



# AJR JOURNAL

The Association of Jewish Refugees

## The Lucky Ones

Many refugee families thought they were the lucky ones. They had escaped to Britain and survived. They not only survived but managed to keep their families together and to rebuild their lives and careers in a foreign land, despite formidable obstacles.



A scene from the 2002 production of Charlotte Eilenberg's play *The Lucky Ones*

Recently, though, I have come across a number of stories which show that the truth was often more complicated. There were relatives who were not so lucky but somehow slipped out of the prevailing story.

Thomas Harding's fascinating book, *The House by the Lake* (2015) starts out as a family memoir. His family, the Alexanders, affluent, cosmopolitan Jews, had flourished in 1920s Berlin. They spent their summers in a little wooden lake house, near Berlin, "a symbol of their success." With the rise of the Nazis they were forced to flee, "moving

to Britain where they had struggled to establish a new life. They had escaped when so many had not..." The relevant chapter ends, "The Alexander clan had reassembled in England. They were now refugees." Many had successful careers in post-war Britain. Thomas becomes a successful and acclaimed author. His cousin James was the editor of *The Times* and head of news at the BBC.

Researching the story of the house and his family, Harding discovers a twist in the story. His father sends him a family tree.

*Continued on page 2*

### AUTUMN READING

As the nights draw in allow us to shine our spotlight on a couple of features:

Firstly the Melody Makers, with profiles of two renowned refugee composers on pages 10 & 11. Then come the next generations, with two very moving articles, one written by the adopted daughter and the other by a great-grandson of different Holocaust refugees, on pages 12 & 13 respectively.

Finally, art lovers will enjoy our review of the Ben Uri Gallery's new online exhibition (page 8) and its announcement of an exciting transformation (page 17).

We hope you enjoy this issue and, as always, would welcome any feedback.

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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 Lucky Ones (cont.)

"Strangely," writes Harding, "it is missing the death dates for five of my grandfather Erich's relatives: Alfred Werthan and his wife Else, along with Emil Lesser, his wife Rosa, and their son Franz. I quiz my father, but he has no idea why the information is missing – his parents, Elsie and Erich, never spoke of them, he replies. I email other relatives but no one seems to know what happened to Erich's relatives, and I cannot find any trace of them in Berlin."

Harding eventually tracks them down on the Yad Vashem website. Alfred and Else, both profoundly deaf, were murdered at Auschwitz. Erich's Uncle Emil and Aunt Rosa died at Theresienstadt. Their son, Franz Lesser, was deported to Riga where he was shot.

"Growing up," writes Harding, "we had been told that our close family had been 'lucky', that we had managed to escape Germany in time. And yet my grandfather's two aunts, two uncles and first cousin had been killed in the Holocaust. My grandparents knew, but chose not to speak about it. I cannot believe that I was only finding out about these crimes seventy years after they took place. We were not so lucky after all."

Within days of reading this, I received an e-mail from Germany about my mother's family's attempt to restore the family tomb in Berlin. I was asked if I had any information about any of the names on the tomb. I did some research. Much of this I already knew but then I came across some stories which I never knew, and which my mother, uncle and grandmother had never told me about.

My grandmother's cousin, Kurt, and his wife, Else, both died in the Minsk Ghetto in Belarus. "Ermordet" is all it says on the relevant website. Murdered. Then there was my Great-Grandfather's second wife, Alice Georgine Dorothea Platschek (1881-1942). She died in Munich in February 1942. All it says is "Holocaust: suicide?"

I had never known. No one in the family had ever mentioned them. Until that moment I had assumed that everyone in my mother's family had got out of Germany in time: her uncle to Switzerland, her father to America via Paris, and she, her mother and her brother to England.

Her brother became a distinguished neuropsychologist and she worked as a doctor and then as a psychotherapist. They, too, were the lucky ones. But as with the Alexanders the story was more complicated.

My mother was at Oxford Girls High School with Elly Miller, who went on to have a very successful career as an art publisher. Elly, too, was a refugee. Her family left Vienna immediately after the *Anschluss*. Her father became a famous publisher in Britain, her brother a well-known composer and professor at the Royal College of Music, and her sister a concert agent and impresario. I was at school and university with Elly's son and got to know the family well. But it was only recently, when I was researching her life for an obituary, that I discovered the fate of some of her relatives. In an interview given almost twenty years ago, Elly described how her aunt and cousin had been sent to Bergen-Belsen. They survived but her cousin "had terrible psychological problems in his forties and fifties and died at the age of 53 of a heart attack." I have known the family for almost fifty years but I had never heard of these relatives before.

In Judith Kerr's acclaimed autobiographical trilogy, *Out of the Hitler Time*, she describes how her family escaped from Berlin to Britain, via Switzerland and Paris. What is so brilliant about the books is how she manages to convey the dark side of exile: her family's poverty, her father's inability to learn English and make a living and his loss of authority within the family.

But in the trilogy, the saddest stories are about others. Those like Uncle Julius who didn't get away, and later commits suicide in Berlin. Above all, there is Uncle Victor. Perhaps the most powerful moment in the trilogy comes when Anna (the Judith figure in the books) visits Aunt Dainty at home and "suddenly realised that there was someone standing outside, staring in": "The figure at the door was old and quite bald and there was a curious lopsided look about the head which had a scar running down one side. It was dressed in a kind of shift and as Anna looked at it, it moved one hand in a vague gesture of silence or farewell." Aunt Dainty explains what Uncle Victor had been through in a concentration camp and their son, Otto, goes to help.

In the Jewish Restitution Successor Office in Berlin we later meet Herr Birnbaum

who has lost fourteen relations, including his wife and three children ("My cousin Samuel," he said pointing.... Age 36. Last-known address Treblinka."). He's the sole survivor of his family.

These three men are desperately sad figures. By contrast, the Kerrs seem almost untouched.

In 2002, Charlotte Eilenberg wrote a fascinating play called *The Lucky Ones*. It was a thoughtful, ambitious drama about German-Jewish refugees who had come to Britain and the dark shadow of the past. Towards the end of Act One, one character, Bruno, says, "But remember the real victims, it's the others. We're the lucky ones. We survived." By then we already know enough about the four characters and their unhappy children to appreciate the irony of Bruno's words. Yes, they were lucky. They got out alive and prospered in post-war Britain, but they have not altogether survived the past. And yet they remain the Lucky Ones, just like the Hardings, my mother's family, the Kerrs and the Millers. They survived but they all kept quiet about a family secret, about those who died, from Auschwitz and Theresienstadt to Riga and Minsk.

### David Herman

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# MY STORY REACHES ISRAEL

**A set of AJR's wonderful *My Story* books now has pride of place within the National Library of Israel, where they will be made available to readers from all over the world.**

The Library's Channa Lokschin-Bob, pictured here with some of the books, told us "As part of the National Library of Israel's mission to collect and preserve the

treasures of knowledge, heritage, and culture of the Jewish People, we are especially interested in books like the ones published by the *My Story* project. These books contain unique stories and information that contribute to our understanding of the Jewish experience in the twentieth century. Aside from telling powerful personal narratives, the *My Story* books also preserve a trove of fascinating documents and photos that otherwise would be lost to history."



## ANNUAL ELECTION MEETING

The Annual Election Meeting of The Association of Jewish Refugees (AJR) will take place at **3pm on Wednesday 2 December 2020** at AJR, Winston House, 2 Dollis Park, London N3 1HF.

Anyone wishing to stand for election must be nominated by at least ten associate members of the AJR together with a notice signed by the nominee indicating their willingness to serve as a trustee should they be elected. This must

be duly received in writing by Monday 23 November 2020 at the AJR offices.

Anthony Spiro and Philippa Strauss have been nominated for re-election as Trustees. Danny Kalman and Miriam Kingsley (appointed during the year as trustees) have been nominated to be elected as trustees.

If you wish to attend please contact **Karin Pereira** on **020 8385 3070** or at **karin@ajr.org.uk**

## PODCAST SERIES

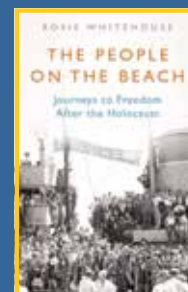
**AJR has launched a new series of podcasts which use material from the AJR Refugee Voices archive, and explore one specific strand of the Jewish refugee experience – the Kindertransport.**

The podcasts use testimony extracts from the archive to examine the Kindertransport from first-hand sources, both for its own sake and also in the hope of informing our understanding of refugee policies today. The introduction is by AJR's Head of Educational Grants and Projects, Alex Maws and ten episodes are available, each throwing light on different aspects of the Kindertransport:



The Journey; What Was Left Behind; The Decision Makers; First Impressions; Dovercourt; Against the Backdrop of War; Identity; Enemy Aliens; Red Cross Letters; Legacies.

