



## The Library of Exile

So many fascinating exhibitions and plays have had to close because of Coronavirus. Tom Stoppard's *Leopoldstadt*, *Endgame* at the Old Vic, Andy Warhol at the Tate Modern. Who knows if any of them will re-open again? Someone enterprising at the BBC should make a film about the artistic events we never saw in 2020.



The Library of Exile, at the British Museum

*Library of Exile* was particularly interesting because it was all about refugees, loss and memory, the fragility of civilisation. It opened at the British Museum on 12 March and then closed within a few days because of the epidemic.

Conceived as a 'space to sit and read and be', it was the creation of the British ceramicist and writer, Edmund de Waal, best known for his family memoir, *The Hare With Amber Eyes* (2010), a moving story

of exile and loss. The exhibit was a pavilion, made of brilliant white porcelain, full of more than 2,000 books, all written by exiled authors, some famous, like Freud, Tsvetaeva and Nabokov, others barely known at all. The books were arranged by nation, in alphabetical order, from Afghanistan and Austria to Zambia and Zimbabwe.

Outside, on the pavilion walls, there were a few words written in black, blurred, almost  
*Continued on page 2*

### SHANA TOVAH

As Summer and the Jewish year draw to a close it is hard to believe that almost six months have passed since the country went into lockdown. The AJR Chairman and Chief Executive have jointly written a letter to update you on our services – see page 3.

Other topics covered this month include architecture, music, art, photography, film and even driving – so there really is something for everyone.

Wishing you a peaceful, happy and – perhaps most importantly, given that the pandemic is far from over – safe New Year and well over the fast.

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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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## The Library of Exile (cont.)

indecipherable. Others were more clear: 'Psalm', 'Baghdad', 'Timbuktu', 'Al Sa'eh Library in Tripoli', 'the Imperial Library', 'Cordoba'. They evoked an exotic world, the great, lost libraries of the world, from Nineveh to Mosul.

Some were chosen for their stories. The Imperial Library of Constantinople, in the capital city of the Byzantine Empire, was the last of the great libraries of the ancient world. Long after the destruction of the Great Library of Alexandria and the other ancient libraries, it preserved the knowledge of the classical world for almost a thousand years.

Others are more recent. The Al Sa'eh Library in Tripoli, Lebanon, was founded in 1970, prized for its diversity. Then in January 2014, almost half the collection was deliberately burnt by Islamist extremists. The library of the University of Mosul was destroyed by Islamic State in 2014. 'The destruction is complete,' said Obay al-Dewachi, president of the University of Mosul.

Inside the pavilion there were four vitrines, all in brilliant white, holding small porcelain and marble pots. Their arrangement reflects the composition of Daniel Bomberg's 1519-23 edition of the Talmud printed in Renaissance Venice. Bomberg printed the first complete Babylonian and Jerusalem Talmuds.

What was most striking was the whiteness of the porcelain. The installation brings together de Waal's two great preoccupations: exile and ceramics. 'White is also my story', he writes in his book, *The White Road: A Journey Into Obsession* (2015). 'I am a potter, I say, when asked what I do. I write books, too, but it is porcelain – white bowls – that I claim as my own...' In his study in south London he has a copy of Melville's *Moby-Dick*. There is a sentence in Chapter 42, 'the elusive quality it is, which causes the thoughts of whiteness...' In his copy of the book, he once wrote, '*Thoughts of whiteness* is underlined repeatedly.'

In between the vitrines were shelves lined with books, including several books by Elisabeth de Waal, Edmund's grandmother. A few go back in time, most famously, Ovid and Dante, but most are by modern masters, Victor Hugo, Canetti and Musil, Milosz, Paul Celan and Brodsky and by contemporary

writers from all over the world. The bookends which supported the books were made of white porcelain. It is a reminder of how many of the great writers, especially modern writers, were refugees.

There were a few children's books also, including *The Tiger Who Came to Tea* by the child refugee Judith Kerr and *Meg and Mog*, illustrated by the Polish refugee, Jan Pienkowski. Eighty-eight countries were represented. But there were also some puzzling gaps. Three books by Israeli writers, but nothing in Hebrew or Yiddish. Great Yiddish writers were listed elsewhere: Sholem Aleichem under Ukraine, Isaac Bashevis Singer under Poland.

The British Museum could hardly be a more appropriate setting for this exhibition. It was in the old British Library that Karl Marx did his research. Norbert Elias, helped by a Jewish refugee fund, worked on his masterpiece *The Civilising Process* (1939), and Stefan Zweig worked regularly in the Reading Room when he first arrived in 1933. This was where the filmmaker, Emeric Pressburger researched the duel in *The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp* and Paul Hirsch donated his collection of almost 20,000 volumes on music to the BM in 1946. Museums, like libraries, are both great institutions that last for centuries. But they are also bound up with the history of exile and refugees.

This was clearly a deeply personal project for de Waal. 'I'm making this for my grandfather Viktor who saw his library stolen,' he wrote. Viktor von Ephrussi was forced to flee from Vienna and died stateless in Britain in 1945. In *The Hare With Amber Eyes*, there is a powerful description of his arrival in England. His daughter Elisabeth 'notices that on his watch-chain he still carries the key to the bookcase in the library in the Palais [in Vienna].'

Books and exile run through *The Hare With Amber Eyes*. It tells a story of rise and fall, how a Jewish family from Odessa became one of the great banking dynasties in 19<sup>th</sup> century Europe. And then comes catastrophe, as the Nazis invade Vienna. Perhaps the most dramatic scene in the book is when Nazis storm the Ephrussi Palace: 'three of them heave the desk and send it crashing over the handrail until, with a sound of splintering wood and gilt and marquetry, it hits the stone flags of the courtyard below. This desk ... takes a long time to fall. The sounds ricochet off the glass roof. The

broken drawers scatter letters across the courtyard.'

After the violence, silence. '[A]s my great-grandmother and great-grandfather [Viktor] sit in silence in the library, there is Anna ... sweeping the broken fragments of porcelain and marquetry away...' Porcelain, a library and terrible violence. Sitting in the porcelain pavilion, eighty years later, everything felt very still. Only the books and the black words outside spoke of loss and exile.

Exile is one of De Waal's great subjects. His father, Victor, came to England as a refugee at the age of ten. 'The only reason I and my family exist at all is because my father was allowed to come to Britain as a refugee and become a British citizen,' de Waal told *The Guardian* last September. 'I am European. I refuse to feel exiled from England, but, like many, I am feeling an acute sense of rootlessness.' Last winter, de Waal went to Vienna, the city which banished his family, for a reunion.

*Library of Exile* was first unveiled at the Venice Biennale 2019 and then transferred to Dresden's baroque Japanisches Palais. The exhibition was to run for six months at the British Museum. Soon the books in the library will be donated to the library of the university of Mosul in Iraq. 'It is the most personal and significant thing I've done,' says de Waal. The exhibition has pulled together many of the themes at the heart of his life and work. What de Waal couldn't have anticipated was that his exhibition about transience would barely last for a few days.

David Herman

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Dear Friend,

We hope you and your loved ones are well and have been able to manage during the Covid-19 pandemic.

As aspects of the lockdown ease we are writing to update you with the steps we are now taking to reopen the AJR.

These past few months have been amongst the toughest the organisation has ever faced and we have endeavoured to ensure that all our members have remained safe and well-provided for. Once lockdown began, we started to publish the weekly e-Newsletter, which we know from the many kind and grateful messages we have received, has had a transformative effect, especially for those of our members who are more isolated. This weekly interaction is now as eagerly awaited as the monthly AJR Journal and has literally brought the world to your computers. With a huge variety of content, there really is something for everyone.

Our Zoom events have also transformed our work and enabled us to reach many of our members with whom we do not always have the chance to connect. It has been our great pleasure to bring you dozens of fascinating and illuminating events and to hear from engaging, entertaining and leading figures in so many fields of public interest.

We have been mindful though that not all our members have wanted to connect through Zoom. Here we have made sure that every first generation member has been called and checked up on to see how and where we might be able to help. Our army of volunteers, supplemented by AJR staff and trustees, has continuously made contact. We also know that fellow members have been calling each other.

For the most vulnerable members, our dedicated social workers have, where necessary, organised grocery shopping and the delivery of PPE so that visitors, including most critically, carers, can continue to provide personal and medical care. Relatedly, we are grateful to the Claims Conference for a contribution from the Holocaust Survivor Covid-19 Urgent Response Fund to help defray the additional costs we have incurred in lockdown.

Regrettably though, the AJR has not been immune from the devastating effect Covid-19 has had on businesses as well as on individuals and families, including many close to the AJR. During the past few months we have had to look very carefully at our finances, partly to make sure we can deliver our services now, but also to try to forecast what our future needs might be.

With that in mind, we have made cuts to several areas of our operations that have, regrettably, led to a small number of redundancies and to a reduction in hours for other staff with effect from the start of August. The area of our work that has probably been impacted the most has been the regional groups. It is also with great regret that we will be bringing the *My Story* project to a close once all the books currently unfinished have been completed. In making all these difficult decisions, we have paid particular attention to maintaining a national presence.

