



My Story
Alice Malcolm



These are Alice's words. This is her story.

'My Story' is an initiative of The Association of Jewish Refugees (AJR).

www.ajrmystory.org.uk www.ajr.org.uk

Alice Malcolm spoke to Sharon Mail to share her story. Thanks also to AJR volunteers Muireann Grealy, Shelley Hyams and Ekaterina Vyurkova.

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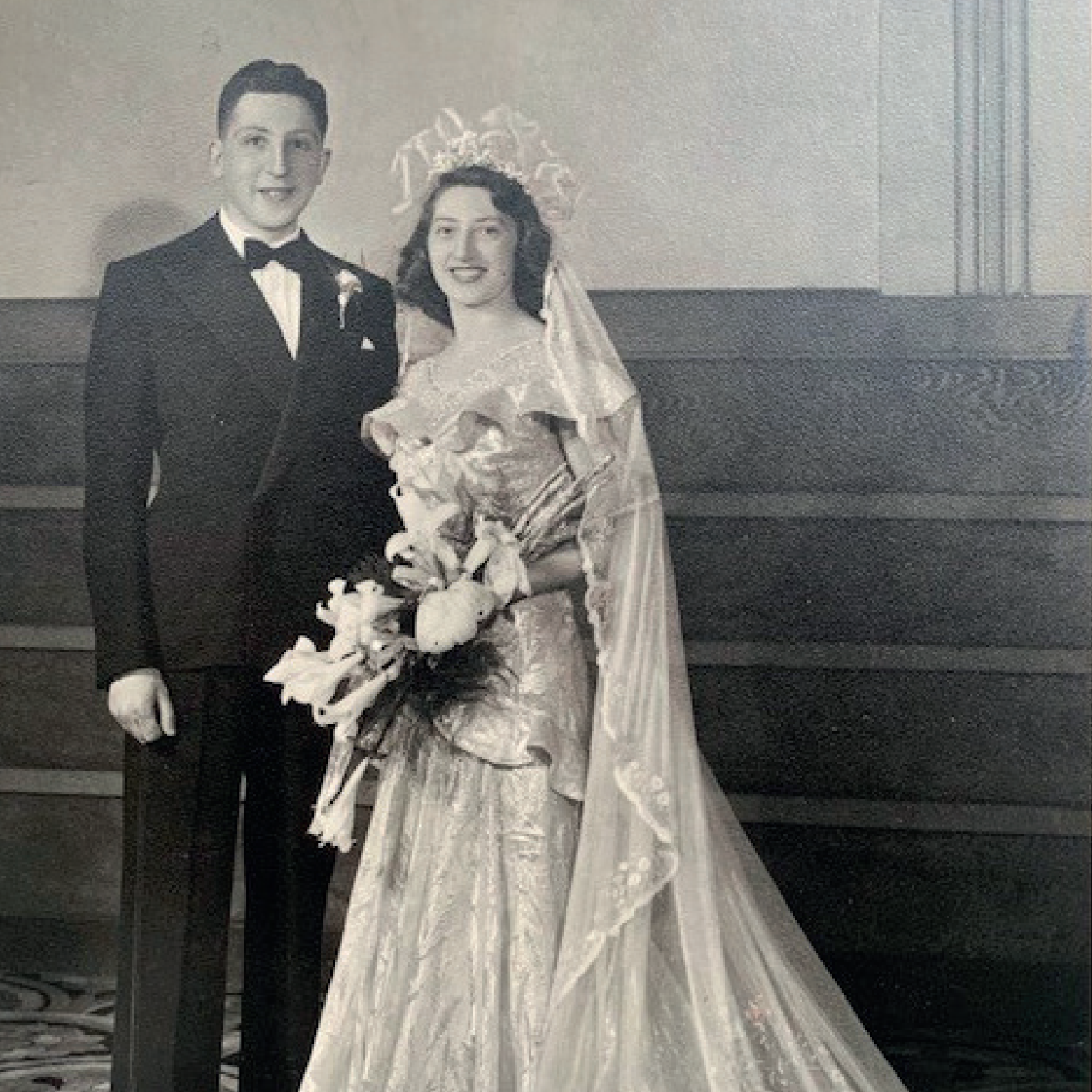
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My Story

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“One time, I was terrified being followed by a Nazi wearing an armband with a swastika. I was a very good runner, so I ran home, but I had to wait for the concierge to answer the front door and then had to get up two floors. The Nazi bided his time and then slipped in when someone else entered the building. He wanted me for no good reason.”