To access the podcasts go to: **www.ajrrefugeevoices.org.uk/podcast**



**AJR ONLINE BOOK CLUB**  
with Rosie Whitehouse, author of *The People on the Beach: Journeys to freedom after the Holocaust*

On Monday 19 October at 4.00pm

Reserve your place on <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/ajr-book-club-rosie-whitehouse-author-of-the-people-on-the-beach-tickets-120356442359>

Buy the book at: <https://www.hurstpublishers.com/book/the-people-on-the-beach/> and use the code PEOPLE25 at check out for a 25% discount.

The Holocaust Exhibition & Learning Centre at the University of Huddersfield, which receives an educational grant from the AJR, has launched a series of 30 free online events, covering everything from *Transnational Jewish identity* to the *Roots of Antisemitism*. AJR Bradford member Rudi Leavor takes part in the first event, on 1 October. See the full programme on <https://holocaustlearning.org.uk/events>

# Countering Antisemitism

**In the first half of 2020, the Community Security Trust (CST) recorded 789 antisemitic incidents across the UK. This represented a slight decrease from 2019 and a reversal of the trend which saw increases for several years.**

Logic suggests that the national lockdown for much of the first half of 2020 played a role – even the antisemites had to stay indoors and desist from physical acts of vandalism and harassment. However the CST's 2020 figures show an uptick in one particular variety of abuse – online antisemitism. Of particular concern were reports of educational or religious online events being hijacked, exposing viewers to antisemitic content, a trend rarely experienced before the world became accustomed to using platforms such as Zoom and Microsoft Teams on a near daily basis.

Against this backdrop AJR hosted an online discussion panel on 8 September comprising three of the country's most outspoken public voices on the topic of antisemitism: Lord John Mann, Lord Ian Austin and Karen Pollock MBE. A major focus of the discussion, which was chaired by the AJR's Head of Educational Grants and Projects, Alex Maws, who also serves as the UK's representative on the IHRA's Committee on Antisemitism and Holocaust Denial, was online antisemitism. Karen Pollock, Chief Executive of the Holocaust Educational Trust and a prominent voice on Twitter, spoke of a recent example of online antisemitic abuse perpetrated by the popular musician Wiley, who had nearly half a million followers on social media.

"His tirade on Twitter and Instagram lasted nearly 48 hours," Pollock said. "He was allowed to say the most despicable things. Really it was incitement. It wasn't just opinions; it was aggressive. And Twitter and Instagram just left it all up there. There was no intervention for a very long time."

Pollock believes that a large amount of responsibility lies ultimately with the social media companies. "The framework of how



Clockwise from top left: Lord Mann, Karen Pollock, Lord Austin and Alex Maws

social media operates comes into question. When should [the companies] intervene? What's the point of having a policy saying antisemitism is wrong, racism is wrong, if you don't actually remove somebody from a platform or stop them from airing their antisemitic and racist views when they're doing so for hours on end?"

Lord Mann, who has been appointed as the Government's special advisor on antisemitism, put it into a wider context. "Antisemites start off by going on about the rich Jews, and this concept that there is a very powerful group of people wielding their power is longstanding in terms of the imagery of antisemitism. But behind that are the conspiracy theories, which have certainly been around for the last 150 years," he said.

He believes the coronavirus pandemic has become a rich source of antisemitic conspiracy theories. "It's extraordinary how – if you look at the discourse amongst the anti-vaxxers – often people throw in the crudest antisemitism, almost randomly into their discussions. It's from the far-left and the far-right... Israel created coronavirus in order to profit from it; or that there is just some kind of general conspiracy being spread by the Jewish media to try to take people's freedom away."

Both Lord Mann and Lord Austin were Labour MPs before leaving the party in response to its well documented problems with antisemitism to become independents. Lord Austin spoke passionately about his experience. "I was appalled that a political party that so many of us joined to fight racism... and which many people in the Jewish community had instinctively supported

for decades... could become the source of such offence to the Jewish community."

"The worst thing for me was that young people who regarded Jeremy Corbyn as this sort of virtuous political leader... were being sucked into racism," said Lord Austin. "You look at some things that were happening: Jewish MPs being told they didn't have human blood; Luciana Berger being bullied out of the Labour Party; Margaret Hodge being targeted for disciplinary action because she dared to complain about it; senior figures like Ken Livingstone talking about Hitler being a Zionist; other people coming out with age-old stereotypes about how Jewish people controlled the slave trade; an obsession with Israel..."

Remarkably, all three panellists managed to point to some developments that were positive – even hopeful. Lord Mann spoke about the large number of professional football clubs who have taken bold public stands against antisemitism in the terraces. Lord Austin took heart in the fact that UK voters rejected antisemitism at the last general election.

Karen Pollock noted that, in response to Wiley's abuse, a grassroots effort emerged, encouraging Twitter users to boycott the site for 48 hours – a call that was taken up by many people outside the Jewish community. "I really believe in allyship," Pollock said. "We can't be an insular community that only understands ourselves. We have to understand others. We have to build bridges. We have to let other communities know that we are also on their side. Just like we want people to stand with us against antisemitism, we have to stand with them."

# LETTER FROM ISRAEL

BY DOROTHEA SHEFER-VANSON



## NEWSPAPERS



I have read at least one daily newspaper almost since I could read. At my parents' home in

London we had the luxury (which we took for granted) of having a morning newspaper put through our letterbox every morning, so that it was there on the mat, waiting for whoever was the first to come downstairs. At first it was the *News Chronicle*, and when that failed it was *The (Manchester) Guardian*. When my father came home from work each evening he would have the *Evening Standard* under his arm, and it would be eagerly seized and read by myself and my sisters. Sunday mornings were always the highlight of the week when I could delve into *The Observer* and soak up the delights provided by its erudite reporters, feature writers, columnists and book and theatre reviewers.

More recently, whenever I made my annual pilgrimage to London in pre-Corona days, I would marvel at the fact that the *Evening Standard* was freely available (albeit full of rubbish) and wished my father had lived long enough to see that.

Since making my home in Israel

my consumption of newsprint has not declined. At first I was limited to the *Jerusalem Post*, which was not very satisfactory back in those distant pre-Six-Day War days, when Israel was still finding its feet in the world, and in journalism, too. But my knowledge of Hebrew was not up to reading the Hebrew press, and it wasn't until many years later that I found myself preferring to read the *Ha'aretz* morning paper in Hebrew, even though today it is also available in English. I suppose that spending many years translating texts of various kinds from Hebrew to English must have honed my Hebrew-reading and understanding skills.

Some years ago, when I was offered a job in the Government Press Office in Jerusalem, I jumped at the opportunity. However, I soon found that the nature of the work involved far more than simply reading and summarising the Hebrew press. The work was done in awkward shifts which unhinged my home life, the pay was low, the physical conditions were shabby, the equipment unfriendly and office rivalries prevailed. It did not take long for me to realise that I was not cut out for that kind of work, and resigned in short order, relieved to be able to continue my leisurely (and more profitable) work as a freelance translator.

These days, since I am an early riser, I delight in the start of my day, when

I can read the paper in peace as I drink a cup of coffee and nibble a Hobnob or (chocolate) digestive biscuit (now easily available in Israel, thank goodness). Even though it may still be dark, by six in the morning the paper has usually been delivered, while my house and the street where I live are still at rest. The birds are just beginning to chirp and sing, and even the neighbours' dogs are still asleep.

Sometimes I'm up even before the paper has arrived. It comes wrapped in a plastic bag and is usually deposited at the far edge of our driveway, which means that I have to take a few steps outside to retrieve it. If there is no sign of the paper, I step out onto the pavement and look up the road to see if there is some indication that it is on its way, the indication being the headlights of the car of the lady who distributes the paper to the various subscribers in our area. If I see the headlights gradually coming closer, I stand at the end of our driveway and as the car draws near, instead of chucking the paper out of her window, the lady hands it to me with a smile. We each greet one another with 'boker tov' (good morning) and we then go our respective ways, I to sit in comfort and read the day's (usually depressing) news, and she to bring the information to the other poor blighters who are still sound asleep.

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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.

## ALTHEA McNISH

Thank you, Gloria Tessler, for your interesting article about this remarkable woman. We first met her husband, John Weiss, when my highly functioning autistic and artistic son, David, began studies at the (then) London College of Furniture. John, who, at that time, was Head of Furnishing and Interior Design, had noticed David's problems, took an interest in him and his talents, and suggested he took the course in textiles and design. We became good friends and Althea's work was of great interest to us. She was an unassuming and modest person with many interests and we greatly enjoyed her and John's company.

John, whose parents were Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe, had many interests, among them music and photography, which we shared. He was passionate about researching Althea's Trinidad family history. We attended several of their joint exhibitions at the Mall Gallery in London.  
*Hannelore Braunsberg, London, NW3*

## LYONS CORNER HOUSE

I found the excellent talk by David Barnett (13 August) of considerable personal interest as the Lyons Corner Houses and Tea Shops played an important part for me in eating out occasions, both as a child and as a young adult. My most vivid memory dates back to the Blitz. My parents had friends staying in the Cumberland Hotel and through them we had access to the Quebec Café in the basement of the Marble Arch Corner House which turned into an air raid shelter at 11pm each night during the Blitz.