Where we can, we have now restarted social work and volunteer visits to certain members in their own gardens. In doing so, we are carrying out our own risk assessments whilst also being mindful of the need to respect prevailing social distancing rules. Similarly, whereas all staff had worked remotely during the lockdown, we are now implementing the gradual return to work at Head Office.

We all know that the situation is difficult and delicately poised, and that you might continue to be affected by the impact of Covid-19. As you would expect, we continue to monitor developments with the aim of implementing further easing in the coming weeks. In the meantime, please do let us know if we can help in any way.

Wishing you and your loved ones much strength and our very best wishes for Rosh Hashanah and an easy fast.



Andrew Kaufman  
Chairman



Michael Newman  
Chief Executive



# Katie, the Japanese, Deventer and Me

Seventy miles east of Amsterdam, beside the River IJssel, lies the City of Deventer with its beautiful historic centre.

Today Deventer has a population of about 100,000 but, in the 1930's, it was only a third of that figure, with most of its citizens living in the historic centre.

Among other features, Deventer is famous for ginger cake, the location for the film *A Bridge Too Far* and the Jewish diarist Etty Hillesum. Before WW2 about 550 Jews also lived in the centre, mainly involved in small businesses, with their religious needs catered for by a beautiful Moorish style Synagogue, still standing, but now unused, just off the central square.

Most of my father's family lived there in the 1930's, including my cousin Katie Frankenhuis, a self-assured and lively young woman, then in her late teens. Katie fell in love with a Dutch army officer who, in 1938, was posted to the Dutch East Indies, a Dutch colony, which later became Indonesia. Katie was determined to be with him and, after a long sea voyage, arrived in the colony just before war began in Europe. They married and, in 1940, Katie gave birth to a daughter.

The Japanese invaded the Dutch East Indies soon after their attack on Pearl Harbour in 1941 and rapidly overwhelmed the Dutch and British forces there. Many Dutch and British soldiers perished in the invasion and over 100,000 civilians were captured. These were either placed in prison camps or used as slave labour by the Japanese.

Katie and her young daughter were imprisoned with several hundred other women and children and endured extremely harsh conditions. She described the camp as making the 1980's TV series *Tenko*, about a women's Japanese prison camp, look like a holiday camp compared to conditions in her camp. Many women and children died from starvation,



Katie, her husband Lambertus and daughter Elles taken in late 1946 in the Far East, shortly before their return to Holland

punishment, disease and horrendously cruel treatment. Katie survived by crawling to the rear of the Japanese soldiers' mess at night with her little daughter and wiping grease from the cooking pans with grass, which they both then sucked. The Japanese had no particular interest in Jews and simply despised all Westerners.

In 1945 the Japanese defeat resulted in their withdrawal from the Dutch East Indies. Prisoners were soon freed but their misery was not to end. All women and children from Katie's camp were ordered to the main square of a local town by soldiers of the Indonesian independence movement on the pretext that they were to be addressed by the future President of Indonesia. They were tightly packed into the square with exits blocked by the soldiers, who then proceeded to throw live grenades into the crowd. That day, more than half the women and children were slaughtered but, quite incredibly, Katie and her daughter survived.

Katie was reunited with her husband soon after. Amazingly, he had survived slave labour constructing the Japanese railway through Thailand to India, as portrayed in the film *Bridge on the River Kwai*. More than half of the labourers died from disease, starvation and ill treatment during that construction.

They returned to Deventer in the late 1940's to find that virtually the entire

Jewish community had disappeared. It later transpired that the Jews of Deventer had been rounded up by local Dutch people, particularly members of the Dutch Nationalist Party (NSB) and transported to their deaths at Sobibor in Poland. Their property and homes had been stolen by local people and the inside of the Synagogue wrecked. Sobibor was the fate of most of the 140,000 Jews of Holland.

Katie and her husband had two more children, but she never spoke about her experience until, after much persuasion, she told me some fifty years later whilst visiting her. Katie died in Deventer in her mid 80's about fifteen years ago, by strange twists of fate the sole survivor of 62 members of my family there. Too young to directly experience the War, I find her story both quite amazing and a very different narrative for Jewish people. She was a wonderfully forthright and tough lady.

I have often visited Deventer to be with Katie and now her daughter. Jews who once lived there are commemorated by the many "Stolpersteine" set in the pavements of the historic centre, but their ghosts still seem present. I find myself in a dilemma there, both enjoying the beautiful surroundings and remembering the horrors that local people inflicted on their Jewish fellow citizens. May they rest in peace.

Frank Miller

## LETTER FROM ISRAEL BY DOROTHEA SHEFER-VANSON



### TRYING TO STAY SANE



After the initial influx of the Coronavirus in February, followed by the massive and rapid lockdown and attendant social and economic damage, in early June matters were gradually being restored to some semblance of normality here in Israel. Small groups were allowed to meet, some schools were able to function partially, in what was known as 'capsules' and there was a general relaxation of the lockdown restrictions.

After receiving financial compensation for their losses, whether in full or partially, businesses and even restaurants, cafes and bars were able to open provided certain restrictions were met. The unemployment rate fell, synagogues were reopened, people returned to the parks and beaches, and finally schools were allowed to function fully.

Those involved in the performing arts were indignant at being left out of the general return to normality. Protests and demonstrations were held, and eventually the government gave in and performances were permitted, provided the audience did not exceed 250 people, or fifty percent of the auditorium's

capacity. Buses and eventually also trains were allowed to function, albeit to a limited extent. And at last, promises were made to 'reopen the skies' and allow Israelis desperate for holidays abroad to depart for specified countries (Cyprus, Greece, Iceland), where infection rates were considered to be sufficiently low.

But as June progressed the general rejoicing and premature self-congratulation on the part of the government came to an abrupt end. The dreaded second wave had arrived.

The curve which had been flattened began to rear its ugly head again, and alarm bells rang as the number of infections rose. The idea of returning to the theatre and the concert hall seemed to vanish like the proverbial mirage. Admittedly, orchestras and theatres have been putting on performances of one kind or another via the medium of Zoom, but that is not going to put much money in their coffers or provide audiences with the thrill of seeing and hearing performances by living, breathing human beings.

In mid-July, after dithering between re-imposing a full or partial lockdown and letting matters sort themselves out somehow, the government reacted with total hysteria. Even our all-knowing and all-powerful Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, has admitted that the restrictions were eased too soon. Demonstrations by irate citizens demanding a return to normality and the Prime Minister's resignation, expressing

disgust with the chaos and corruption at the top, as well as general opposition to whoever is responsible for the mess the country now seems to be in, have been met by police violence, the re-imposition of far-reaching restrictions and a pathetic attempt to appease the general anger by granting a token (small) sum of money to every individual and family in the land. Matters were further complicated by the 'revolt of the restaurateurs', who refused to close their establishments following another sudden change of tack by the government.

The few faint rays of light that seemed to be emerging out of the darkness have vanished into the black hole of the absence of social and cultural life, the inability to travel abroad, the closure of businesses, and all their attendant ills and uncertainties. In other words, we're on our way back to square one, but this time with far worse economic, social and psychological repercussions than before. After all, how long can one stay sane when the world we have known all our life comes crumbling down around us?

From the outset I was told that this is like another world war, and it would seem that this is the mental attitude we must now assume. I personally find solace in reading books, tending my garden and occasionally meeting with my immediate family. But I'm one of the lucky ones who no longer have to earn a living. Unfortunately, many people in Israel today are not in the same privileged position.

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# 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.

## MESSAGE TO ALL

We have now been on lockdown for quite some time. But we have survived many episodes in our life time. However, now in our eighties and nineties we have done pretty well, including our growing families. The weather, at least in the South, has been rather good to us. So with the High Holidays approaching let us be thankful that we are here to enjoy them, with our families, whether on Zoom or properly in person. Meanwhile keep safe and well. Let's hope this extraordinary and difficult time comes to an end in the near future.  
*Erich Reich, London N6*

**Note from the Editor: Erich Reich is Chairman of Kindertransport, an AJR special interest group.**

## LOCKDOWN ADVANTAGES

I have just come off the Zoom meeting with author Debra Barnes which was a fascinating session. Michael Newman said something about how many Zoom meetings the AJR is organising: he is right, and I have been able to be involved in so much more than was possible before lockdown. I just wanted to say thank you for all your efforts to engage what would be your regulars but for also opening it up to people like me, who would have loved to have been more involved before and couldn't – but can be now. I am very grateful, as I am sure are many others.  
*Jenny Evans, Rugely, Staffs.*

## FITTING TRIBUTE

I was pleased to see AJR devoting an entire seminar to Rosalind Franklin who, after discovering DNA, sadly died of cancer at a young age, and even more sadly, before she was internationally recognised for her research.

Eighteen months ago the Bank of England invited suggestions as to which visage should be displayed on the new £20 note. I suggested Rosalind Franklin, adding that additional attributes would be that she was Jewish and a woman. The Bank went one better and published her imprint

on the new 50p piece released on what would have been her 100th birthday on 25 July.  
*Rudi Leavor BEM, Bradford*

## HORTHY'S APOLOGY

It is very creditable for young Mr Horthy to apologise for the Holocaust and in so doing stand against the views of the large majority of his countrymen. It is just as creditable for Mr Fisher (August) to draw attention to this act.

