



Kindertransport

A special interest group of

The Association of Jewish Refugees
SERVING HOLOCAUST REFUGEES AND SURVIVORS NATIONWIDE



JUBILEE HOUSE, MERRION AVENUE, STANMORE, MIDDLESEX HA7 4RL
Telephone: 020 8385 3070 Fax: 020 8385 3080 Email: kt@ajr.org.uk www.ajr.org.uk

**Contact: Andrea Goodmaker at AJR,
Jubilee House, Merrion Avenue, Stanmore,
Middlesex HA7 4RL
Tel: 44 (0) 20 8385 3070
Fax: 44 (0) 20 8385 3080
email: andrea@ajr.org.uk**

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EDITOR:

Rev. Bernd Koschland
nisraf@compuchange.co.uk

Chairman:

Sir Erich Reich

Previous issues may also be viewed at:
www.ajr.org.uk/kindertransport.htm

Dear Kinder and Friends



From the Editor's Desk

Dear Kinder and Friends

I always worry that there is not sufficient material for the production of the Newsletter. Yet somehow it materialises from all kinds of sources as the contents will show. The Dovercourt 'report' and the Southampton documents came as a gift. I also do look forward to hearing from readers- don't be shy in writing.

May the coming Festival of Freedom bring freedom from hate, from the surge of anti-Semitism to enable us all to live in full peace and harmony, and in the words of the Prophets, to sit under our vine and fig-tree with no one to make us afraid. *Chag Sameach*

Bernd.

Dear Fellow Kinder

Winter is nearly over and spring is on the horizon. I have actually seen snowdrops and crocuses quite a good sign. Very soon we will be celebrating Pesach which I have always regarded as the festival of Spring and Freedom. It is a time to rejoice and look forward to warmer and longer days ahead. Of course we have just experienced the commemoration of Holocaust Day and the 70th anniversary of the freedom of Auschwitz. This should not deter us from looking forward to spending the upcoming *Chagim* with our families and loved ones.

So in advance may I wish you all a big *Chag Sameach*

Eudith Kider



DOVERCOURT

Below are brief reports on Dovercourt, which I received recently in connection with other materials. Also included was a list of 30 Kinder who came on the *SS Manhattan* in March 1939; the list was accompanied by a letter from the doctor of Southampton Port Health Authority to the Ministry of Health stating that the children were found medically healthy before embarkation. For data protection I am not including the names of the 30 Kinder, but would confirm on request whether a name appears. This is in case anyone on the list would not want his name released. Some things strike me about the list: there are no girls on it, a number (perhaps all?) went to the Rowden Hall hostel in Margate and possibly all 30 of us, or only some, were sponsored by B'nai B'rith (I was).

Bernd

SS Manhattan



Report on camp at Dovercourt by C.F. Roundell, Chief General Inspector, on 19th December 1938 (see further pages 11-12 with some repetition)

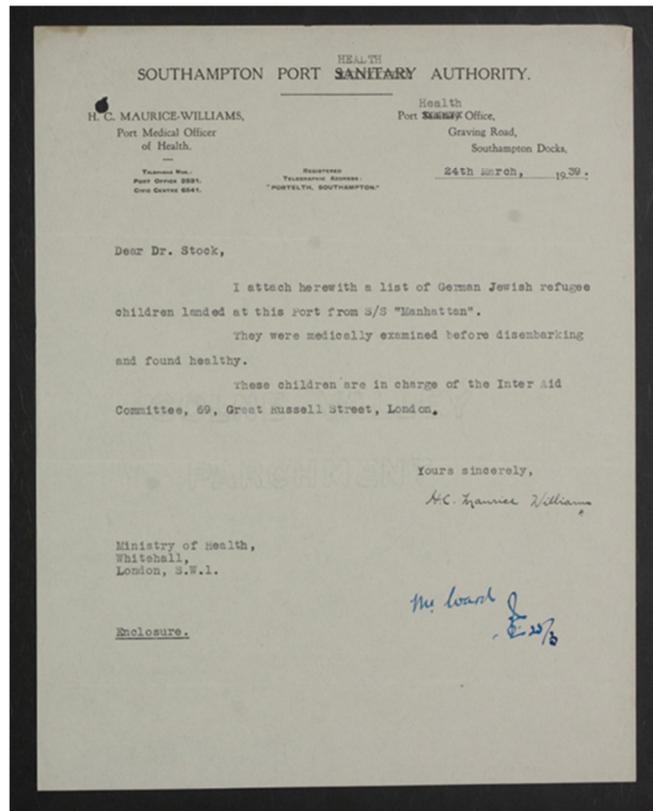
- Describes staffing, facilities, the layout of the camp and the severe lack of adequate heating
- Discusses health and education of the 300 children at the camp
- “Complete sets of clothing have been given by Messrs. Marks and Spencer for every child requiring them” “Messrs. Marks and Spencer have fitted out these children... from “top to toe”, including gum-boots, and two members of Messrs. Marks and Spencer’s staff have given their service gratis to attend in the camp.”
- Describes how a Christmas tree was put up for non-Jewish children and “Chanukah candles” for Jewish ones.