Once the diners had left we were able to enter and make little camps by turning tables on their sides. We borrowed blankets and pillows from the hotel. I sometimes went to the hotel straight from school in Swiss Cottage (The Hall) and returned there direct in the morning. Quite often the bus had to make diversions because of bomb damage in the streets. It was a rather unusual life but for a 10 year old boy it was just an adventure, although I am sure this was felt rather differently by my parents!  
*George Vulkan, Harrow,*

## NO POLITICS - PLEASE

Dominic Cummings' 'explanation' of his cross-country drive provoked mirth across the entire range of politics in Britain, and indeed abroad. Is Deborah Wrapson (August) suggesting that it is left-wing to have a sense of humour?  
*Anthony Grenville, London NW6*

## JEWISH PORTRAYALS MATTER

*The Times* published a letter of mine registering my disgust at the BBC deciding to omit the words of *Rule Britannia* and *Land of Hope and Glory* from the Last Night of the Proms. Sensibly, their new Director General, Tim Davie, rescinded the decision. If the "woke" lobby, including Black Lives Matter and Extinction Rebellion, have their way, I am wondering whether we Jews could have *The Merchant of Venice* and *Oliver Twist* banned. Shylock is defined as a "loan shark" and Fagin as a "receiver of stolen goods". Both are criminals. Alec Guinness as Fagin was grotesque, with a horribly long nose. In the theatre, Dustin Hoffman was probably the first actor to play Shylock sympathetically but he, of course, is Jewish. So I propose we start a group called "Jewish Portrayals Matter". Let's face it - if you can't beat them, join them!  
*Peter Phillips, Loudwater, Bucks*

## EU FUTURE

I can fully understand what it is that drives Holocaust survivors – of any generation – to think about or possibly make an application for one of the 27 European passports. I've thought about applying for Austrian citizenship – my mother was born and raised in Linz, Hitler's home town – but have rejected the idea not at all for emotional reasons but after a rational assessment of the future of the European Union and those of its member states.

The EU's founders made no secret of their end-goal: a superstate in which the ancient nations of Europe would be reduced to mere counties. More recently, the EU federalists are no less shy about their objectives. This is Mr Guy Verhofstadt, the European Parliament's Brexit co-ordinator: 'The world of tomorrow is not a world order based

on nation-states or countries. It is a world order based on empires ... in which we Europeans, and you British, can only defend your interests, your way of life, by doing it together, in a European framework and in the European Union.'

He appears to overlook two things: A common fate awaits all empires; they collapse. The EU's will, too. It might be a calm dismantling; it might not be.

Across the empire being created by Brussels now we can see the dire consequences of its bullet-head endeavours: economic peril in countries such as Greece and Italy, and the emergence of nationalist movements – some of them deeply unpleasant – the project was designed to prevent.  
*David Kernek, Bath, Somerset*

## ANTOINE de SAINT-EXUPERY

I have just read the article *Fleeing from France* which fronts your July 2020 edition. In this, Antoine de Saint-Exupéry is said to have "spent the war in America". Although he was in the USA from 1940 to 1943, he returned to active service with the French Air Force in the Mediterranean in 1943. On 31st July 1944, he failed to return from a mission over France. Wreckage identified as his aircraft was raised from the sea some sixty years after his disappearance.

This omission made me feel rather cross on behalf of this heroic man; I would recommend his biography in *Britannica* and all his books.  
*Jonathan Chambers, Newnham, Glos.*

## THE NEW NORMAL

I am incredibly impressed by the AJR e-newsletter and the range, variety and no doubt, quality of events and features you are offering to members.

Well done on adapting this aspect of the services AJR offers to the 'new normal'. I am quite sure that if there were awards for charities/welfare organisations who have adjusted to the new situation, the AJR team would be up there amongst the winners.

AJR provides a lifeline to so many, who will

be feeling lonely and isolated during the current strange times we are living through. Keep up this wonderful work. It is truly heartening.

*Miriam Kingsley, London N2*

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#### WHY RACISM?

Your correspondent Eric Sanders asks about the source of racism, what it covers and whether it may be caused by a feeling of inferiority (September).

I have been thinking about this for some time, before the latest series of nasty incidents and reactions and believe it is an innate part of human defence mechanism, which can only too easily get out of control. You grow up as a child in a specific group and that group is your protection. In primitive circumstances, another group is likely to be your enemy. You must stick to your group or society for safety's sake.

The other relevant factor is the hierarchical nature of human society. There is always a top class and bottom class, even if some are less exaggerated than others, i.e. more equal - but that will always remain an ideal. So when two groups are put together, for whatever reason and usually it is conflict of some kind or other, you should expect one group to strive to stay superior to the other. (That's where "inferiority" comes in). If there are large numbers involved and a rebellion is feared (as in ancient Sparta with the Helots, an earlier Greek tribe who were treated abominably by the Spartans who came later), the upper class will concentrate on keeping the lower orders down or use a specific group (the police) to do it for them.

Many years ago a friend of my parents went to Malaya (as it was then). She was interviewed by the local British radio station. At the end, they asked her what

piece of music she would like to hear. She said the 'Chorus of the Hebrew Slaves' from Verdi's *Nabucco* - always a popular classic on Housewife's Choice and so on. During the edit they came back to her with a sheepish request to change her musical choice. This was a Muslim country and they were not allowed to play anything with a Jewish reference! In fact this piece of music was itself a code for the much wished-for unification of Italy and immediately understood as such by the Italian audience. Nothing is what it seems to be on the surface.

So racism in its essence is unavoidable and actually serves a purpose. But it's like salt, essential for life but only in tiny amounts. If you take too much, it ruins your health. We really need two words, one for the basic feeling of group identity and another for its exaggeration and distortion, i.e. racism.  
*Ruth Rothenberg, London NW3*

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## 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.

#### ZANCKER / SINCLAIR

Journalist Matthias Schirmer seeks information on Klaus Zancker (born 17 January 1929). His name was anglicised to Peter David Gordon Sinclair and he was believed to be in Scotland in 1959.  
[matthias.schirmer@rbb-online.de](mailto:matthias.schirmer@rbb-online.de)

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#### S.S.DUNERA

Ariana Neumann is a historian and writer. For research purposes she would

like to speak with any descendants of passengers on the *Dunera* ship that left England for Australia in 1940. She would particularly like to hear family stories/anecdotes and/or see letters or documents.

[ariana@ariananeumann.com](mailto:ariana@ariananeumann.com) or 07710 073 935

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#### DR ELSAS

Family Vietzen from Stuttgart would like to contact descendants of Dr. M. Elsas with regard to archive correspondence.  
[walterwolff@btinternet.com](mailto:walterwolff@btinternet.com)

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#### BERLIN EXILE MUSEUM

An exile museum due to open in Berlin in 2025 will commemorate the half million Jews forced into exile during the Hitler regime. The museum will incorporate all that is left - the ruined entrance - of the Anhalter Bahnhof from which many fled, but also from where the Nazis later deported thousands to the death camps

The museum invites friends and families of refugees to submit details about their emigration and exile.

[www.stiftung-exilmuseum.berlin/en](http://www.stiftung-exilmuseum.berlin/en)

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#### TRANSLATION HELP

Maurice Kozlowski's parents were both survivors of the Vilna Ghetto. He has a number of documents and personal letters from their time during and after the war that he would like to have translated into English from Yiddish (mainly), Polish, Lithuanian and some German.

[maurice.kozlowski@talktalk.net](mailto:maurice.kozlowski@talktalk.net)

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#### GERDA MAYER

Paul Walder would like to contact the family of the writer Gerda Mayer, who travelled from Vienna with his late father, Peter Walder, in 1938 to Dorset as part of the Kindertransport organised by Trevor Chadwick.

[paulwalder@yahoo.es](mailto:paulwalder@yahoo.es)

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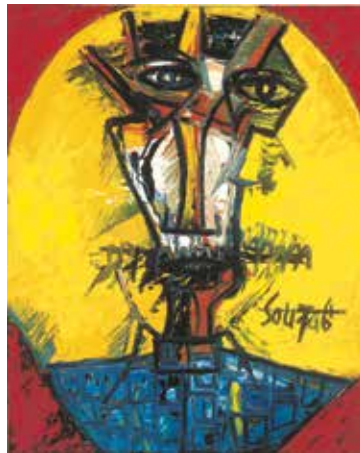
# ART NOTES: by Gloria Tessler

It is timely, it is imaginative and it fulfils the Ben Uri's long avowed aim, to celebrate the art of immigrants other than those from Nazi Europe. The result: **Midnight's Family, 70 years of Indian Artists in Britain**, which I mentioned briefly in last month's column, is an ambitious online exhibition launched on August 15, 2020 on the 73rd anniversary of Indian Independence.