It is understandable that Istvan (or as he now calls himself, Selim) Horthy wishes to apply some whitewash to his grandfather's memory. Very few, if any, people knew how to deal with Hitler and Horthy was no exception. It is, however, less likely that he would have shared his thoughts regarding treatment of Hungarian Jews with his six year-old grandson, however close they undoubtedly were. Istvan/Selim's information clearly originates from a later communication.

The fact is Horthy was fully aware of the deportation of provincial Jews, not only from appeals for help from threatened Jews, but also from Gendarmerie reports and seeing facts on the ground when moving regularly between the capital and his country estate. He must have realised that his two regular bridge playing partners, Chorin (heavy industry) and Goldberger (textiles) disappeared on 19 March 1944. Not only did he not lift a finger for these whom he previously acknowledged as friends but did not even enquire where they were.

In July 1944, when he was threatened from abroad, he knew exactly where to find the deporting Gendarmerie, knew how to stop them from dealing with the Jews of Budapest. As a result he was allowed to slip into Portugal rather than stand trial in Nuremberg. His grandson's apology is both apt and welcome, but he should let sleeping dogs lie before it is asked why his grandfather did not act some weeks sooner.  
*George Donath, London SW1*

## NO POLITICS HERE – PLEASE

I so agree with the Editor who, above the letter from new member Deborah Wrapson (August) wrote "No politics here please". However, that request should have come before (and after) the letter from Eric Sanders. Why on earth was he attacking Margaret Thatcher in 2020 for something about which he disagreed with her in 1971, nearly 50 years earlier? This is purely political and has no place in our journal. Interesting how we didn't hear from Mr Sanders while Jeremy Corbyn was leader of the Labour party.  
*Peter Phillips, Loudwater*

If Deborah Wrapson disapproves of political comment in the Journal, she would do far better not to write a letter which also expresses such comment. Her expression of her view of Dominic Cummings is neither more nor less valid than that of Dorothea Shefer-Vanson. Her comment on left-wing trope is invidious.  
*Judith Rhodes, Leeds*

As a son of one of the early founders of the AJR I have to inform Ms. Wrapson that if she thinks modern day politics devoid of anything to do with Israel or Judaism has no place in the journal, she has come to the wrong place. Everything in politics has a bearing on Israel or Judaism. In any case the article of which she complained was about élitist politicians including Netanyahu and Rivlin (Israel) who think they are a cut above the common people and can break the rules they have themselves made, celebrating Passover with their families during lock-down. As for Dominic Cumming's disgraceful flouting of the lock-down rules, does the fact that he 'clearly explained' his breaking of the law make it kosher? ("Please, m'Lord, I have clearly explained why I murdered my wife.....may I go now?"). Ridiculous.  
*Jon Rumney, London N20*

## RACE RELATIONS

David Herman's article on racism (August) has, I am sure, touched on a problem which has never left our minds. Certainly the

whole of my life, good as well as bad, was influenced by the antisemitic treatment I experienced during my teens. I believe that I share this with thousands, if not more.

But I have never understood where racism really comes from. Perhaps it is not just one thing? Maybe the same word covers different sensations? Would David Herman and others agree that inferiority is a major cause of racism? The racist wants to put others down in order to feel big, her – or himself?  
*Eric Sanders, London SW16*

David Herman refers to a turning point in relations between African Americans and Jews without explaining what caused it. I believe these are some of the reasons:

The "golden age" in Jewish/Black relations culminated in the Civil Rights Act of 1964 in the passing of which Jews had played a prominent part. But there were always conflicts with Jewish landlords and

shopkeepers accused of extortion and discrimination, exacerbated by the rapid rise of immigrant Jews into the middle class which gave Blacks a sense of being "left behind". Prominent Muslims identified with the Palestinians and the Black Power Movement became openly hostile to Israel and Zionism after the Six Day War in 1967.

I wonder what – or whom – David Herman had in mind when he wrote about "our history" and colonial past. Looking at last month's letter writers, who are presumably representative of his audience, I doubt any who would own up to having a colonial past.  
*Victor Ross, London W9*

## SUMMERS BY THE LAKE

Your Zoom talk with author Thomas Harding brought back childhood memories. My family lived in Berlin and on sunny Sunday mornings in summer my father and his two brothers would phone each other and arrange to meet at the lake. Our three

families, including two cousins the same age as my sister and me, would take the train and then a boat across the lake to the sandy beach. We children brought our buckets, spades and swimsuits. My father brought a hammock to put up in the adjoining forest. In the afternoon we would go to the restaurant in the wood for coffee and cake. The custom was to bring your own coffee and they provided the cups etc. The sign said *Der alte Brauch wird nicht gebrochen; hier koennen Familien Kaffe kochen* (The old custom will not be broken; families can brew their own coffee here).

I met Thomas Harding at a Holocaust meeting when he presented *The House by the Lake*; we had an interesting chat.  
*Gisela Feldman, Manchester*

**Erratum:** Further to her letter published in the August issue, Vera Schaufeld has asked us to point out the very kind family friend who met her at the Hook of Holland and saw her onto the boat to Britain was not Jewish.

## LOOKING FOR?

The AJR regularly receives messages from our members and others looking for people or for help in particular subjects. Here are some of the most recent requests – please get in touch directly with the person concerned if you can help.

### ERWIN HALL

Petra Maurizio would like information on Erwin Hall, born in Vienna, who came to Britain with a Kindertransport. Erwin was a cousin of Petra's mother; he is no longer alive but Petra is eager to find out more about him.  
[petra.maurizio@aon.at](mailto:petra.maurizio@aon.at)

### BLOOMSBURY HOUSE & WOBURN HOUSE

Deborah Oppenheimer is the producer of *Into the Arms of Strangers: Stories of the Kindertransport*. She is seeking information about rooms in London at the end of the war where survivors searched lists for news of their loved ones via posted lists, registers, or blackboards at Bloomsbury House or Woburn House, or elsewhere.  
[deb@debopp.com](mailto:deb@debopp.com)

### ESCAPEES FROM BELGIUM

Based on documentation from his Antwerp grandmother, Steven Dotsch is researching the escape of Belgian Jews into France following the German attack on Belgium in May 1940. He would particularly like to hear from anyone whose own family had personal experience of this.  
[stevendotsch@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:stevendotsch@blueyonder.co.uk)

## Mazel Tov Lord Ian



The AJR wishes a hearty congratulations to the former MP Ian Austin, who has been nominated for a non-affiliated seat in the House of Lords.

The former Dudley MP, whose adoptive father was a Jewish refugee, turned Independent last year citing a "culture of extremism, antisemitism and intolerance" within the Labour Party. He is now the UK's trade envoy to Israel, and is a long-time friend of the AJR.



# ART NOTES: by Gloria Tessler

What could be more joyful during lockdown than to gaze on an Impressionist painting? Last month The Royal Academy opened its collection of 60 masterpieces: Gauguin and the Impressionists from the Odrupgaard Collection, which will be available until October 18. Due to social distancing, you will need to book a slot in advance, which you can do on [www.royalacademy.org.uk](http://www.royalacademy.org.uk)



Camille Pissarro,  
*Plum Trees in Blossom*

The art is from the collection of Danish entrepreneur Wilhelm Hansen and his wife Henny and represents the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Some paintings can already be viewed online.

Hansen was more noted for his collection of Danish 19<sup>th</sup> century art, but his contemporary, the French art critic Theodore Duret, an early champion of Impressionism, helped him acquire some of the best French paintings, from Corot to Cézanne. They opened their house near Copenhagen, Odrupgaard, to the public in 1918, and soon their acquisitions had expanded to some of the most complete collections of 19<sup>th</sup> century French painting outside France. In 1951 Henne, his widow, bequeathed their home and collection to the Danish State. Two years later it became a museum.

The website offers a snapshot of these masterpieces. **Eva Gonzales'** insight into the mind of a sick woman: *The Convalescent: Portrait of a Woman in White* is a masterpiece of subtle energy: it



Berthe Morisot, *Young Girl on the Grass*

has that effete quality making you believe the patient is truly fading away. **Gustave Courbet's** *The Ruse: Roe Deer Hunting*, a monochromatic brown, shows the deer in almost mechanical motion, racing between the trees, seemingly unaware of imminent danger. I was also struck by **Berthe Morisot's** *Young Girl on the Grass*. Painted with swirling brushstrokes, it conveys a child-like innocence as though time itself is whirling away from the girl. Piquant in her sunhat, surrounded by flowers and a bird cage; she seems an evocation of fleeting youth, the cage perhaps a metaphor for the capture of that youthful sensitivity. It has some resonance with **Camille Pissarro's** *Plum Trees in Blossom*, showing a garden with the tree off centre, swaying in the breeze. It is an evocation of spring with light and shadow dancing on the cobbled path. Only a woman who appears to be walking slowly up the path offers a sense of permanence and solidity.

In contrast, **Camille Corot's** *The Windmill*, is full of menace; heaviness everywhere; the clouds, the windmill itself, which touches them, the thick sandy path, the buildings. Even the pure blue sky seems solid.

For me, **Paul Gauguin's** *Portrait of a Young Girl* is captivating. From her auburn fringe, to her taut, orange lips and blue eyes; her magnetic face stares out at you from that whimsical background that suggests the painter's love of the exotic; the painted wooden chair, the pink and blue background with assorted flowers; all his love of Tahiti seems present.