Very Detailed Women’s Voluntary Service Report worker, following a visit to Dovercourt by Lady Marion Phillips on January 12th 1939

- “The camp belongs to Butlins Company, who built it for the purpose of letting huts to town people in summer at the rate of about £2 a week”.
- “It is used as a kind of clearing station for German and Austrian Jewish and non-Aryan refugee children until arrangements can be made for their future. These children are from 5 to 18 years of age, and their parents are mostly dead or in concentration camps. The Nazi authorities are apparently only too glad to get rid of the children, with the exception of boys of seventeen and over, whom they require for labour. They come through Holland, are only allowed to bring one mark out of Germany, and come into England in batches of varying numbers.”
- Describes ‘commandants’ in charge, sleeping facilities for each child, where children are ‘interviewed’ and records kept. Mentions plans to send a number of children to do “farm training in Scotland previous to their departure for Palestine or other places willing to take emigrants”. Then goes on to describe catering and entertainment facilities including, sports fields, swimming baths, a piano and a “show of drawings done by some of the

younger children. Describes how the cost is met by the Refugee fund and how all helpers were volunteers, many refugees themselves. Volunteers include “Herr Blodig, a celebrated Arlberg Ski Champion. English public school boys and other young children have also been going to help”.

- Insufficient heating meant “conditions were very difficult”. Each Child was “provided with a hot water bottle and five blankets”.
- M&S provided “articles such as coats, jerseys, dressing gowns, mackintoshes and gum boots”.
- “Well arranged; each lavatory hut is divided into two halves, marked ‘lads’ and ‘lassies’.
- all children “examined on immigration and there have not been any epidemics at Dovercourt. However, at a camp in Lowestoft there was “an outbreak of measles and the camp had to be closed.” “There are two Austrian Doctors and their wives to deal with illness and injuries. Looked very healthy and said they were happy with real enthusiasm.”
- “They do lessons in the mornings – the very young ones do drawings and songs – the elder ones go to the village school to learn English.” “In the afternoons the elder boys play football. The other children go for walks, play indoor games and sew or write letters. They rehearse plays and songs and give weekly evening entertainment. On other evenings they are entertained by local talent and various voluntary helpers.
- “The camp leaders are very keen, full of human kindness, vitality and emanating a cheerful atmosphere. Great efforts are made to stress the future of hopes of the children and so help them forget the past.” “The one glaring aspect appears to be the profiteering on catering, which should be remedied. The excuse for this would seem to be the difficulty of finding suitable accommodation in a short time. “



Letter from Southampton Port Authority

WHY?

“Mummy(or Daddy) Why?” Why what? Parents are frequently confronted by their young children with this ‘why?’ Answers are found according to age and understanding, often followed by more ‘why’s’. That small word may have many answers of some kind or perhaps no real answer or one that satisfies the questioner only. However it, can open the mind to further searches for understanding and answers.

Pesach, and specifically the Seder, are occasions for questions as initially stated in the Torah by “When your son/s will ask you...” what all this is about (Exodus 12:26, Deuteronomy 6:20) with many more coming at the Seder itself, such as the ‘questions’ of three of the sons.

The *mah nishtanah* is a set of observations, rather than questions (*mah* should be translated correctly as ‘how different is this night...’), implying the acceptance of the ritual in the first place and observing the events with implied questions.

The questions in Exodus and Deuteronomy mentioned above are initiated by the questioner. There is a third verse (Exodus 13:8) where the question of ‘why this ritual’ is anticipated by the parent, or by the implied responder:” You shall tell your son ...”

Thus the verses quoted in the Haggadah regarding ‘why?’ teach us a number of things about questions and answers in Jewish life. Two verses emphasise direct questioning by the son or people generally and demand a straight forward answer, in this instance the historical background which gave rise to the ritual of the night. The third verse places the

responsibility on the 'parent' to teach, anticipate and obviate the 'why.' Thus at times we must find answers to questions to the best of our ability and at other times deal with the situation before the question arises, before the 'why.'