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My family history

I WAS BORN Alice Levyi on 28 August 1924 in Vienna. My brother, Robert, was 18 months older than me.

My father was Samuel Levyi from Istanbul. In Turkey, they said that every Jew had to change their name to be recognisable to the Turks, so he stuck an ‘i’ at the end of Levy to stand out. He was the eldest of three brothers. I never met the middle brother, Vitaly. The youngest was known as Pepo, the shortened version of Josef.

My father was the head of the family import/export business. He was very enterprising and travelled all over, even to America. After meeting my mother while travelling, he moved to Vienna and they settled in the first district, where not many Jews lived. He was older than my mum and she was very young when they got married.

At that time, Pepo was still at school in Turkey. His mother was ageing, so my father became like a father to him. Pepo moved into my parents’ flat, and my mother sent him to school and helped him with his German homework. He already knew French and Turkish. He lived with them for two years until his *Bar Mitzvah*, and then his mother claimed him back.

“ My father was Samuel Levyi from Istanbul. In Turkey, they said that every Jew had to change their name to be recognisable to the Turks, so he stuck an ‘i’ at the end of Levy to stand out. ”



My grandmother Henrietta (right) and my mother Erna, 1922



Arthur Pollak, my mother's younger brother

My mother was Ernestine, known as Erna. Her maiden name was Pollak. Her mother was born Henrietta Berger whose father was a photographer from Odrau, which was in the German Empire back then. My mother's father, Gustave Pollak, was an architect from Vienna. They settled in Vienna's second district. Gustave died young so I don't have any memories of him.

My grandmother Henrietta had a very posh apartment on the third floor of Leopoldstadt, Ferdinandstrasse 13. I remember she owned the most beautiful jewellery. Most of her furniture was kept in the loft; it was the sort of stuff that would fetch a lot of money today.

My mother had a younger brother, Arthur, who worked for a short while in a leather shop. He lived with us, but I think he wanted his own space so he moved out until he became ill and came back to be nursed. He eventually moved in with his girlfriend who was also called Alice, like me. She was a children's nurse and a single mother. Arthur and I were good friends. I used to give him his water to gargle with.

It was a very musical family. Arthur played the violin, my mother played the piano and my grandmother played the accordion. My mother had a trained singing voice and Uncle Arthur was a lovely singer. I will always remember them singing together, and I also remember our His Master's Voice gramophone with its trumpet to project the sound. ■

Everything changes

I WAS ONLY 18 months old when my father died, so I remember nothing at all about him. He took very ill on a train and was taken off to a hospital in Milan, where he died and was buried. According to the Turkish law of the time, everything he owned had to be handed over to Turkey when he died, which left my mother with no money or investments that she could draw on. Consequently we had to move out of our apartment to live with my grandmother.

My mother and grandmother shared a bedroom, and each had a big brass bed. I slept in a big cot called a *gitte*, which was made of soft string, so I didn't hurt myself while moving about. The sides would come down and it turned into a proper bed. My brother slept in a pull-out bed. Every room had a washstand with a basin and a jug.

There was one big room with a marble washstand, a red-mauve three-piece couch and chairs and a big table where my brother and I played ping-pong.



My father's headstone in Milan, Italy

“According to the Turkish law of the time, everything he owned had to be sent to Turkey when he died, which left my mother with no money or investments that she could draw on.”

I remember there was always a smell of beautiful baking in the kitchen. My grandmother did all the cooking. Her kitchen was very modern. She never had to bend down for baking, as there was an oven that stood on the fitment. Next to the oven there were four gas rings with a cupboard underneath. She had a sideboard called a credenza: the bottom was for dishes and the top was for her lovely china. You could pull out two bowls in the table: one for *milchig* (kosher foods containing milk) and the other for *fleishig* (meat and poultry). You could push them back in when you didn't want to wash up straight away, and you had a lovely table again. My brother and I had our own tables that were joined together in my grandmother's kitchen. That's where we sat and played when my mother was out working.

There was a big coal bunker in the hall, which was used to store all the stuff that came from my parents' house like some of our old carpet and office papers from my father's business.