The show will be in four sections: **En Plein Air**, an array of landscapes, seascapes and cityscapes around Paris, Normandy, London

and the forests of Fontainebleau.

In the second section, **Collecting French Masters**, Hansen recalls the painters whose work probably inspired Impressionism, such as **Ingres** and **Delacroix**, whose portrait of George Sand is featured, as well as **Corot** and **Courbet**.

The third section is devoted to **Impressionist Women** – a long neglected group. Here **Morisot** and **Gonzales'** works are featured. It is to the Hansens' credit that they chose these supremely gifted women whose work passed largely unrecognised. Their domestic scenes reflect the constraints placed upon them at the time.

The fourth section looks ahead to **Gauguin, Cézanne** and **Matisse** and Post-Impressionism.

The **Ben Uri** has launched an online exhibition **Midnight's Family**, featuring 70 years of Indian artists in Britain. It coincides with the date of Indian Independence, midnight, August 15, 1947, and features Modernists such as **F. N. Souza** and **S K Bakre** to second generation artists, like the **Singh Twins**. The BU is keen to stress that some artists, like **Anish Kapoor** do not identify with national belonging. They are simply artists.

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CONTEMPORARY  
PAINTING AND SCULPTURE

# The Learner Driver

Cars and watches are the only permissible jewellery for men. Even a Star of David on a silver chain is in doubtful taste, according to Victor Ross.

I still have my first driving licence, a dainty booklet in stiff red covers, ca. 1938. By contrast the second-hand Standard Eight, a car bought for me by my mother for £25, lasted only twenty-four months, a victim of my status as an enemy alien.

My life-long affair with cars started with watching my father shave with a safety razor bearing the Perl logo. A Perl was the car he drove; you can judge its size by the offer of a free razor as inducement to become a Perl owner.

It was replaced by a Steyr, a more serious vehicle. Even so I remember my father rocking back and forth at the wheel, willing the engine to master the ascent of the Poetschen on the way to our holiday home in the Salzkammergut.

I learnt about cars watching the driver and being allowed to put my hand on the steering wheel when the roads were clear. Ten years later I was once again putting my hand on the steering wheel, this time to prevent my mother, whom I was teaching to drive, from aiming the car straight at a woman crossing the road. I was unsuccessful. My mother managed to wing her just before she gained the safety of the pavement. She was not badly hurt but needed hospital treatment. My apologies were sincere but also designed to establish in her mind that I was the driver. It was the spring of 1940, at the height of the phoney war – not a good time for the police, called by the hospital, to take down particulars of an accident involving a woman with a German accent and no L plates. It was the first and only time in her life that my mother allowed herself to be corrupted. A few weeks later enemy aliens were forbidden to own cars and the police came for me for other reasons.



Victor Ross's mother

When I was released from internment into the Pioneer Corps I jumped at the chance to be a lorry driver. It was a lot better than digging ditches, although not in mid-winter when I struggled to start the frozen engine with a crank-handle. "Soft hands, eh Rossi?" was all the encouragement I got from the real lorry drivers among us. But in the end they always came to my rescue.

As I climbed the army's promotion ladder my means of transport improved. While serving in an anti-tank regiment I was taught to handle a tracked vehicle (in which I bombed up and down the main road in Darlington). A couple of years later and a few thousand miles further east I was a staff officer swanning around Hong Kong in my own Jeep.

After the war I wasn't long without a car. My first was a monstrous left-hand drive Buick acquired for £125. There followed the golden years, when I earned enough to buy the cars of my choice and went through the entire Ford range, from modest to deluxe. This led to the discovery of a very English addiction, the company car, a status symbol as nuanced as the size of the civil servant's office carpet.

By that time I was chief executive of

a high-profile company and under pressure from my fellow directors to change my Ford Consul for something more stylish so that they could upgrade in turn. But I did not indulge their taste for ostentation at the company's expense.

Ostentation at my own expense was a different matter. Cars and watches are the only permissible jewellery for men. (Even wearing a Star of David on a silver chain is in doubtful taste.) Once I had retired, I was always on the lookout for specimens. This is how I spotted a Bentley in a local showroom. It was not new but immaculate, in British racing green. It talked to me. One day I told my wife about our conversations and invited her to share my wonder. She was not a car person but a good sport. So we went to look at it together and were given a brief sales talk. "That's true gloss," observed my wife, looking at the gleaming bodywork. "Can you see yourself taking it out in the rain?" I had to smile but managed a nod. Turning to the salesman she said, "We'll take it. Please wrap it up."

This is where any story about motor cars must end, because I cannot think of a happier end than with a Bentley in racing green.



# AN ARCHITECT OF MODERNISM

John Lewis has an elegant department store right on the Thames in Kingston. Had the firm built it in North West London's 'Finchleystrasse', more customers would surely know that Vienna-born Paul Koralek was the architect.



Paul Koralek marking the 50th anniversary of the opening of Trinity College's Berkeley Library

Completed in 1990, the building's large atrium recalls the interiors of the great nineteenth-century Paris department stores such as Bon Marché and Au Printemps. That is no coincidence: as a young man, Koralek lived in Paris, and he has acknowledged that these 'markets with glass over them' influenced him.

Koralek – his name means 'bead' in Czech – died last February. He was an only child, born in 1933. After the Anschluss, friends of the family already in Britain telephoned to urge them to come over. They were allowed to bring furniture and family possessions, but no money or jewellery. The family came just in time; his mother would relate that the guard at the frontier whispered to her, "I wish I was coming with you".

It was a traumatic time for Paul. He did not fully grasp what the family had been through; his warm, outgoing mother had lost all her family. His parents' grief gave way to the desire to shed their refugee past, and use the opportunity to start afresh.

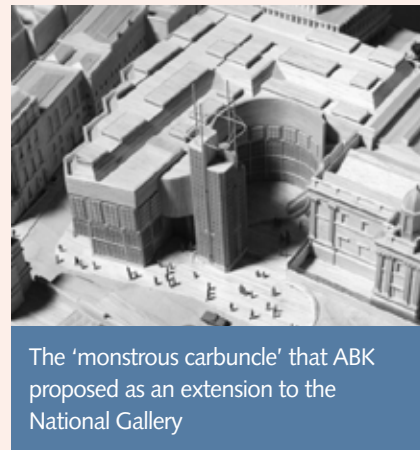
His father managed to rebuild the textile business he had left behind. Fear of invasion led Paul's parents to bring him up as 'English' as they could; they thought that would lessen the risk of persecution if, as seemed likely to them, Hitler invaded Britain. Paul co-operated by refusing to speak German. Only as he grew older did he become more aware of his Austrian background. He learned that his grandparents, but not his parents, had been observant Jews.

The family settled in what Paul described as the 'Viennese colony' in Hampstead: a flat with garden – highly unusual in Vienna, Paul noted – in Arkwright Road, and then 'Greenhill', a block of flats in Prince Arthur Road. Inevitably, Paul's father was interned on the Isle of Man.

Paul described himself as a shy boy, unsure of himself, but well-behaved. When neighbours noted his love of drawing, especially houses, his parents approached the Architectural Association in Bloomsbury. The AA offered him a place, but suggested he take a gap year as he was only seventeen years old. Paul went to Paris and followed a course in French civilisation at the Sorbonne.

Koralek began his professional career designing nurses' housing in Swindon. He then worked in New York with Marcel Breuer – like Walter Gropius, a Bauhaus 'bird of passage' who had spent a short time in the mid-1930s in Britain before emigrating to the USA. While in New York he learned that, aged 28, he had won a competition to design Trinity College's Berkeley Library in Dublin. Opened by president Eamon de Valera in 1967, it is considered to be Ireland's finest Modernist building, and led to many further commissions in Ireland.

Koralek returned to London and, with two of his AA contemporaries, Berlin-born Peter Ahrends and the late Richard Burton, formed ABK; it became a renowned architectural partnership



The 'monstrous carbuncle' that ABK proposed as an extension to the National Gallery

that designed buildings ranging from Britain's embassy in Moscow to twelve stations for London's Docklands Light Railway.

One of Koralek's more unusual commissions was to build a house overlooking Jerusalem's Jewish quarter for Itzhak Ernst Nebenzahl, a lawyer who had emigrated from Frankfurt and who served for twenty years as Israel's state comptroller. The link was a young Israeli architect who had worked for ABK. He would recall how he had to comply not only with British mandate building regulations, but also with religious guidelines: no part of a building should overhang a public space; separate milk and meat kitchens; and, of course, no work or travel on the Sabbath.

The ABK partnership lasted for more than half a century. The low point came in 1984, after Prince Charles derided as a 'monstrous carbuncle' the firm's winning entry for an extension to the National Gallery in Trafalgar Square. The National Gallery dropped ABK's design and engaged other architects to build the Sainsbury Wing. Although Prince Charles later met the architects and expressed regret, the adverse publicity halted new commissions for some four years, other than from existing clients.

A British Library interview with Koralek is available online. Two architecture journalists, Jeremy Melvin and Kenneth Powell, have published books about the ABK partnership.