The title recalls Salman Rushdie's novel *Midnight's Children*, which applauds the creativity of characters born on the midnight of India's independence. Now the Ben Uri applauds first and second generation artists working in Britain since Independence. This inaugural venture into a non-European émigré artistic community is planned as part of a series.

The artists hail from various backgrounds and different periods. Some second generation artists, like the **Singh Twins** feel Britain is their home. Others like **Prafulla Mohanti**, or **Paul Gopal Chowdhury**, allow their myths and history to penetrate their art. Still others, like **Anish Kapoor**, are international stars of the art world who represent all places and none.

These artists address a complex variety of subjects. **Shanti Panchal**, co-curator of the exhibition with **Rachel Dickson**, offers a stark political message. In the powerful *Grenfell Pyre and the Rescued Family*, a husband, wife and daughter stand before the smouldering building whose black smoke disappears into an orange background. They are separated from, yet deeply linked by, that tragic background. There is a challenge, a pent-up anger in their faces just waiting to explode. The *Pyre* in the title offers a cultural and funereal message; there is no sense of integration, only alienation. A more recent political message is expressed by twin sisters **Amit and Rabindra Singh's** two colourful heraldic art posters, *Get Your*



Francis Newton Souza, *Self-Portrait*, 1961

*Knee off Our Necks* and *NHS V COVID-19 Fighting On Two Fronts*.

Returning to the artists' indigenous culture, Chowdhury's *The Visitation*, which is a four part painting, links myth, dream and longing to express a deep-felt Indian tradition.

Chowdhury's *Emanations in a Coffee Cup* is also a work of dream imagery divided into several parts to form a whole; the simple drawings verge on caricature, but for their softness and romantic quality. All his work is defined by alternating colours; both brilliant and muted. **Francis Newton Souza's** dark Modernist portrait of the English tenor *Peter Pears* in full voice is an arresting subject on an unexpected theme, while **Shanti Panchal's** *Laxmi-Narayan and Son* strongly evoke indigenous roots.

There are less narrative works, including several abstracts which speak of their Indian heritage, while others do not. **Prafulla Mohanti** whose *Shiva* is a meditation of burning primary colours, has a deeply hypnotic effect. **Lancelot Rubeiro's** cubist *Angular Landscape with Sun* contrasts with **Avinash Chandra's** *Church on University Road, Belfast*, an abstract painting of rectangles and circles, which oddly recalled **David Bomberg's** *Ghetto Theatre*. More church imagery suggesting integration is presented in **Sadanand K Bakre's** rather beautiful and inspiring *Landscape with Cathedral Spire*, an aspirational, geometric painting.



Raqib Shaw, *Self Portrait in the Studio at Peckham (After Steenwyck the Younger) II* 2014-2015

Fate has lent a helping hand to the Ben Uri in our dark Covid days. Cramped for too long in a corner of London's St John's Wood, the Gallery has reinvented itself as a virtual museum which will take it beyond time and geography. It is a self-professed "strategic shift from the physical to the digital, offering a new pioneering and extensive envelope of online content."

The Ben Uri has faced interminable questions about what makes an artist Jewish. Ironically, art historian Zehra Jumabhoj now puts the same question. "Are the artists in **Midnight's Family** too British to be considered Indian? Does the right to belong to one category mean summary expulsion from the other?" And most pertinently: "What makes an artist Indian versus British?"

It seems we are not alone.

Watch the exhibition online at <https://benuri.org/exhibitions/46-midnight-s-family-70-years-of-indian-artists-in-britain/works/>

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**CONTEMPORARY  
PAINTING AND SCULPTURE**



# TURNED OUT NICE AGAIN . . . .

**Continental make conversation about the weather but Brits wax lyrical, mainly about rain.**

William Wordsworth, whose tribute to autumn became the most quotable quote in weather poetry, said this about rain:

*How beautiful is the rain  
After the dust and heat;  
In the broad and dusty street,  
In the narrow lane,  
How beautiful is the rain.*

Shelley was less pedestrian:

*I bring fresh showers for the thirsty  
flowers  
From the sea and the streams.*

And Shakespeare reminisced:

*When that I was a little boy  
With hey ho the wind and the rain*

I bet it rains a lot in Beowulf if only I could read it, and in T.S. Eliot if I could understand it.

The weather plays havoc with sport. Only snooker is safe. Inevitably the first Wimbledon (1871) was rained off. In cricket the weather is an active participant, with rain a potential ally or opponent. "Rain stops play" can mean a defeat avoided, a dream of victory dashed. It also provides relief from the boredom of actually watching play and sends true lovers of the game to the bar and their Wisden's to argue about records.

Show business is soaked to the skin by rain and nowhere more so than in two iconic scenes from stage and screen. In *My Fair Lady* the song *The rain in Spain falls mainly in the plain* marks the turning point in Eliza's ascent from Cockney flower girl to society lady, and Gene Kelly's *Singing and Dancing* in the rain proves that talent is waterproof.

With the weather being such a hot topic, forecasts are eagerly scrutinised. "Cloudy, with scattered showers and occasional

sunshine" is a safe prediction for three hundred days of the year. That's why there is general rejoicing when forecasters get it wrong.

The most notorious mishap befell weatherman Michael Fish on October 15, 1987 when he assured viewers that "no hurricane was on its way" a mere four hours before South East England was devastated by the worst storm in three centuries. In true-Brit fashion this malfunction earned Fish lasting fame; the "Michael Fish effect" entered the language and secured him a place on the after-dinner speakers' circuit.

Newspapers regularly report grim coincidences such as hailstones the size of golf balls falling at St. Andrews. Extreme conditions produce headlines that combine two favourite topics: animals and the weather.

## **Heat-wave threatens hedgehog survey DOG PREDICTS THUNDERSTORM Waterspout rains fish on Great Yarmouth**

This year's August Bank Holiday provided good copy. Following our heat wave in July, it was the coldest on record: 16-18°C in London, night frosts in parts of Scotland - in sharp contrast to last year's August Bank Holiday, which recorded 33.2°C at Heathrow.

*The Times* once went as far as claiming that a wet Bank Holiday was "a national misfortune".

The Shelley siblings, house guests of Lord Byron on Lake Geneva, were fascinated by thunderstorms. Mary Shelley wrote, "The thunderstorms that visit us are grander than I have ever seen before." She turned this experience into a ghost story that morphed eventually into the tale of *Frankenstein*.

The seasons evoke powerful literary associations, be they the looming menace of the Ides of March in Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*, Shelley's "Spring has put a



Singing in the rain is a favourite pastime for many

step of youth in everything", or T.S. Eliot asserting that "April is the cruellest month". Shakespeare, speaking metaphorically, returned to the subject of rain in Portia's monologue in *The Merchant of Venice*:

"The quality of mercy is not strained. / It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven upon the place beneath".

Shipping forecasts, where lives are at stake, are taken seriously. When I was a youngster the radio crooned me to sleep: Cromarty, Dogger Bank, Faroe, Fair Isle, Fastnet, Forth, Fitzroy, Finistère. I never stayed awake long enough to get to know the weather in Shetland.

But the scene is set for everyone in childhood with the poetry of nursery rhymes.

*Rain, rain go away/Come again another day.*

*It's raining, it's pouring/The old man is snoring.*

*Rain on the green grass/Rain on the moss  
Rain on the housetop/But not on*

**Victor Ross**

## **THE EMPIRE AS REFUGE**

On **7 October at 6.00pm** Dr Swen Steinberg, Dr Anthony Grenville and Dr Jutta Vinzent will introduce volume 20 of the *Yearbook of the Research Centre for German and Austrian Exile Studies* by talking about refugees in Canada and Kenya. The volume is the first to cover forced emigration from Nazi-controlled Europe to the territories of the British Empire as a whole.

<https://modernlanguages.sas.ac.uk/events/event/22704>

## **AJR ANNUAL KRISTALLNACHT SERVICE**

**Monday 9 November at 2.00pm**

Please join us at our Annual Service which will be live streamed from Belsize Square Synagogue. Our guest speakers will be AJR member Professor Robert Shaw, Austrian Ambassador Michael Zimmermann and Hannah Lessing, General Secretary of the Austrian National Fund.

**Booking details to follow via our weekly e-newsletter**

# THE MELODY MAKERS

## MIKLOS ROSZA



Ben Hur was one of many film scores composed by Miklos Rozsa

**It is 25 years since the composer, Miklos Rozsa, died. His contribution to the art of film music was enormous, with its aim of always enhancing the story of the film. The music he composed was light in tone, beautiful, but still dramatic in feeling.**

He was born in Budapest in 1907. At the age of five he started to learn to play the violin and the piano. By eight he played a Mozart violin concerto in front of an audience and at eighteen he composed a concerto based on a poem he wrote.

In 1937, he was asked to compose the music for Alexander Korda's

production of *Knight Without Armour*, with Marlene Dietrich and Robert Donat. This was followed with music for other Korda productions, like *The Four Feathers* and *That Hamilton Woman*. When, because of the war, the production of *The Thief of Bagdad* was transferred to America, he decided to stay there.