There is a link between the four observations of the *mah nishtanah* and the four 'sons' or types of Jew or persons.

The wise son wants the details of the laws of the ritual as is reflected in the 'question' regarding *chametz umazah*, which means an explanation of these two terms in some detail. The wicked son's 'question' – "What is this ritual for you, not him" - is a challenge: "this night it is only bitter herbs," what kind of ritual, what kind of meal is this? This question has no direct answer as it is meant to ridicule. The reply to this 'why' is utter rejection with words. However you explain it will not satisfy – a sort of secular society approach and rebuff by the believer.

The simple son's 'why', what is it all about? is answered by giving the historical background as the basis for the ritual. His question regarding dipping is to try to understand a strange detail of the evening, strange because it is not done any other time. When asking 'why?' people often want the details without knowing or trying to understand the background and causes of a particular situation.

The one unable or unwilling to ask is answered with 'this happened to me.....' The son is happy in reclining (the Roman/Greek way of feasting) but not understanding why. The given answer seems to imply that it concerns another, not him, and so perhaps lets the world go by.

Ideally at the Seder one should question and probe via the text of the Haggadah, the numerically most published Hebrew book with any number of commentaries asking and answering, commentaries from the past, the present and in future times no doubt.

The question WHY? Is a penetrating one, especially with its answers at the Seder, for the different types of persons, four, but it could be many more.

As Kinder we may have asked, and may still ask why?: ' Why did it all happen?, why happen to us? to me?' In my view, none of the answers are 100% water-tight. So whatever answer we give ourselves as individuals to that 'WHY?', it must satisfy as far as it goes. Maybe a better answer could be found, or not, but 'why leaves it open to search further, to mull over, or analyse further or leave it as it is. Whatever way we think, let it help to keep the memory alive, if not for us then for future generations.

Chag Sameach to you and your families.

Bernd Koschland.



Reviews

Emerging from the shadows

Rummaging through shelves of books is always exciting, whether you find something of interest or not. The other day looking for a specific book on my shelves, I found one that I

had bought and forgotten about. Squeezed in between other volumes was this paperback on the Kindertransport: *Never Look Back* by Judith Tydor Baumel-Schwartz, Purdue University Press 2012, (\$39.95).

The book originated as a thesis many years ago, and through encouragement much later was expanded into a book. Extremely useful is the introduction, which focuses on various areas relating to Kindertransport, including the stages which led to the development of the book. There is a very general survey of the subject with important sections on available sources, primary and secondary, as well as interviews with Kinder. The author points out the sad and irreplaceable destruction of records, e.g. those of the Refugee Children Movement, or some only reappearing stuffed in a filing cabinet hidden in the garage of a Jewish retirement home.

There are some errors that need correction (page 2). War broke out on 3rd September (not 1st). Refugee children came, mainly from Germany and Austria rather than the general statement that they came from Central Europe. The evacuation progress did begin slowly with not just to the Midlands entirely.

The body of the book gives an excellent survey of the Kindertransport. Chapters relate to the period 1933-39, to British Jewry and refugee organisations. It then proceeds to Kristallnacht and the aftermath as far as Kinder are concerned and then details the 'story' as it develops during the war.

The final chapter reviews the post-war years to 2012. Using Karen Gershon (poet and writer) as an example, the author discusses the question of one's connection with Judaism as a result of experiences, of denying one's origin or just hiding them. Also reference is made to the contributions Kinder have made, such as Nobel Laureates and our own entrepreneur Sir Erich Reich.

Important in this final chapter is the rise of the Kindertransport from few prior references until its full emergence through the work of our own dear Bertha Leverton and her organising the first reunion. This sparked off activities in many countries, leading to further reunions, writings and the beginnings of this Newsletter by the pen of Bertha. I highly recommend the book with its excellent bibliography.

BK

Four 'Players' in the Guardianship Discussions

In reviewing *Never Look Back*, it occurred to me that many may not have known about our legal Guardians and who they were. In 1943 a debate arose about guardianship. Issues were raised that the Refugee Children's Movement (RCM) had placed Jewish children in non-Jewish homes. The 'players' in the discussion were the Chief Rabbi, Dr Joseph Hertz, Lord Gorell and Rabbi Dr Solomon Schonfeld (son-in-law of the Chief Rabbi). The matter of Guardianship was eventually 'settled' with the appointment of Lord Gorell as the overall Guardian and the Revd Ephraim Levine responsible for the Jewish element of the guardianship. The Chief Rabbi had wanted to be the Jewish element; but it was not to be. There was still dissatisfaction expressed from the orthodox community regarding the final decision of the Guardianship Bill.