Martin Mauthner

# The saviour of the British film industry

16 September marks the birthday of the Hungarian-born film producer, director and screenwriter Alexander Korda. Born Sándor László Kellner in 1893, in Turkeve, his career began with scraping a living by writing articles for Hungarian publications before, with the help of a loan, becoming involved in the cinema. By 1916 he was directing his own films and editing a well-known film publication.

He founded the prestigious production company Corvin, adapting Hungarian literary works for film, on which he collaborated with talents later renowned in Hollywood, like Michael Curtiz, the director of *Casablanca*.

He was active during the revolution of 1917 so when Horthy's troops took over the country, he had to flee to Vienna with his beautiful wife. They adopted a grandiose lifestyle which they could ill afford and in 1927 went to Hollywood. Korda found he hated the studio system and after four years returned to Europe.

In England he brought ambition, imagination and glamour to the depressed British cinema. He founded his own production company and named it London Films, with a grandiose picture of Big Ben at the beginning of each film.

His first major success was *The Private Life of Henry the Eighth* with Charles Laughton, in which Henry is portrayed as a victim of manipulative women. The film earned £500,000

on its first world tour and carried on earning £10,000 p.a. for years.

Korda kept a small framed picture in his office. It showed a Paris street with a tattered poster of *The Private Life of Henry the Eighth* on the side of a public lavatory: Korda said he kept it to remind him of what comes after glory. A notice in his office also said: "It is not enough to be Hungarian, you must have talent too". Many of his associates were refugees from Hungary and his talented brothers, Vince (later Vincent) and Zoltan, were associated with him throughout his career.

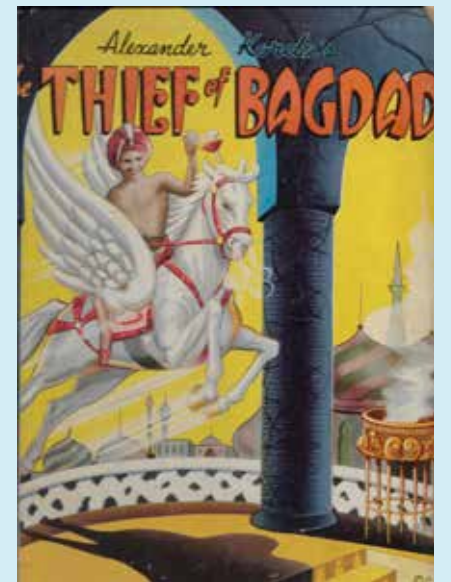
Next he produced *The Scarlet Pimpernel*, starring Leslie Howard; then came the successful *Sanders of the River* (directed by Zoltan) with Paul Robeson singing. This was followed by *Things to Come*, a collaboration with H G Wells. With Vincent designing the sets, a film on the later years of Rembrandt was made which was a critical, but not a box office, success.

His biographer described Korda as "a man of immense charm, social grace and culture". When asked how he managed to raise money from hard-headed financiers while native producers could not, Korda replied, "You ask for it in broken English".

Von Sternberg was engaged for the filming of *I Claudius*; this was followed by *Knight Without Armour* starring Sternberg's discovery, Marlene Dietrich. *The Drum* and *The Four Feathers*, both films about the British Empire, achieved lasting success and are still played frequently on TV. *The Thief of Bagdad* followed, with the young Indian, Sabu.

When war seemed inevitable, Korda was asked to make a propaganda film. The result, in record time, was *The Lion has Wings*.

For reasons which were the subject of



a lot of debate, he left for Hollywood. Here he directed *That Hamilton Woman*, with Vivien Leigh and Laurence Olivier. Churchill saw it at least five times and asked Korda to convince America to be pro-British before and during the war.

Next came a remarkable film in technicolour, *The Jungle Book*, also starring Sabu, which received six Academy Award nominations.

In the forties the British film industry was languishing and a £3,000,000 loan was extended to Korda's studio by the state. A flood of talents left the Rank Organisation to join Korda's outfit: Emeric Pressburger (also from Hungary), Michael Powell, Carol Reed, David Lean, the Boulting brothers, Laurence Olivier, etc. *The Third Man* or *The Fallen Idol* would not have been made without the impetus given to the projects by Korda. Between 1933 and 1955 he was associated with 95 feature films, but losses were mounting and the government finally called in the loan: Korda personally lost £500,000.

In his later years he foresaw the value of his films for American television and also planned to enter television production himself. After his death the tributes flooded in. His memorial service was attended by 400 stars. This poor Jewish boy, Sandor Kellner was, for decades the British film industry.

Janos Fisher



# Vienna's 'Wall of Names'

*"...Even though the war did not start because of the Jewish people, the story is true and it happened to a lot of Jewish families. With all our love, your Oma & Opa, March 1996".*

This note is written to me and my brother on the inside cover of a copy of *A Candle in the Dark* by Adèle Geras.



Vienna's Shoah Memorial – architect's impression

Some twenty years after he launched his initiative, Holocaust-survivor Kurt Yakov Tutter's dream is coming true: Austria this summer started work on the construction of a memorial listing the names of some 65,000 Austrian Jews who perished in the Shoah. The ceremonial opening of the memorial – several granite slabs, about 2.4 metres tall, surrounding an oval lawn and trees in Ostarrichi Park, near the Ring and the university – is planned for autumn next year.

Born in 1930, Tutter left behind and lost his parents when he fled; he now lives in Canada. Sebastian Kurz, Austria's chancellor at the time, announced in 2018, after debates on who should pay for the memorial, and where in the capital it should stand, that the federal government accepted the proposal; he said it would foot most of the bill,

estimated at £4.7 million/\$6 million. Kurz stressed that the memorial would help ensure the country never forgot that dark chapter in its history.

In 1991, his predecessor, Franz Vranitzky, was the first head of government to regret publicly Austria's 'Mitschuld' – its complicity. As part of a government project, the documentations archive of the Austrian Resistance (DÖW) has been collecting the names of those murdered in the Shoah. Relatives of victims should check DÖW's database and inform the agency, if they wish to add a name; its website is [office@doew.at](mailto:office@doew.at).

Yad Vashem in Jerusalem and similar

memorials with names of victims inspired Tutter and Vienna's initiative. Walls at the Holocaust Museum in Paris list 76,000 French Jews deported and killed by the Hitler regime. In Prague, the names of some 77,000 Czech and Moravian victims are inscribed on the wall of the Pinkas Synagogue. In Amsterdam, Daniel Libeskind, the eminent US architect and son of Holocaust survivors, has designed a memorial, going up near the Jewish Historical Museum, for around 102,000 victims. A memorial near the centre of Brussels, in Anderlecht, commemorates the country's roughly 24,000 Jewish martyrs.

Martin Mauthner

## JUST Act Now

The AJR has joined the World Jewish Restitution Organization (WJRO) and other member organisations in welcoming the U.S. Secretary of State Department's ground-breaking JUST Act Report.

The 200+ page JUST (Justice for Uncompensated Survivors Today) Act Report comprehensively reviews actions that have been taken by various countries

to provide restitution or compensation for property confiscated during the Holocaust or subsequently nationalised during the Communist era. It concludes that many European countries have not yet met their commitments to Holocaust survivors and Jewish communities to provide restitution or compensation for property that was wrongfully taken from them during WW2.

Gideon Taylor, Chair of Operations, WJRO, commented: "Even in these hard times, countries should live up to their pledges to address the material wrongs of the

Holocaust while the remaining survivors are still alive. Amid the coronavirus pandemic, all must be done to care for vulnerable Holocaust survivors, many of whom live on limited incomes and are in poor health. We are proud of the work that AJR and our other member organisations are doing on the ground every day to assist Holocaust survivors and others during this crisis."

The full JUST Act Report can be seen at [www.state.gov/reports/just-act-report-to-congress/](https://www.state.gov/reports/just-act-report-to-congress/)

# The Kindertransport from Vienna

My mother, Erika Guttmann, often referred to her good fortune that she was chosen from her photo to leave Vienna through the Save the Children Fund on 11 January 1939. When I asked Kindertransport historians about lists for each train, they responded such lists were lost. When I mentioned that my mother was born on 29 July 1921, the reply was negative in that the upper age limit was 15. And were non-Austrians eligible for the Kindertransport? The venerable Amy Gottlieb and World Jewish Relief could not find a record on Erika.

While at the Vienna Wiesenthal Institute I was curious what the Israelitische Kultusgemeinde (IKG) might have on Erika. No problem for the archivist in finding the transport list. At first my mother was not included, but 12 children failed medical checks and my mother came onto the revised list. She had a guaranteed place in Highgate N6 (that of the Nobel laureate A.V. and Margaret Hill) and a passport. So Erika travelled at short notice.

This raised wider questions: had lists survived for every transport from Vienna? Why could some children travel, and many not? How many children were registered, what is there in the way of photos and letters? Why were there medical checks?

Trawling through microfilms revealed transport lists, reports on each child, correspondence and medical certificates. The archivist confirmed no one had used them. A grant bid to index them had been rejected. I found the microfilms frustrating. The print outs were grubby. So I worked



Kindertransport children from Vienna

on original IKG documents at the Central Archives for the History of the Jewish People on the Giv'at Ram Campus of the Hebrew University.