In America he composed magnificent scores for *El Cid* and *Ben Hur* among many others. When not busy composing for films, he composed pieces of classical music.

He was nominated for 17 Academy Awards, winning three times. Between 1937 and 1982 he composed scores for nearly a hundred films, thus making him by far the most significant composer of film scores of his time.

**Janos Fisher**

## MISCHA SPOLIANSKY

**Until Nazi violence forced him to flee to Britain in 1933, Mischa Spoliansky was a leading pianist and composer for cabaret and films in 'Roaring Twenties' Berlin. He soon was equally successful in London. His elder grandson Chris Kelly thinks the 2020s is the decade to revisit his music, 'especially in view of the economic and social parallels we're encountering today.'**

Kelly told me Spoliansky was a 'Wunderkind' whose versatility enabled him to compose classical pieces, cabaret songs and numerous film scores. Born in 1898, in a part of the Russian empire that is now Polish, Spoliansky came from a musical family. After both his parents died prematurely, he joined his brother and sister in wartime Berlin, where he studied music. There, his brother found him a job as a pianist in a café on the throbbing Unter den Linden boulevard.

Soon Spoliansky was playing the piano for silent films. He was composing memorable tunes – tangos, fox-trots and waltzes - for revues and cabaret shows. His 1920 *Das lila Lied* (The lavender song), a 'hymn to sexual liberty' adopted by Berlin's gays and lesbians, was dedicated to the 'sex guru' Magnus Hirschfeld, who campaigned for reform of the law on homosexuality. Other hits included *Heute Nacht oder nie* (Tonight or never); *Alles Schwindel*

# SPOLIANSKY

(It's all a swindle); and his melancholic *Auf Wiederseh'n*, reminiscent of Vera Lynn's *We'll Meet Again*.

Mischa encouraged Marlene Dietrich's to lower her range, and he adapted his music to suit her voice; she performed in his 1928 revue *Es Liegt in der Luft* (It's in the air) and in his 1929 *Zwei Krawatten* (Two bow-ties). This latter show led to her starring role in Germany's first major sound film, *Der blaue Engel* (The Blue Angel). Spoliansky's *Rufen Sie Herrn Plim* (Call Mr Plim), staged in Berlin in 1932, was a satirical one-act operetta set in Wertheim's department store, where Mischa had his first job in the capital.

By then, Spoliansky was becoming a target of antisemitic propaganda. Kelly, a retired film editor, says Spoliansky left 'degenerate' Berlin for Vienna, before emigrating to Britain in 1933. Mischa's 'Aryan' wife Elspeth, known as 'Eddy', and their three daughters joined him. Kelly recalls that 'The family lived happily for more than thirty years' in Hampstead, at No 1 Wellington House, Eton Road.

Spoliansky's big UK break came after Alexander Korda offered him a two-year contract. The renowned Hungarian-born film movie mogul had left Hollywood for London in 1930. Mischa wrote the music for Korda films such as *The Ghost Goes West*, *King Solomon's Mines* and *Sanders of the River*, the 1935 film starring Paul Robeson and set in Nigeria (Jomo Kenyatta, the future leader of Kenya, had a minor part as a tribal chief).

Between film commissions, Spoliansky composed a five-movement symphony with full orchestral score. Kelly thinks a contemporary ballet company would be best suited for performing the piece, entitled *Symphony for Dance*. Spoliansky worked for the BBC's German Service, set up in 1938 to entertain and inform, with a dash of



Mischa Spoliansky with Marlene Dietrich

propaganda - listen to Lucie Mannheim singing *Lili Marleen*. Mischa sang 'forbidden' music for the programme *Aus der freien Welt* (From the free world).

'After an illustrious career, Mischa's final theatrical adventure was *My Husband and I*, a musical version of Sheridan's *School for Scandal*', Kelly tells me. 'The production - it had a first run in Munich in 1957, as *Wie lernt man Liebe* (Learning about love) - was not a success.

Mischa decided enough was enough. Nonetheless, despite the setbacks - orphaned at twelve, fleeing his country of birth, and then Poland and Hitler - he considered himself a privileged man, lucky in love and in life.'

Spoliansky died in 1985. Chris Kelly, with his step-brother Greg, has set up a trust to stimulate interest in his grandfather's music. He says that, besides a continuing demand for Mischa's sheet-music, there are plans to showcase English versions of Mischa's early revues, *Es Liegt in der Luft* and *Rufen Sie Herrn Plim*. In Germany, Dresden's Semper Opera will next July be performing *Wie werde ich reich und glücklich?* (How do I become rich and happy?)

*Excerpts from Spoliansky's work can be seen and heard on YouTube and Vimeo. <https://www.facebook.com/groups/weimarera/permalink/3308018959259145/>*

**Martin Mauthner**

## RESTORING A BIT OF FAITH

**AJR second generation member Jacqueline Boronow Danson recently achieved her German naturalisation. It was an unusual and challenging case, as she explains.**

### ACT III. LONDON, JULY 2020

As if sitting in the German Embassy - in masks - wasn't strange enough, we were there doing the seemingly impossible. A simple enamel pin depicting the flags of Great Britain and Germany symbolised a profoundly emotional journey affecting three generations of my family. For this was the ceremony when the German nationality of my ancestors was, against all odds, rightfully restored to me. On the Embassy sofa with me was Ruth Boronow Danson, my 95 year old mother, a Holocaust refugee.

Witnessing from their photo frames were my late father Charles Danson (born Karl Erich Danielsohn), also a refugee; his grandparents Fanny and Simon Neufeld, splendidly dressed for their morning constitutional in Berlin in a photo labelled "Weinachten 1924", oblivious of horrors to come; and my maternal refugee family, the Boronows - Opa Ernst, taken to Buchenwald on Kristallnacht, and my Oma Käthe, assimilated German Jews, and my uncle Klaus who, having escaped through Europe by crossing the Pyrenees on foot, surprised my mother by appearing in her workplace in Baker Street, bearing a gift of nylon stockings.

Feelings in the community about applying for restored citizenship are understandably mixed. What brought me to this watershed?

I was born in London. My parents met and, in 1949, married there and, after six years in their new homeland, adopted me at three weeks old. My mother never tires of telling how she chose me from a room full of babies because, with no hair,



Jackie and her ancestors at the naturalisation ceremony in July 2020 in London.

I reminded her of her hero Churchill.

Current German law doesn't allow children adopted before 1977 automatic eligibility of German citizenship, unlike - since some recent improvements - many other descendants with a similar family history of Nazi persecution. But with Brexit as the catalyst, and help from many along the tortuously winding route, we finally found a way.

Germanness was always in my DNA. We spoke "Genglish" at home; my bedtime stories were *Struwwelpeter* and the Grimms' *Märchen*; Goethe and Schiller dwelt on my parents' bookshelves next to Shakespeare; our musical evenings were filled with Beethoven. Through my parents' intimate circle of friends I was immersed in European culture, language and experience, in tales of past lives in (as it seemed to me) faraway lands and unimaginably horrendous events. They lost so much but 80 years on, embodied in that little enamel pin, one significant aspect was finally restored, along with the recognition that non-biological children also matter.

### ACT I. Breslau, September 2009

We'd revisited the Berlin of my father's childhood several times, standing on the steps of the Staatsoper where his vocation to be an opera singer had been inspired; revisiting the Charlottenburg district of his cherished and seminal youth.

My mother, in contrast, never wanted to return to Breslau (now Wrocław),

believing that everything that might have held memories had been obliterated. So I went without her. Imagine my surprise to find the building which exactly matched the stories of my mother's childhood. A resident graciously let me in and showed me the architect's drawings. In tears I called my mother in London: "not only does it still exist, I'm inside it".

### ACT II. Breslau, September 2019

My mother decided to revisit Breslau after all. En route to the flat she had left in March 1939, an off-duty tram driver told us: "You are my dream! All my life I have wanted to meet someone born in my town before the War". With that, angel Pavel, with the essential Polish we lacked, unlocked access to my mother and grandmother's actual former apartment. We were astonished to learn that the current owner had arrived there from Kazakhstan as a child - in 1946.

My mother recalled standing at a nearby interchange, 10' from Hitler's cavalcade, being sent out to warn friends on Kristallnacht and, much earlier, playing without a care in the nearby Südpark, where Pavel assiduously pointed out "THAT tree was there before the war". A faint, but poignantly beautiful, reminder of my family's pre-war daily life in Germany.

### ACT IV. EVERYWHERE, 2020 ONWARDS

The impossible can happen. And sometimes it does. For those who, regarding German citizenship, desire the same as me, I hope my case will prove a shining beacon of hope.

# GENERATIONS

## TRACING GREAT-GRANDMA'S BENEFACTOR

Sixteen year old **Dov Forman** recently helped his great-grandmother, **Lily Ebert**, trace the family of an American soldier who had helped liberate her from Auschwitz and given her a banknote. The story made the news on both sides of the Atlantic. Here **Dov** explains why he was so compelled to make this search and how he did it.