The Players:

Chief Rabbi Hertz held office from 1913 to his death in 1946. His fame, among his manifold activities, rests on his commentaries on the Chumash and Siddur and other writings. He was concerned with the welfare of Jewish children, not just Kinder, during World War II, especially with maintaining the Jewish identity.

Chief Rabbi Hertz Lord (3rd Baron) Gorell 1884-1963 was educated at Oxford. He was called to the Bar in 1909, but became a journalist for The Times. He served in WWI, when he founded the Army Education Corps. Later he served in the Government. He was appointed Chairman of RCM and eventually, as mentioned, Guardian of refugee children. The Tylers Green Hostel Committee archives contain an item in which he had to give a decision in regards to a Kind. (The archives are in my possession. BK)

Rabbi Dr Solomon Schonfeld (1912-84) A giant of his times, for whom a 'yes' was a 'yes' and 'no' was likewise a 'yes' especially in his rescue work before and especially after the war. He succeeded his father as Rabbi of the Adath Yisroel Synagogue in North London and headed the Adath organisation. As an educator he founded the Jewish Secondary Schools Movement, of which only the Hasmonean primary and secondary ones exist. He was a staunch fighter for orthodox Jewry and Judaism and very much his own man.

Revd Ephraim Levine was born in Glasgow. His final position as a Minister was at the New West End Synagogue. 'Ephie' Levine (as he was often known) was a superb speaker and wit also author, as well as editor, of several books. On a personal note: some 30 years ago as a locum Minister at the New West End on the occasion of his Yahrzeit, I prefixed my sermon with belated thanks to him in the presence of his family for his guardianship of us Kinder, comments well received.

Finally, on the sidelines of the guardianship discussions was **Dorothy Hardisty**, the hard-working and harassed General Secretary of the Refugee Children's Movement, some of whose many letters are preserved in the archives of the Tylers Green Hostel Committee held by me. She no doubt had her work cut out and probably was happy to retire from the arduous work of the RCM.

BK



LETTERS

Dear Bernd,

Re: Julius Buck

For a research project at the Freie Univesität Berlin I am looking for survivors who were among the Polish Jews deported from Berlin on the 28th of October 1938, during the so called Polenaktion, or have relatives/friends who were deported. In this regard I am

especially looking for information on Julius Buck, born in Berlin 1923, who went with a Kindertransport from Poland directly to the UK. Please contact me at alina.bothe@fu-berlin.de

Thank you very much

Alina

Alina Bothe [<mailto:a.bothe@zentrum-juedische-studien.de>]

'MIXING IT 'PROJECT

Did a member of your family fight alongside the British in the Second World War or arrive as a war worker, prisoner of war or refugee? A research project at the University of Huddersfield is recording the histories of the different national groups which spent time in Britain during World War II as part of a project investigating the diversity of Britain's war time population. We are particularly interested in children who arrived via Kindertransport and other Jewish refugees.

We are hoping to interview ex-service personnel, war workers and refugees but, as most are very elderly, we are also interested in speaking with their descendants. Besides recording memories and family stories the project team is looking for photographs, diaries and memorabilia. Information gathered by this project will feed into an exhibition at the Imperial War Museum North which opens in September 2015. If you would like to take part please contact:

Dr Janette Martin

'Mixing It' project

History Department

School of Music, Humanities and Media

Queensgate

University of Huddersfield

HD1 3DH

Tel 01484 472452 or email j.martin@hud.ac.uk

KINDERTRANSPORT by Abigail Sarah Bagraim (acrylic on canvas)

Here the Berlin monument by Frank Meisler is changed in that the figures back to back are both made to look forward to face the viewer. The painting is dedicated to her uncle (i.e. Bernd) Against the eerie blue background,



angels descend from above holding a red rose as a gesture of *rachamim* (compassion) towards the children in the monument setting out on their journey to an unknown future. They are accompanied by their toys, the only reminder of their home and parents. Abigail is seated in the posture of eastern meditation, inviting the viewer to identify with these children who in this monument meet their destiny with obedient fatalism.