The London-based organisers under Lola Hahn-Warburg (1901–1989) required certificates of good physical and mental health, educational attainment, and of a child's social worth. Hahn-Warburg prioritised children of high intelligence and moral qualities, and preferably not too Jewish looking. Even for the first rapidly organised and by far the largest transport on 10 December 1938, the medicals were held two days before departure at the IKG office.

The Refugee Children's Movement (RCM) insisted on only physically and mentally healthy children. The RCM collected and scrutinised £50 guarantees, backed up by a banker's reference. The RCM issued pass cards in place of visas for the UK, exercising a high level of control. Whereas Hahn-Warburg wanted high achievers, Lola Schwarz of the IKG prioritised the destitute. The Nazis cut all welfare, pensions, unemployment assistance and evicted stateless parents making many households dependent on IKG meals and funds.

The upper age was twice reduced to 15, and May 1939 marked a low point with 84 arrivals, contrasting to 851 in December 1938. Local groups and concerned individuals offered hospitality. Desperate parents and children attempted to arrange their future. Edith Riss, aged 11,

wrote: "I promise to be very industrious and obedient". She was killed at Maly Trostinec on 18 September 1942. Eva Renee Seinfeld petitioned Princess Elizabeth on 17 March 1939: "I am 14 years old of a quiet and modest kind, of a good and severe education and it will be my greatest endeavour to be worthy of your noble and kind protection." Eva was deported from Vienna on 14 June 1942 for Sobibor.

At the AJR Lancaster House conference Hannah Lessing of the Austrian National Fund commented that only the children who came should be documented. Each life saved should be celebrated. But lives lost need commemorating. I routinely check the website of the DOEW (the Documentation Centre of the Austrian Resistance) for information on Austrian victims of the Holocaust, but there are children not on a transport list and not on the DOEW website. Should one worry that the Vienna wall being erected will miss out names of children who were deported and killed?

An exhibition on the Kindertransport will open at the Jewish Museum in Vienna on 9 December 2020.

For a longer text from Transactions of the Jewish Historical Society: <https://www.scienceopen.com/document?vid=854d1252-e03e-4a42-90ba-00ee7fb1c231>

Paul Weindling



# The other Boris

One of the AJR's many enjoyable Zoom meetings in recent weeks was with the son of the East End photographer Boris. Many AJR members, especially those based in London, may still have one of his classic portrait photographs somewhere in the house.



Boris Bennett wearing his trademark hat

Boris Bennett (né Sokhatchevsky), my father, was born in 1900, in Ozorków, Poland, the seventh of eight children. In 1905 the family moved to Łódź, where they ran a small textile factory. At the age of 18 Boris left Poland, as living conditions were poor and there was growing antisemitism.

He moved first to Paris, where he worked on restoring old damaged photographs. He was later employed by a German company specialising in setting photographs onto the backs of mirrors, brooches, cameos and earrings. In 1922 Boris moved to London as their British agent, meaning that he could learn English and also feel closer to his desired goal of settling in the United States.

He found a room in Whitechapel and within eighteen months had earned enough money to realise his childhood dream of becoming a photographer. His first studio in Fieldgate Street, glamorously entitled *The Parisienne Studio*, was a short-lived venture as Boris, keen to extend his professional skills, moved to Glasgow to enrol on advanced photographic courses. To make ends meet he worked part time in the local synagogues, photographing weddings. In 1927 he returned to London and opened a new studio at 150 Whitechapel Road under his own name *Boris*, located on the first floor with living quarters above.

The studio had no shop window, just two small displays at street level; developing and printing took place in the basement. Boris approached the nearby florist, *Bookschneer's*, who agreed to recommend him to couples ordering their wedding flowers in return for a reciprocal

promise from Boris. A similar arrangement was made with *Frumkins*, the local wine merchant. He also sought the names and addresses of all those registering for marriage with the local registrar.

In 1929 a young woman came into the studio requesting a passport photograph. This was a service not normally offered, but something made Boris agree. It was love at first sight, and Boris proposed to her on the spot. Her name was Julia Vines (Vigonsky). They married in 1930 and had four children: Phyllis, Ruth, Maurice and myself.

Julia worked alongside him in the studio, as later did daughter Ruth. Julia took the orders and organised the studio and reception areas, which overflowed with wedding parties. It was she who persuaded Boris to give up his dream of settling in America.

In 1931 Boris moved to larger premises at 106 Whitechapel Road. By 1934 he had purchased a former pub at 14 Whitechapel Road, which was converted into a studio with living accommodation above. This became Boris's best known studio where he firmly established himself as *the* photographer in the East End. There was a large red neon sign proclaiming *Boris Studio*, stretching diagonally across the first floor. Internally, the building was restructured with



Boris and Julia's own wedding photo, taken by Boris himself in his Whitechapel studio

a broad sweeping staircase leading up to the studio and reception. Boris designed modern wooden sets with interchangeable components, such as steps, fireplaces, pillars, and windows. These sets, and his unique lighting techniques, culminated in Boris creating photographs which exuded the sophisticated style and glamour of Hollywood.

At that time it was unusual for wedding photographs to be taken at the venue. Instead, a visit to the photographer's studio was an integral part of the wedding day. The couple and their entourage visited the studio between the morning service in the synagogue, and the reception in the afternoon. Large crowds gathered outside the studio to see the bridal parties, including dressmakers who would study and sketch the latest bridal wear of famous designers, such as Norman Hartnell. To keep the crowds back, Boris needed a commissionaire, and hired Sidney Long, who had been desperately looking for a job. In his wine coloured uniform, resplendent with gold braid, Sidney was there to ensure that the right car, with the right bride and her entourage, arrived and departed at the right time. Boris's warm personality and charisma established an immediate rapport with his clients.

Michael Bennett

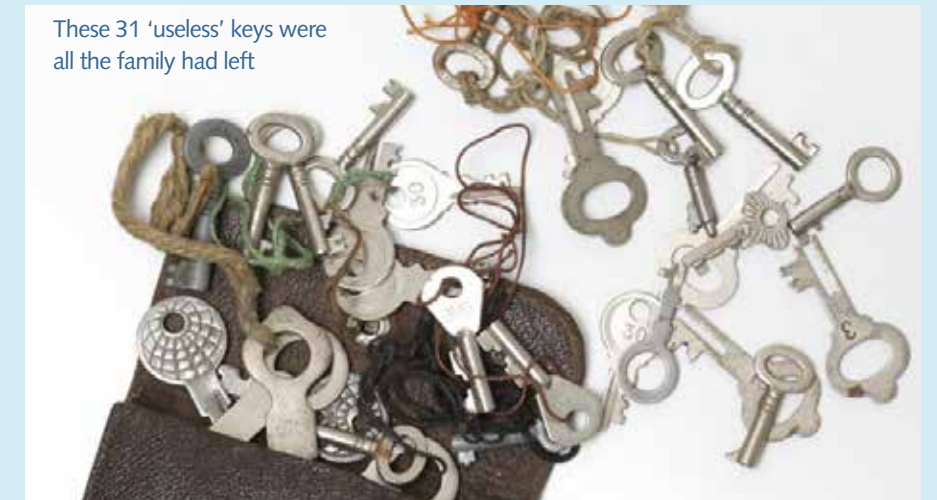
# The saga of the useless keys

When my twin brother George and I were 6 years old, living with our parents in Berlin, they were desperate to escape the hell of Nazi rule. A distant Uncle had agreed to sponsor us to settle in Pennsylvania, USA but it took another year before the US Government consented to our immigration.



Peter and Marianne Summerfield

These 31 'useless' keys were all the family had left



In August 1939, we were finally able to prepare our departure. Our household goods were packed into a large container destined to be sent direct to the United States with each item approved, having to be listed and payment made to the Nazis of the price originally paid for it – pure theft for the Nazi war chest! Our father had the bright idea of separating groups of household items in separate cases and chests under the watchful eye of a Nazi Officer who sealed the room at night. There were 31 keys and these were carefully stored in our father's attaché case for him to carry on our journey to freedom.

A fortunate switch from leaving by boat from Hamburg to taking one of the last trains from Berlin to Holland, enabled us to escape one week before the outbreak of war. We left with one suitcase, two overnight bags and the attaché case containing the vital keys. At Bentheim, on the border with Holland, we were ordered off the train for emigration formalities while leaving our case behind for inspection on the train. To our utter dismay, the train did not wait but was shunted back into Germany and we lost our one case – another theft! For 24 hours, we were held sitting or lying on the floor of the emigration hall surrounded by guards, with neither food nor drink. Then a Dutch local train arrived to take us across the border. Eventually, we reached Liverpool Street Station arriving with practically no money, no contacts, no knowledge of English, two overnight bags and the 31 keys in the attaché case.

In London we were helped by the charity now known as World Jewish Relief and gradually settled in the UK; our boat to the USA was cancelled because of the war. Our father preserved the keys, hoping that they would one day open up our household effects but, after the war, we learnt that on arrival in Hamburg the container was broken open by the Gestapo and all our belongings auctioned off – another theft! The keys were thus rendered useless except for a possible claim.

In 2005 the Jewish Museum in Berlin put out a request for items of interest for its Holocaust Collection and George and I agreed to gift the attaché case including the keys and relevant papers to the Museum. The keys created immediate interest and were soon prominently exhibited in a large display case together with a synopsis of their history and with a photo of the two of us. An accompanying explanation emphasised that the only thing we still possessed of all the belongings we once owned in Germany were the keys.