Lily Ebert with her grandson Dov Forman, the scribbled banknote, and the soldier who gave it to her 75 years ago

Growing up I heard my great-grandmother speak formally and informally about the Holocaust. I always felt that one day I should take responsibility to memorialise her experiences. During lockdown, not seeing my Great Grandma for two months made me realise how precious she is, and that she will not live forever. I also realised that I am now a similar age to her when the Nazis invaded Hungary in 1944. Her family was moved into a ghetto, and on 9 July, taken to Auschwitz Birkenau where many family members were gassed on arrival.

As soon as lockdown rules were eased I was determined to absorb her testimony whilst I still had the chance. I wanted to help people understand what she had to go through, just for being Jewish.

A keepsake that really touched my heart was a German banknote which had been inscribed with ten words of hope and given to Great Grandma by her unnamed American liberator in 1945.

On 5 July, I posted a picture of this banknote on social media platform Twitter, aiming to discover this soldier's identity. The tweet spurred an international hunt for the name of the soldier who had placed within my great-grandmother the hope of a new life. Incredibly, after eight hours, the tweet had achieved over one million interactions and has now been seen by over two million people. Most

importantly, I received a direct message containing the identity of the soldier: Private Hayman Shulman.

After further research we confirmed that it must have indeed been Private Hayman Shulman who'd written on the banknote. A few days later, an online meeting had been organised between myself, my great-grandmother and the son and daughter-in-law of her liberator.

Great Grandma couldn't believe that we had actually found the name of the first person to show her kindness after the war. The previous day she'd laughed as I jokingly suggested I'd be able to uncover the soldier's name in under 24 hours.

To have discovered his identity 75 years on is nothing short of a miracle. As the number of survivors and liberators dwindles over time, meetings like these are increasingly rare and are the ultimate proof that the Nazis didn't win.

Our experience of meeting with Private Shulman's family was surreal, and it's so amazing to be able to use social media – to connect two dots from opposite ends of the world.

It was also inspiring to hear about the work Hayman Shulman did after the war - he helped to relocate Holocaust survivors from Buchenwald to Switzerland, as an assistant to Chaplain

Schechter. Sadly, the trauma of what he saw haunted him for the rest of his life. His son Jason said, "My father was certainly traumatised and was unable to bring himself to talk about it." He added, "It would have been wonderful to have my father here to meet your great-grandmother again in such different circumstances."

As a result of the huge interest generated from the banknote many historians, organisations and other relatives of survivors contacted us with extra information and documents. A historian from America, provided the exact date she was taken on her train to freedom from Buchenwald: 19 June 1945. We had never previously been able to find out this date.

Amazingly, on the USHMM website there is a clip of the orphaned survivors boarding that very train to Switzerland. When my Grandpa and I watched it we immediately recognised my Great Grandma. We couldn't believe it.

I will never forget this experience and it proves what's possible when we use social media for good. As Lily's great-grandson, the duty of sharing her story will eventually fall upon me and my generation. We must do all we can to ensure that the legacy of those who were forced to witness the murder of six million Jews lives on.

# BAFTA for 'The Last Survivors'

**A documentary starring several AJR members was named the 'Best Standalone Documentary' in the recent BAFTA television awards. Its director, Arthur Cary, also received the award for 'Best Director – Factual'.**

*The Last Survivors*, which first aired on BBC2 last year, is a 90-minute documentary that follows the stories of a handful of Holocaust survivors. It sensitively interweaves testimony interviews and present day filming to present a complex and expansive account of the survivors' experiences of the Holocaust, the lives they rebuilt after the war and how in their final years, they still strive to find peace after all that they lost.

Manfred Goldberg is one of the AJR members featured in the film. He told the *AJR Journal* how Arthur Cary had personally interviewed over 60 survivors before deciding to focus on the lives of just a few.

The film follows Manfred as he visited his home town of Kassel in Germany for the first time in 72 years, for the consecration of a Stolperstein for his younger brother Hermann. He recalls seeing Hitler waving from a car, surrounded by cheering Nazi crowds. At the time Manfred was just a young boy on his father's shoulders. "Did your father salute back?" asked a producer off-camera. "My father may have done," Goldberg replied evenly, "not to stand out."

Manfred was initially very reluctant to allow Cary to follow him to Germany. "Making that visit was an incredibly personal and emotional experience for me, and I wanted to do it in private," he says. But Arthur Cary was very persistent and eventually Manfred and his family agreed to let him accompany them, with the proviso that they had the right to veto the inclusion of their trip to Germany appearing in the eventual film.

The resulting scene proved to be one of the highlights of the documentary. It shows the concrete setting around a



Manfred Goldberg holding a picture of his brother

small brass plate which reads 'Hermann Goldberg. Deportiert 1941 Riga. Ermordet' while Manfred makes a speech and sings a memorial prayer for his murdered brother, whose fate is unknown to this day. This was the first time that Manfred had said *El Maleh Rachamim* for Hermann, until then always making himself believe that his brother might still somewhere be alive.

Despite the peace that comes from metaphorically laying his brother to rest, Manfred admits in the film to having doubts about the impact of Stolpersteine on passers-by. "People become immune to these things very fast," he says to camera. So in the past year he has been moved to receive letters from people who watched the documentary and recall seeing his brother's stone.

Manfred, whose own story was featured in the *Journal* in February 2018 and who famously accompanied the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge to Stutthof in July 2017, says that he felt quite uncomfortable to be back in Germany. "I realise that the younger generations cannot be blamed for what their parents and grandparents did, but I still didn't like being there," he explains. Politely refusing an invitation to a civic reception, Manfred and his family flew straight back to London after the Stolperstein ceremony.

Another stand out moment of the documentary was taken at Rainham

cemetery. "I first met Arthur shortly before Rosh Hashanah, and I happened to mention that I was going to visit my parents' graves, as is traditional at that time of the year. Arthur asked if he could accompany me, but I was not keen on being filmed during such a private moment."

Cary's dogged determination paid off however. He persuaded Manfred to return to Rainham on a separate occasion. Using a drone, he took an aerial shot of Manfred standing in front of Baruch and Rosa's grave. This provided one of the most poignant scenes of the film.

The Royal Television Society conducted a student masterclass with Arthur Cary last November. On making *The Last Survivors* he said: "I was quite intimidated by it... I'm not Jewish, so I felt a responsibility as an outsider making this film... You're really struck when you start making this sort of film at how important it is to the community to make films that chime with how they feel and do justice to the subject."

Other AJR members featured in the film include Anita Lasker-Wallfisch, who only survived Auschwitz because the orchestra needed a cellist, and retired engineer Frank Bright, who is a regular contributor to these pages. The other survivors featured in the programme were Susan Pollack, Sam Dresner, Ivor Perl & Maurice Blik.

# Portraits for Posterity

**Portraits for Posterity – Photographs of Holocaust Survivors is a wonderful new book which includes photographic portraits and testimonies of 101 Holocaust survivors, with their messages for the 21st Century. Jacki Reason takes up the story.**

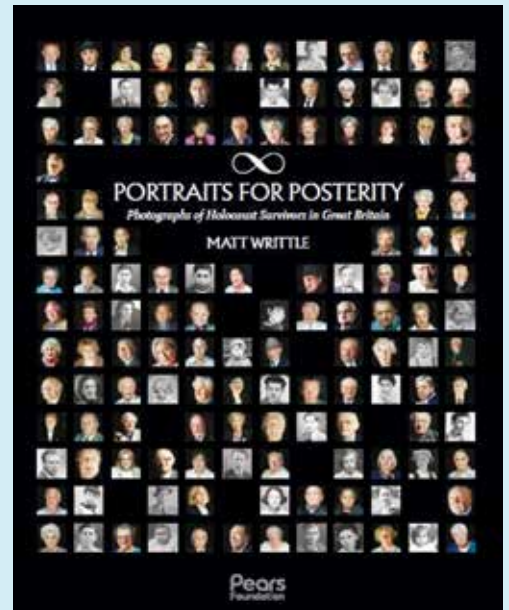
The project came about in 2007, when I visited the Holocaust exhibition at the Imperial War Museum. I was stunned to see someone I met daily at the swimming pool featured in one of the video testimonies. I had no idea of his history. When I told him that I didn't know what to say, his response was 'Well, I'm still here, aren't I?' He was Roman Halter.

A fellow swimmer, Jan Marsh, worked at the National Portrait Gallery and

suggested commissioning a portrait of Roman for potential display at the Gallery. Fortunately, I knew the perfect person for the job – my neighbour, portrait photographer Matt Writtle.

We put the idea to Roman. He agreed to participate, but said 'why just me?'. And so the project began. Our first exhibition was in London's City Hall, in January 2009. Since then we have exhibited all over the country.