Abigail's paintings are to be understood as visual connection points between past, present and future. She addresses herself to the viewer with a bewildering directness.

She lives in South Africa, where she paints and teaches painting. Much of her work is kabbalistic-mystical.

Bernd Koschland

Obituary

Sir Martin Gilbert

Kindertransport would like to add to the many tributes already paid nationwide to Sir Martin. Whilst not ignoring his general historical works, e.g. his magnum opus on Churchill, his many writings on the Shoah are essential reading to try and understand this genocide. His many atlases are of immense help in understanding history. His books on Jewish life generally and also on Israel are major contributions. All his writings together would form a veritable library of history on their own. His death after a long illness has deprived the world of a great historian. Our sympathies go to Lady Gilbert and family.

TRUTH-NOT A FAKE

A step into a different place
 You may think is a different world
 Yet only a race
 For life, for breath, for family and all
 Yet it is torture, suffering and Jews used as a tool
 Majdanek, Auschwitz
 Places of crime
 Killing so many in such little time
 The beauty of nature taken away

These humans that tortured, humans, no, what were they?
Into the cattle carts, full of pain
Whether in summer's heat
Or cold winter's rain
Innocent children split from their past
Their future gone, gone quick and gone fast
No time to say hello
No time to say goodbye
Their breath taken away
No sound of any cry
It may also seem fake
Like it isn't even true
But no, it was not a mistake
It happened to you.

By Ruthie Epstein, a 17 year old 3rd generation Kindertransport on her visit to Poland with her school in 2014.



Findmypast adds Kindertransport records

Family history website Findmypast has recently added records of Kindertransport refugees to their collection of over two billion family history records.

This new collection of Kindertransport records offer an incredible insight into the journey taken by those who escaped Europe and made the journey to England. They mainly comprise passenger lists telling you the name of the child, their birth date and place, the date they departed Germany, name of the ship on which they travelled and their arrival port in the UK.

You can search by place of birth – these include Austria, Poland, Armenia, Switzerland, and even Ontario – but mainly towns in Germany.

As not all the Kindertransport refugees were lucky enough to have foster homes, many stayed at holiday camps until appropriate homes could be found. One such camp was in Dovercourt Bay in Essex, and the records recently added include reports and accounts from those who visited the camp.

There are 41 browseable documents in this collection including: minutes of the War Cabinet legislation committee and a copy of the Guardianship (Refugee Children) Bill draft; documents from the Education Department & Board of Education on the problems faced by gifted Jewish Kindertransport schoolchildren progressing to higher education facing financial problems and an enquiry from the German government on the well-being of German internees.

Eyewitness accounts of the Kindertransport camps

One report by Chief General Inspector C.F. Roundell, made on 19 December 1938 describes how: "Complete sets of clothing have been given by Messrs. Marks and Spencer for every

child requiring them... Messrs. Marks and Spencer have fitted out these children... from top to toe, including gum-boots, and two members of Messrs. Marks and Spencer's staff have given their service gratis to attend in the camp."

In another report, Women's Voluntary Service Report worker N De Selincourt on 12 January 1939 describes how:

"The camp belongs to Butlins Company, who built it for the purpose of letting huts to town people in summer at the rate of about £2 a week.

"It is used as a kind of clearing station for German and Austrian Jewish and non-Aryan refugee children until arrangements can be made for their future. These children are from 5 to 18 years of age, and their parents are mostly dead or in concentration camps. The Nazi authorities are apparently only too glad to get rid of the children, with the exception of boys of seventeen and over, whom they require for labour. They come through Holland, are only allowed to bring one mark out of Germany, and come into England in batches of varying numbers."

For more information on the Kindertransport records, accounts and for a guide on how to trace your Jewish family history, visit the Findmypast website at - <http://www.findmypast.co.uk/jewish>

Debra Chatfield

Product Marketing Manager, Findmypast

dchatfield@findmypast.com

0203 326 6303

www.findmypast.co.uk

The Glebe, 6 Chapel Place, London, EC2A 3DQ

KINDERTRANSPORT LUNCHESES

15 April – Michelle Gold

13 May – Jake Wallis

10 June – Michael Sherwood

9 September BARBARA WINTON WILL BE SPEAKING AT THE STERNBERG CENTRE. FURTHER DETAILS WILL BE IN THE AJR JOURNAL AND BY POST

Views expressed in the Kindertransport Newsletter are not necessarily those of the Kindertransport Special Interest Group or of the Association of Jewish Refugees and should not be regarded as such.