As a result of our contribution to the Museum, especially the keys, George and Marion were invited to attend the

opening of the Berlin Jewish Museum and to undertake workshops in German with non-Jewish students to recount our experiences in Berlin and our escape. The following year, Marianne and I substituted for them and since then have been back every year, with all expenses paid by a German Government fund. This prompted Marianne and me to approach the UK Holocaust Educational Trust to offer to participate in their programme of visits by Holocaust survivors to UK schools and other organisations. We have been involved ever since, for which both Marianne and I have been honoured.

The keys had an unhappy beginning but they ended up redeeming themselves. Once thought "useless" they will now forever be on display at the Berlin Jewish Museum to teach the lessons of the Holocaust. As for Marianne and me, the keys proved to be the catalyst for really worthwhile work in the fight against racial intolerance. Our father would be delighted to know that his retaining the keys had such an impact on our lives.

Peter Summerfield BEM



## REVIEWS

### THE LIE THAT WILL NOT DIE – THE PROTOCOLS OF THE ELDERS OF ZION By Hadassa Ben-Itto Vallentine Mitchell

If you google *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* the first hit is Amazon selling copies of the original Protocols, which is truly astonishing.

All the more relevant then that this is an impressive and engaging work, and despite all the important historical material made available, it is extremely readable. The author explores the characters involved in this crime – Russian, French, German, Swiss, and so on – and the remarkable individuals who undertook to expose the lie. Ben-Itto's book captures one's attention like a good mystery novel but unfortunately, the story she tells of this forgery and those who employ it to further their interests is not make-believe.

Judge Ben-Itto maintains that all Jewish conspiracy theories derive from the protocols, whether it was that the Jews caused the Great Depression, or the Aids epidemic, or were behind the 11 September terrorist attacks on New York, or countless others. She says Hitler adapted the protocols for his own use and they are also mentioned to this day in the covenant of terror group Hamas, as well as being widely distributed across the Middle East

In his introduction Dave Rich writes: "In these times, when truth is under assault and there is seemingly no shame or cost for political leaders who reject the fundamental value of truth over falsehood, we must not ignore the pursuit of truth and justice."  
*Kathy Cohen*

### THE MISSING: THE TRUE STORY OF MY FAMILY IN WORLD WAR II By Michael Rosen Walker Books

When author Michael Rosen was

growing up, stories hung in the air about his great-uncles who his father said were there before the war but weren't afterwards. To him it never made any sense and he was extremely puzzled about how people with whole lives and families could just disappear. Later, over many years he tried to find out what happened. The cover and illustrations immediately set the scene with Michael as a boy and poignant old black and white photos of the people involved.

Michael – a former Children's Laureate – was born the year after war ended so hostilities were still vivid in people's minds. He lived with his brother and teacher parents over a shop in Pinner. Sometimes the grown-ups talked about "The War" – his father was an American soldier, responsible for writing reports in Berlin. Michael loved listening to his stories but his father was more reticent about family from Poland.

His parents' long summer holidays enabled them to spend time all over France, which he loved so much he wanted to be French. He went back time and again on his own and became proficient in the language which proved invaluable for his research.

Two uncles, Oscar and Martin, had migrated to France so to find out more about them he stayed with other relatives in the USA. Following clues and many dead ends he kept trying to discover more when he got home. Eventually family papers were found helping unravel the mystery. Michael draws from books, contemporary records, internet searches and, of course, visits to the Wiener Library to piece the sad story together.

To escape the Nazis, Oscar a clock-mender and Martin a jeweller had moved addresses in France but both were tragically sent on separate convoys to Auschwitz. The detailed description of Martin's appearance and what he was wearing when arrested provides a very real human angle and helps convey the sheer awfulness of the terrible situation.

The book – for readers over 10 – is

illustrated by poems throughout. He explains: "Poems are like special rooms where I can think slowly about what happened; in a way, they're pictures of my mind." Verses written over the years about what happened to family and how he felt when he found out are included. The story shines despair and hope with the arrival of a young relative who miraculously survived in the Polish Free Army turning up in London after the war.

Michael is very good at putting himself in the mind of a child and describing historical context with the increasing restrictions and persecution of innocent Jews. All is described in simple and easy to understand terms. He said: "With every passing year, the number of Holocaust survivors gets smaller. We need to keep the memory of them alive: the people who died and those who survived." By exploring lessons learned from the Holocaust he stresses the importance of avoiding contemporary discrimination and of helping refugees from intolerant political regimes.

*Janet Weston*

### THE SABOTEUR OF AUSCHWITZ By Colin Rushton Summersdale Publishers

The worst thing about this book is its title. When it arrived in the AJR editorial office my first thought was: here is another writer jumping on the Auschwitz bandwagon, following in the trail of the best-selling tattooist, librarian and so on.

In fact it turns out to be an updated and expanded version of a book that caused quite a stir when it was first published in 1998. *Spectator in Hell*, telling the story of Arthur Dodd, who spent two years in Auschwitz as a British POW, shed new light on operations at the camp and presented what, at that stage, was a largely unknown story of the military POWs who were held there.

What makes this version stand out is that it contains several responses to the original story, all from relatives of fellow captives who said how much it

helped them to better understand the profound impact that the experience of being in Auschwitz had on their loved ones. While PTSD is now a very much recognised condition, back in 1945 most of the returning British POWs were simply assessed for their suitability to remain in the armed forces, while the War Office sent their families a standard letter warning them that their returning family member might be slightly odd for a while. Some of the ex-POWs, including Arthur Dodd, were even fined for failing to return their rifle and kit.

There is no denying that living and working conditions in Auschwitz for the British POWs were far superior to those of the Jewish inmates, but they were still pretty tough. And the toughest aspect of all was having to witness horrifying brutality every single day. Justly-ground fear for their own lives prevented Dodd and his counterparts from intervening more. Despite this, many of them regularly took risks to lessen a moment of suffering for one or more poor Jewish souls.

The new version of the book also focuses on the steps that the POWs took to sabotage production processes at the I.G. Farben manufacturing plant and in other construction projects. SS plans to double the production of fuel for its V1 and V2 rockets, for example, never came to fruition thanks to the POWs deliberate go-slow action and selective sabotage. Some of the POWs testimonies about this, as well as their terrifying eyewitness accounts of the Nazis' treatment of Jews, provided vital evidence during the Nuremburg trials.

I still don't like the title of the book. But for anyone unaware of these aspects of WW2 history it is an essential read. It tells of a simple man caught up in mankind's darkest hour and shows, more importantly, how the trauma of the Holocaust can never go away.  
*Jo Briggs*

### THE OPPERMANNS By Lion Feuchtwanger (translated by James Cleugh) Persephone Books

First published in 1933, this novel has been described as the first great

masterpiece of anti-fascist literature. Set in the Germany of the early 1930s, when all the rules of civilisation were starting to be broken by an army of brown-shirted Stormtroopers, the book chronicles the lives of the Oppermanns, a middle class Berlin Jewish family.

There are four Oppermann siblings, three brothers and a sister. Martin Oppermann, the head of the family, runs the family furniture business and sees it taken over by his Aryan competitor. His son, Berthold, falls foul of his Nazi form teacher with tragic consequences. The second brother, Gustav Oppermann, to some extent the principal character of the novel, is signatory to an anti-Nazi manifesto and following urgent advice from friends, flees to France. However he foolishly decides to return to Germany in order to resist the Nazis.

As a Jewish public servant, the third brother, Edgar, a renowned surgeon, is forced from his position. Only Gina, the fourth sibling, married to an American 'Ost Jude' with business interests in Germany, remains free from persecution.

Feuchtwanger clearly offers Zionism as one possible solution to the dilemmas faced by the family, as several of the characters manage to accumulate the 500 Palestine pounds necessary at that time to be allowed to emigrate to the then Mandate.

While the complacency of the German population (and of some Jews), turning a blind eye to the horrors being committed all around them is roundly condemned, Feuchtwanger still has quite a positive view of the Germans which, with the benefit of hindsight, seems rather optimistic. But then in 1933 who, in their right mind, would have predicted 'The Final Solution'?

While the events described will be all too familiar to first generation AJR members, for others the novel certainly offers a vivid and accurate description of the early days of the Nazi regime.  
*Robert Weiner*

## ON BEING SECOND GENERATION

On Sunday 27 September JW3 is hosting an online workshop for children and grandchildren of Holocaust survivors and refugees, to explore how it has affected their lives.

The workshop will be led by AJR Trustee Gaby Glassman, a psychologist and psychotherapist who has facilitated second generation and intergenerational groups since the 1980s. The cost is £10 and numbers will be restricted to enable full participation from all attendees.

Book via [www.jw3.org.uk/whats-on/being-second-generation-1](http://www.jw3.org.uk/whats-on/being-second-generation-1)

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# A TRUE CULTURE VULTURE



An entry from Martin Cahn's visitors book



One of the two Jozef Herman drawings inherited by Martin Cahn junior

**Martin Cahn, from Cambridge, sent us this very interesting letter in response to the article we published in June on the Amadeus Quartet, to coincide with the death of Martin Lovett. We hope you enjoy these precious memories and treasured keepsakes of his grandfather.**

I remember meeting the Amadeus Quartet as a child because they were great friends of my grandfather and namesake, Martin Cahn, a refugee from Fuerth in Germany, who was a very skilled amateur viola player.