Time is inevitably running out as regards the lifetimes of survivors so we felt the time was right to create a permanent, accessible memorial, including all 101 portraits and testimonies, plus messages from Eva Clarke, Ardyn Halter, Nicky Gavron and Hugo Rifkind – a survivor, a son of survivors, a relative of those killed, and a representative for all the Jewish people in Europe who would



have died had the Nazi regime won the war.

Copies of *Portraits for Posterity* are available from [www.mattwrittle.com/projects/portraits-for-posterity/](http://www.mattwrittle.com/projects/portraits-for-posterity/)

## EXCEEDING EXPECTATIONS

**The renowned cellist Anita Lasker-Wallfisch, who celebrated her 95th birthday earlier this year, is one of the AJR members featured in both *The Last Survivors* (see left) and *Portraits for Posterity* (see above).**

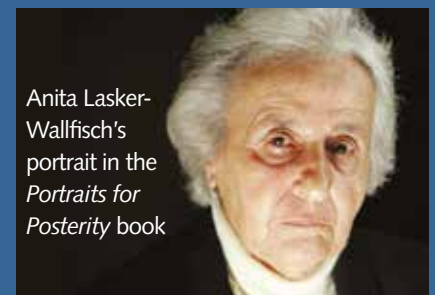
With an unflinching capacity to 'speak truth to power', Anita has for decades travelled internationally, warning governments and other organisations of the threat of increasing antisemitism. The birthday cards and letters she received this year read like a Who's Who of world leaders.

In January, at the Yad Vashem 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz, Prince Charles spoke glowingly of Anita, whom he has

known for 43 years as a co-founder of the English Chamber Orchestra, of which he is Patron. He has commissioned the artist Peter Kuhfeld to paint her portrait.

Anita believes that Holocaust education dwells excessively on the horrors of the 20<sup>th</sup> century at the expense of teaching young people the *history* of the Jews over the last two millennia: Why are Jews found all over the world? Why were they thrown out of one country after another? Why do we never feel fully secure wherever we are? She maintains that the answers to these questions lie in the fact that, in general, Jews worked hard wherever they found themselves; then, when they achieved a modicum of success, they became the target of jealousy, from which antisemitism followed all too easily.

Anita and her late husband, the pianist



Anita Lasker-Wallfisch's portrait in the *Portraits for Posterity* book

Peter Wallfisch, had two children, Raphael and Maya, who have become eminent in their own right. Raphael is a cellist and Maya is a psychotherapist and best-selling author.

When Anita was forcibly parted from her parents in the war her father said to her "*Ich verlasse mich auf Dich*" (I am depending on you). Since then, she has tried to live up to his faith in her and today she says she hopes she has justified his expectations and that he would be proud of her.

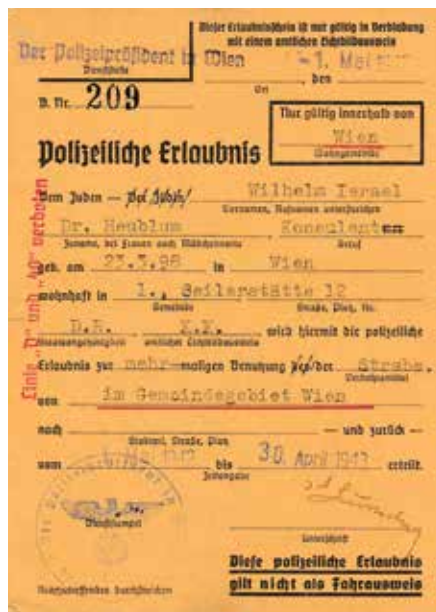
Lilian Levy

# A Document with a Secret

The AJR is grateful to George Vulkan for sharing this fascinating document which proves how some of his relatives managed to escape the same fate as the rest of his family.

Many years ago, on a trip to Vienna with my older son, Daniel, I visited a relation, Dr Trude Falkner, who, with her parents, were the only ones of our family to survive the Shoah while living in Vienna. Her father, Dr Wilhelm Heublum was a lawyer who nominally worked for the Jewish community in Vienna. In fact he was powerless and it was merely window dressing for the Red Cross and neutral countries. The main reason he was allowed to stay was that his wife was a Catholic although 'tainted' by being a quarter Jewish. According to the Nazi purity 'laws', if she had been half Jewish the whole family would have met the same fate as the rest of our family..

Trude gave me a document entitled 'Kleinen Abstammungsnachweis' or 'Short Proof of Descent' which was their lifeline. The front, with its eagle and swastika background, summarises the four grades of 'purity' which determined the fates of the person.



Dr Heublum's tram permit



Anna Marie Heublem's 'Short Proof of Descent' (front)

These were: 'Deutschtüchtig' (Aryan); Mischling 2. Grades (Mixed 2<sup>nd</sup> Grade); Mischling 1. Grades; and Jude (Jew).

The actual 'family tree' is on the reverse of the document and hides a vital secret! The document belonged to Wilhelm's wife, giving her maiden name as Anna Maria Theresia Hofmann, religion Roman Catholic. It names her parents and paternal grandparents as being RC, and her maternal grandmother, Maria Bergmann, Jewish. The other section, relating to the maternal grandfather, is blank. Of course if this had been filled in as Jewish Anna would have been classed as half Jewish and the family would have been deported.

The official story was that Anna's mother was illegitimate and the actual father was known to be RC and therefore Anna could only be quarter Jewish. Trude told me that, in fact, Maria's mother was the daughter of a married couple, both Jewish. Moreover she herself, Trude's mother, had converted to Judaism. The secrets held throughout the war!

Trude gave us another document of interest, permitting the 'Jew' Wilhelm /Israel/ Dr Heublum to travel on Vienna's trams. The permit was extended twice, the second time to 29 April 1945 when it was no longer needed. She also spoke to us about the constant harassment of the

family by the Nazis and an occasion when two SS men came to the flat and saw they had a dog. They yelled that Jews are not permitted to keep pets and shot the dog.

Both Trude's parents survived the war but died before our visit to Trude; she herself has also died since our visit.

George Vulkan's *My Story* book is available to read online: <https://www.ajrmystory.org.uk/people/George-Vulkan>

## APPLYING FOR AUSTRIAN CITIZENSHIP?

An amendment to the Austrian Citizenship Act took effect from 1 September 2020 enabling more descendants of Austrian Holocaust refugees and survivors to apply for Austrian citizenship. Please join AJR on 8 October at 4.00pm for a presentation from colleagues at the Austrian Embassy on the application process.

Register for this event at <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/applying-for-an-austrian-passport-tickets-120209759627>



# benuri.org

## A New Year: A New Era



Art Identity Migration



David Bomberg (1890-1957) *Ghetto Theatre*, 1920  
© Ben Uri Collection courtesy of the David Bomberg estate

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*Covid-19 allowing, we hope to reopen to the public our extended art reference and archive library, research centres and focused exhibition gallery in London's St. John's Wood by the end of October.*

*The transformation to the digital arena as Ben Uri's permanent principal public engagement model was central to the Sustainability and Public Benefit Strategy published in October 2018. It is accessible in full on [benuri.org](http://benuri.org)*

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# REVIEWS

## THE UNKNOWN MRS ROSEN

By Andrew Sanger  
Focus Books 2020

This remarkable novel spans decades of a complex life, encompassing war, love, family, friendships and old age. The author ventures effortlessly from one area to another, holding the reader's attention throughout.

The protagonist is 90 year old Marjorie Rosen, widow and mother of three, who has been living on her own with daily carers. Although her husband died many years earlier, she constantly looks at his photo and believes he can still hear her. While she connects quite normally with her carers and family, her solitude is consumed in re-living noteworthy episodes of her life, including her early childhood. Most significant is her wartime story of how, as a young Jewish woman working at Bletchley Park, she was dispatched to Germany, to find a Nazi official's wife who is anti-Hitler and has access to the enemy's codebooks.

Marjorie Behrens, as she was then, was blonde, fluent in German and Russian, and an obvious choice to take on the identity of a dead German woman whose husband, a junior officer, was killed on the Eastern Front.

Before learning of her assignment, Marjorie is told of the Final Solution, something she can barely believe.

On her way to receive her orders, she is injured by an unexploded ordnance. She then undergoes training at the Beaulieu estate, after which, armed with an NSDAP membership card and wearing a little black and red swastika brooch on her uniform, she leaves for the long journey on a small Lysander plane, landing in Denmark and then taken by boat to Germany.

Her most significant act in Germany is to strangle a Nazi officer with her stockings while he is urinating. She also manages to find Erika, the Nazi official's wife, and they form a close friendship. When, later, Erika is betrayed, Marjorie hunts down her murderer in rural France.

Shortly after the war Marjorie met her husband, Harry Rosen, who had changed his name from Chaim Rosenzweig to prevent being mistaken for an enemy alien. Marjorie remembers him at the wedding of their daughter, Nicola, in an Anglican church. Their elder son, Philip, had several children, only one of whom was definitely his. Their younger son, Max, rescued a young woman during the disintegration of Yugoslavia and married her. Originally seeming the least concerned of Marjorie's children, alongside her daughter-in-law he is now the most caring.

