitious as the highest Alps when she was younger. The mountains spoke to her spirit.

At her funeral a relative described her as, "simply the epitome of being indomitable, a force of nature that one is not normally afforded the privilege of having in one's midst."

**Janet Lew**



**Carel Felix FRANK**

Born: 27 March 1937, Amsterdam  
 Died: 13 November 2025, London

**Carel's mother, Beatrix Van Lier, was born in Eastbourne in 1910 and his father, Leonard David Frank, was born in Zwolle, Netherlands in 1903. Carel was the youngest of three boys, his eldest brother Nicholas was born in 1932 and Steven, who was born in 1935, still lives in the UK.**

The family lived in the new part of Amsterdam, Guido Gezelle Straat. In October 1942, Carel's father was arrested by the Gestapo and sent to Amersfoort Prison, then transported out of Holland to his death in Auschwitz on 21 January 1943. It was a very dangerous time for the family who were unaware of what had happened to their father for many years. Then, in Carel's own words, 'a miracle occurred': three well-known Amsterdam friends of his father decided to lobby the authorities to have the family put on the 'Barneveld List' of prominent Dutch Jews, who might not be sent to their deaths.

In March 1943 they were summoned to the station for transport to Barneveld, remaining until September 1943 when the Germans ordered them to the railway station for transport East. This was a traumatic event and they went to Camp Westerbork for a year, before being transported 30 hours in cattle trucks to Theresienstadt in September 1944 where they remained until liberation in May 1945. Carel's mother, Beatrix, then organised the 'Great Escape' to get back to England where they started their new life in London in June 1945, raising her niece Ruth Wolf as well, who had lost her parents in the camps.

Carel went to boarding school in Frensham Heights with his brother Steven and Ruth and then went on to complete a degree in Civil Engineering at Loughborough University in 1960. He loved sports playing for the 1st Eleven Hockey Team and

awarded full colours. He was a member of the Dave Cooper Quintet (Cello/ Double Base) and played at many college functions.

Carel started his working life as an engineer, working for Marples Ridgway on the contract for the unique Hammersmith flyover, and then on to the The Dartford Tunnel. His sporting life continued playing for Dulwich Hockey Club.

In March 1962 he went skiing for the first time to Mayerhofen, Austria when he crashed into a Dutch girl, Anna Broeze, on her last day of her holiday. He fell in love and they married in Amsterdam, December 1962, their son Nicholas was born in 1963. Carel worked at the International Department of De Amsterdamse Ballast Mij, living in Buitenveldert, Amsterdam.

The family decided to emigrated to Canada, where Oriele their daughter was born in 1965 whilst Carel worked as an engineer in Toronto. He decided on a career change, studying at the Toronto Stock Exchange to move into banking, working at Merrill Lynch, returning to London in 1970. In 1975 he became Vice President of Wood Gundy, the highly respected Canadian Investment Bank, followed by roles at CIBC, Hill Samuel, Bank of Montreal and Bear Sterns

In 1989 he went to work at NCL Investments Ltd, retiring in 1997, although continued to do consultancy until 2013.

Carel and Anna remained in Hammersmith, London where Anna still lives. They went on to travel the world, Carel played hockey for the Masonians well into his 70s, loved art and music, remaining active until his passing. He will be greatly missed by his wife, two children and five grandchildren. A life well lived.

**Anna Frank**

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# IN PERSON EVENTS

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

DATE	TIME	AREA	CO-ORDINATOR
Monday 2 March	Lunchtime	Muswell Hill	Ros Hart
Tuesday 3 March	Morning	East London and Essex	Karen Diamond
Thursday 5 March	Afternoon	Pinner	Karen Diamond
Tuesday 10 March	Lunchtime	Sheffield	Michal Mocton
Thursday 12 March	Lunchtime	Norwich	Karen Diamond
Tuesday 17 March	Morning	Golders Green, with Pam Fox remembering Blooms Restaurant	Ros Hart
Tuesday 17 March	Morning	Central London (Baker Street)	Karen Diamond
Tuesday 17 March	Lunchtime	Yorkshire	Michal Mocton
Wednesday 18 March	Lunchtime	Glasgow	Agnes Isaacs
Thursday 19 March	Afternoon	Newcastle	Agnes Isaacs
Thursday 19 March	Lunchtime	Cambridge	Karen Diamond
Monday 23 March	Lunchtime	North London	Ros Hart
Wednesday 25 March	Afternoon	Edinburgh	Karen Diamond
Thursday 26 March	Morning	Wembley	Ros Hart
Monday 30 March	Afternoon	South Herts (Radlett)	Ros Hart
Tuesday 31 March	Morning	Ealing	Ros Hart

## CO-ORDINATOR DETAILS

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# ZOOMS AHEAD

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

Monday 2 March @ 4pm	<b>Roxanne de Bastion – The Piano Player of Budapest: a true story of Holocaust survival and hope</b> <a href="https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/86755311152">https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/86755311152</a>	Meeting ID: 867 5531 1152
Tuesday 3 March @ 4pm	<b>Susannah Hodge – U3A: our organisation and the opportunities for you</b> <a href="https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/81603075454">https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/81603075454</a>	Meeting ID: 8160 307 5454
Monday 9 March @ 4pm	<b>Maria Chamberlain – Porozmawiajmy po polsku (let's speak Polish)</b> <a href="https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/82094293540">https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/82094293540</a>	Meeting ID: 820 9429 3540
Monday 16 March @ 4pm	<b>Jarmila Turnovsky – Ruptured Lives</b> <a href="https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/82147596689">https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/82147596689</a>	Meeting ID: 821 4759 6689
Wednesday 18 March @ 4pm	<b>Book Discussion (no speaker) – The Boys in the Boat by Daniel James Brown</b> <a href="https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/87599744345">https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/87599744345</a>	Meeting ID: 875 9974 4345
Wednesday 25 March @ 4pm	<b>Sue Gil – A virtual tour of London's East End</b> <a href="https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/86702898932">https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/86702898932</a>	Meeting ID: 8670 289 8932
Tuesday 31 March @ 4pm	<b>Judy Karbritz – Picasso's wives, lovers and muses</b> <a href="https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/81515834429">https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/81515834429</a>	Meeting ID 815158 34429

# 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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