My grandfather held musical soirées in

his flat in St. John's Wood and Martin Lovett participated in these from 16 January 1944, when he was just 16. Suzie Rozsa, who was to become his wife, was also one of the players. Sigmund Nissel and Norbert Brainin were also among the attendees at the soirées (as were Anita Lasker and Cecil Aronowitz after the War) but Peter Schidlof only performed with them as part of the Amadeus.

The first time the Amadeus played together in my grandfather's his flat was on 4 October 1947, three months before their first public performance. The Amadeus played in his flat a couple of times further and I can only imagine what a treat it must have been to be there and listen to your own private performance. The Quartet's final performance for my grandfather was at his funeral in October 1962.

All these events are recorded in my grandfather's visitors' book – some pages from which are reproduced here – which makes a wonderful record of Jewish musical life during and after the War. It also shows that Norbert Brainin returned to his music before the end of the War, playing at soirées on 4 and 9 February 1944.

My grandfather also had a good friendship with fine art dealers Lilian and Heinz Roland, of Roland, Browse & Delbanco, who attended a number of his soirées. He bought several paintings from their gallery, including some from a then little-known Jewish artist from South Wales, Jozef Herman, the father of David (Contributing Editor of the *AJR Journal*). I have two of his sketches from Ystradgynlais as a treasured inheritance and I am happy to share one of them with your readers here.



Entries from Martin Cahn's visitors book

## OBITUARIES



### ADELE ISENBERG (née Neumann)

Born: 5 January 1922, Wiesbaden  
Died: 17 May 2020, London

Adele was the only daughter of Mechla and Moshe Neumann. They were originally both from Poland but Moshe (Morris) moved to Germany as a child, with his family. Mechla lived in Annapol, Poland until her marriage. They both retained their Polish nationality, so that when the Nazis were rounding up the Jews, they were thrown out of Germany back to Poland.

My mother learnt dressmaking in Wiesbaden, after she had been stopped from attending school at the age of fourteen.

In 1938, soon after Kristallnacht, they were forced to leave Germany and arrived penniless in Warsaw in the middle of the night. They remained in Warsaw with a relative, all four living in the same room and stayed there for about ten months before securing passage on a boat to England in August 1939, just before war broke out. The plan was to travel on to South America to family there but the war put a stop to these travel plans.

They lived in Hackney and my mother was the sole breadwinner because her parents were not allowed to work, as they were only in transit and my mother was under 18 and therefore allowed to earn money. She worked as a dressmaker until the bombing became so bad that they decided to evacuate and moved with friends to Nottingham.

In Nottingham, my mother found a job working for Boots the Chemists and it was while working here that Flying Officer Joseph Isenberg from the RAF, spotted her and decided he would one day marry her, if he survived the war. They did indeed marry, on 13 August 1946 in Nottingham Synagogue.

I was born in 1949 and my brother, Neil in 1956. Very sadly my father died in 1977 and my mother became a widow at the age of fifty five. She never remarried but stayed in Nottingham to care for her now elderly mother, Mechla.

In 1989 she moved to London to be close to me and my brother and her adored grandsons.

She died peacefully at the age of 98 of the dementia from which she had been suffering for the last ten years.

Ruth Levy



### RABBI WILLY WOLFF

Born: 13 February 1927, Berlin  
Died: 8 July, 2020, London

Wilhelm (Willy) Wolff was born in Berlin but in 1933 he fled to Amsterdam with his parents, his sister and his twin brother and in 1939 they escaped to London. Whilst he dreamt of becoming a Rabbi from an early age, post-war realities led him to become a journalist. He became a Parliamentary correspondent and reporter for several UK national newspapers, including the *Daily Mail*, *Daily Mirror* and *Reuters*

However, he never abandoned his dream of becoming a Rabbi, and started his Rabbinic training at Leo Baeck College at the age of 53, being ordained in 1984. Rabbi Wolff went on to hold posts at West London Synagogue, Newcastle Reform Synagogue, Brighton and Hove Reform Synagogue, Wimbledon Synagogue and Milton Keynes and District Reform Synagogue. He was instrumental in the founding of the Reading Liberal Jewish Community and was also involved in bringing the Darlington Hebrew Congregation into the Reform Judaism family; he was Deputy Editor of the *Manna* magazine throughout its publication.

In an historic appointment in 2002, Rabbi Wolff was made State Rabbi of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern in the former East Germany – a post which had previously been vacant for 65 years. He served the Jewish communities in Schwerin, Rostock and Wismar until his retirement at the age of 88. He had formidable language skills – English, German, French, Dutch – and he also learned Russian to be able to cater to the significant number of Jews from the former Soviet Union in these areas.

On 27 January, 2014, (Holocaust Memorial Day), he was made an Honorary Citizen of Schwerin and in 2017 also of the city of Rostock "in recognition of his extraordinary and lasting achievements for the Jewish community, interreligious dialogue and the common good of the citizens".

He became known to Germany's cinema-going audiences in 2011, through filmmaker Britta Wauer's documentary about Berlin's historic Weissensee Jewish Cemetery. In 2016, the documentary *Rabbi Wolff* was released and was one of the three most successful German documentaries of that year.

In his post as rabbi for the state of Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania he became known for his teaching, his humour and his outreach to non-Jews. Together with his understanding of traditional and liberal Judaism, his expressive laugh and the sparkle in his eye he was the perfect spokesperson for the Jewish community.

Kathy Cohen



## ZOOMS AHEAD

Please email Susan Harrod on [susan@ajr.org.uk](mailto:susan@ajr.org.uk) for joining details and also see the weekly e-Newsletter for details of additional events.

Thursday 3 September @ 2.00pm	Clare Ungerson, author of <i>Four Thousand Jewish Lives Saved</i> about the Kitchener camp rescue in 1939
Thursday 3 September @ 4.00pm	AJR Book Club with Deborah Levison, 2G award-winning author of <i>The Crate</i> , in conversation with Marilyn Sinclair, founder of Liberation75.
Monday 7 September @ 2.00pm	Gaye Illsley – <i>Creating a Lasting Power of Attorney</i>
Tuesday 8 September @ 2.00pm	Lord Mann and Ian Austin in discussion with Karen Pollock and Alex Maws about <i>The prevalence of antisemitism on social media and in public discourse</i>

## Applying for European Nationality

In July AJR hosted a well-attended webinar on the process of seeking EU27 nationality by inheritance. The webinar was facilitated by Dr Ruvi Ziegler and Simon Albert, whose EU Passport Project explores how descendants of Holocaust victims and survivors feel about reinstating their families' former nationalities, and have written this update for us.

We recognise that a wide spectrum of opinion exists about reclaiming any one of the EU27 nationalities by inheritance. We know that, for many people, it can be a very emotional process, given what their parents or grandparents may have suffered across Europe in the mid-twentieth century.

During our recent webinar we were grateful to hear some of the views of over 100 AJR members, who took the trouble to emotionally engage with our online event and share their feelings with us. The most frequently mentioned countries included Germany, Austria, the Czech Republic and other parts of central Europe. However, even more remarkably, given our community's long history in this country, it also included Spain and Portugal, as many

British Sephardim are exploring their roots and reclaiming those nationalities.

As the next stage in our research we would like to encourage all readers of the *AJR Journal* to complete an online questionnaire. We are just as keen to hear from people who have applied, as from those who are eligible, but find it too emotionally difficult to do so. We are also interested to hear from anyone who has applied and found their application rejected.

The questionnaire can be found on the Jewish Historical Society of England's website at <https://jhse.org/inner-passport-system> and will be available until the end of 2021.

**AUSTRIA & GERMANY ELIGIBILITY**  
The respective German and Austrian authorities have both introduced new legislation affecting their eligibility criteria concerning the restoration of German and Austrian citizenship.

With immediate effect, children born in wedlock before 1 April 1953 to German mothers whose citizenship had been revoked and foreign fathers, as well as children born out of wedlock before 1 July 1993 to German fathers whose citizenship had been revoked and foreign mothers, are now considered as descendants under



Austrian Embassy, London

citizenship law. These children, and their own descendants, can now apply for German citizenship, even if they were previously rejected on the basis of former legislation. Please see <https://uk.diplo.de/uk-en/home-kontakt-channel> for more information.

Meanwhile, the application process for Austrian citizenship opens up from 1 September following an amendment to the Austrian Nationality Act. The AJR has a very useful Q&A about this on (<https://ajr.org.uk/latest-news/austrian-citizenship-act-amendment/>), and you can also see the full guidelines issued by the Austrian Embassy ([www.bmeia.gv.at/en/austrian-embassy-london/service-for-citizens/identity-papers-and-other-documents/citizenship-certificate/](http://www.bmeia.gv.at/en/austrian-embassy-london/service-for-citizens/identity-papers-and-other-documents/citizenship-certificate/)) explaining exactly who might be eligible and what information is required.

A few AJR members of Austrian descent have formed a small group to share information about the application process. Contact [judithgord42@gmail.com](mailto:judithgord42@gmail.com) if you would like to be included.

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