This multifaceted tale is very engaging and beautifully written.  
*Emma Klein*

## JEWISH FLYERS IN THE WORLD WAR

By Felix A.Theilhaber  
Woodhall Spa 2019

The World War referred to in the title is the First World War, which is not explicitly indicated because this book was first published in German in 1919 followed by an expanded edition in 1924 and expanded again with two appendices for this edition. The main public image of that war is of the enormous land battles of the Somme, Verdun and Passchaendale so the use of aircraft has been rather under-recognised. The idea of Jews fighting for Germany might cause some unease and the notion of Jewish fighter pilots might also not come readily to mind but this book indicates the extent to which they were part of the war. The Appendix gives the names and details of 245 of them. The 1924 introduction reminds us that 'in the developmental period of aviation every flyer faced daily death'. This is reinforced by the photos of what would now count as very flimsy and primitive aircraft.

The brief Foreword to the Hebrew edition by the author's son is enough to indicate that a full biography of Felix Theilhaber would definitely be worthwhile. Here I can just indicate that he served on the Western and Eastern Fronts and in 1918 was awarded the Iron Cross First Class yet still had to 'endure slurs and allegations' that German Jews were 'shirkers and saboteurs'. Thus one can easily understand the controlled and justified anger that is

evident and the strong motive to set the record straight. So, though the title suggests a book about aircraft it is also, perhaps centrally, a book about combatting antisemitism. One of the victims of the war, Robert Löwenthal, expressed in poetry the denigration suffered by German Jewish members of the armed forces:

*He was called a foreigner on every soil,  
Which his fathers fertilised  
With their sweat and blood.*

Of the numerous stories I'll provide just one to give the flavour of the book. Oberleutnant Alwin Lippmann was wounded five times in combat. He 'received eight distinctions: the Iron Cross 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> class, the Bavarian Military Order of Merit with Crown and Swords, the Bavarian Military Cross of Merit with Crown and Swords, Wound Badge in Silver, Bavarian Medal of Bravery, and the Silesian Eagle 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Class'. In the notes at the end of the book we learn that he was murdered in Auschwitz.

This book can be seen as a suitable companion volume to Tim Grady's *The German-Jewish Soldiers of the First World War in History and Memory*. This is a history book but an inspiring one, for it seems that the task of combatting antisemitism is never over.

*Michael Levin*

[www.fishburnbooks.com](http://www.fishburnbooks.com)

### Jonathan Fishburn

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# A VOYAGE INTO RADIO

In May *BBC Radio 4* broadcasted Tom Stoppard's adaptation of Daniel Kehlmann's play, *The Voyage of the St Louis*. It cast light on one of the saddest and most poignant events of the Nazi period, which strangely is little known. David Wirth takes up the story.

Over 900 Jewish passengers, seeking an exit route from Nazi Germany, boarded the transatlantic liner in Hamburg in May 1938. They held legal tourist visas allowing them to disembark in Cuba, where they could stay safely while seeking entry to USA.

Captain Gustav Schröder, although German, was certainly no Nazi. He ensured that all his passengers dined well and arranged entertainments for them. Friday evening Shabbat services even took place in the dining room. A bust of Hitler was covered by a cloth. This was a "vacation cruise to freedom" (words of Lothar Molton, a boy travelling with his parents).

But when the liner docked in Havana, the passengers were told that their landing permits had been invalidated retrospectively.

Captain Schröder ordered the ship to sail to Florida, hoping it could dock there, but permission was refused. With no other option available, the *SS St Louis* left US waters.

They could have reached Canada in two days. But the Canadian government denied them permission to land. Conditions aboard the ship deteriorated, and there was no choice but to cross the Atlantic again and return to Europe. Yet Captain Schröder was determined not to return his passengers to Germany, knowing the fate that awaited them. He considered wrecking his ship on the British coast to force the UK to take in the refugees but instead he ordered the ship to sail to Antwerp, so he could then personally begin



negotiations. By this time the passengers had been trapped on board for five weeks.

The negotiations were successful. Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain agreed to take in 288 refugees.

224 were allowed into France, 214 into Belgium, and 181 into Holland but these countries were soon invaded by Germany. Researchers tracking the fate of the passengers have established that 254 of the passengers of the *St Louis* perished, most of them in Auschwitz and Sobibor.

The story of the *St Louis* has been told a number of times, including the film *Voyage of the Damned* (1974). This BBC Radio 4 script was adapted from Daniel Kehlmann's play.

Kehlmann is a literary superstar in Germany, his 2005 book *Die Vermessung der Welt* (Measuring the World) being the best-selling book in German since the 1980s. His paternal Jewish grandparents both converted to Christianity; during WW2 his father was imprisoned in a labour camp, but his literary works had never before addressed Jewish matters or the Holocaust. Kehlmann justified this omission by stating he did not wish to do the subjects a disservice. That changed with his play *Die Reise der Verlorenen* (The Journey of the Lost).

Kehlmann's play was adapted for the radio by Tom Stoppard who, despite a long and illustrious career as a playwright,

had also never before explored his own Jewish heritage in his works until this year's *Leopoldstadt*, set in the Jewish community of Vienna in the early 1900's.

The decision to focus mainly on the protagonists' discussions rather than on the hopes of the would-be escapees was a strange one, given the personal histories of both writers. There also seemed to be a number of Brechtian devices used to alienate listeners' emotions and sympathies – exaggerated foreign accents, interludes of classical music and monologues given by various characters, even from beyond the grave. However, the decision to commission and broadcast the play on national radio when there was no obvious context or anniversary must be applauded. Few listeners would have been familiar with the story of the voyage.

After the War Captain Schröder was awarded the Order of Merit by the West German government, and in 1993 was posthumously declared one of the 'Righteous amongst the Nations' by Yad Vashem. In 2012, the USA formally apologised in a ceremony attended by 14 survivors of the ship. In 2018 Prime Minister Justin Trudeau apologised on behalf of Canada. Half of the survivors eventually emigrated to USA, including Leon Joel, great-uncle of singer-songwriter Billy Joel.

The full heart-breaking story of the *SS St Louis* is detailed in the Washington Holocaust Museum.

# ZOOMS AHEAD

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

Thursday 1 October @ 2.00pm	<b>Julia Pascal – Discovering a secret English Jewish history</b> , focusing on her research into England's lost Jews
Tuesday 6 October @ 2.00pm	<b>Michael Kushner – Bletchley Park and the Jewish contribution</b>
Wednesday 7 October @ 2.00pm	<b>Edwin Lucas – Prison Artwork</b>
Thursday 8 October @ 2.00pm	<b>Elkan Levy - The History of United Synagogue</b>
Tuesday 13 October @ 2.00pm	<b>Lesley Urbach – The story of Josiah Wedgwood</b>
Wednesday 14 October @ 2.00pm	<b>Kate Swerdlow, Photographer – How simcha photos changed during lockdown</b>
Tuesday 20 October @ 2.00pm	<b>Sidney Austin – Songs from the 50s</b>
Tuesday 27 October @ 2.00pm	<b>Paul Lang – Professional Photograph – How to take a good picture and look good in Zoom meetings.</b>
Wednesday 28 October @ 2.00pm	<b>Gillian Perry - The History of Afternoon Tea</b>

## WRITING THE HOLOCAUST

Join the Second Generation Network on the evening of 14 October for a fascinating online discussion between three different authors. Esther Saraga (Berlin to London: An Emotional History of Two Refugees) and Debra Barnes (The Young Survivors) will each share their experiences of working with and shaping their family material and history into narrative form, while journalist and author Jack Fairweather (The Volunteer) will explain how he carried out historical research and reconstructed the story. Their presentations will be followed by a Q+A session, giving members of the audience the opportunity to share their own experiences of writing and researching their families' Holocaust histories.

To book your place please contact [davidwirth@secondgeneration.org.uk](mailto:davidwirth@secondgeneration.org.uk).

## ENTEBBE RETOLD



Join AJR on Tuesday 3 November at 2.00pm for a live online interview with Rami Sherman, Operations Officer of the 1976 Unit which helped rescue Jewish hostages from the Air France plane which had been hijacked and rerouted to Entebbe.

Rami, whose parents were both Holocaust survivors from Poland, tells his story as articulately and passionately as if it happened yesterday.

[www.eventbrite.com/e/rami-sherman-raid-on-entebbe-tickets-119402300495](https://www.eventbrite.com/e/rami-sherman-raid-on-entebbe-tickets-119402300495)

## SCHULTÜTE



These lovely photos are featured in a new online exhibition launched by the AJR's Refugee Voices Archive to coincide with last month's reopening of schools. They show 10 of the Refugee Voices interviewees with their *Schultüten*, traditional German & Austrian cones filled with treats given to children on their first day of school.

<https://ajrrefugeevoices.org.uk/schultute>

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