My grandmother regularly polished her brass candlesticks, although when we moved in with her, I think she was forced to relax things and I don't think she did this as often. My grandmother favoured my brother. She used to take him on her knee and call him 'my little bird'. He screamed blue murder and she used to cosset him. My mother favoured me – I was her baby. ■

School days

I ATTENDED THE local school. I don't think we started *kindergarten* until we were about seven. My teacher, Frau Von Ankevich, taught several subjects: poetry, music, history and geography, and music. She would bring a guitar into school, which was not usual in those days.

It was freezing in the winter, and wolves came to the city looking for food. I was scared in the mornings going to school, which started at 8am. Once a week, a Jewish teacher would come into the school. I saw her crying in one of our lessons but I didn't know why. There were 40 pupils in my class, 10 of us were Jewish and we sat in one row. Things were uncomfortable for us because the other children didn't want to mix with us.

One of the girls in my class at school was called Alice Tichy. Her father was the beadle of the beautiful Orthodox synagogue in Vienna, near the Danube Canal. Mr and Mrs Tichy invited me for every *Pesach Seder* (first night of Passover meal). I was also friends at school with a Jewish girl called Liesl. Her parents were Polish and owned a second-hand shop. She played the piano and performed for big charities.

All my friends lived close by. We would go into the yard to run and play with the ball against the wall. My brother used to tease us by pulling our long, plaited hair and my friends didn't like this so they didn't come to me much: I would go to their houses to play instead.

“ Once a week, a Jewish teacher would come into the school. I saw her crying in one of our lessons but I didn't know why. ”

When we grew older, my brother began learning how to make papers and boxes. He had to live near the factory where he was training, which was in Döbling, a totally different district from where we lived with my grandmother. It was not a very posh district then, but now I believe it is one of the smartest districts of Vienna.

Once, during the school holidays, a few of us decided to take the tramcar to the old arm of the Danube. There was a jetty going out to the deep end: it was shallow in front and deep beneath. We were all standing on the jetty and somebody pushed me in from behind. I had never been taught to swim, but there I was in deep water, swallowing gallons of the Danube. One of my girlfriends tried to pull me out, but I held on to her the wrong way and pulled her down with me. Every time I went down, I swallowed more water and I tried to scream for help. Finally, my friend told me to hold her waist, and eventually she got me out. There was a first aid rescue station, and they pumped my stomach. I was sick for days. I never told my mother because she wouldn't have let me go again so I wiped it from my memory. ■

My mother

MY MOTHER WAS a beautiful woman. She had lovely rosy apples on her cheeks and I used to say: 'Mummy, you are always working indoors, so how is it that you have rosy cheeks and I look as if I came out of a flour bag?'

She was very talented and could put her hand to many things. Things were tough in the 1930s and there was a lot of unemployment, but fortunately, we had a cleaning business not far from my grandmother's home in the city. We didn't do any of the laundry or dry cleaning ourselves. A company came and collected the laundry in vans and took it out to farms: it was all dried out in the open fresh air. The laundry came back parcelled, so we never touched it. The dry cleaning came back on hangers, covered in paper.

My mother did all kinds of things to earn money when I was very small. In those days it was very difficult, especially for women, as there was a depression. At one time, she worked in a bank, which surprised my grandmother who said my mother found arithmetic difficult at school. At a different time, she worked for a charity that asked her to crochet hats to match coats that were being made for children in a factory. They were all navy-blue, heavy, warm coats. She sat crocheting in the evening. I wanted one of the hats, but every hat she made had to be sent back.

“My mother did all kinds of things to earn money when I was very small. In those days it was very difficult, especially for women, as there was a depression.”

My mother could speak French and Esperanto. Foreigners who visited Vienna for the twice-yearly exhibitions held in the Rotunda needed a translator and my mother would be asked along to work there. She wanted to learn something different, so took a quick course in an exclusive bakery. She came home with the most beautiful cakes and biscuits, which were all delicious.

We knew some performers who were travelling to Sweden and couldn't take Liesl, their white bulldog. They offered my mother payment to look after Liesl until she had her puppies and then send her to Sweden to join them. I was in love with that dog. She would sleep in my bed, and she knew all my wishes and sorrows. She was my comfort. One day, she peed on my bed – she couldn't help it. I thought I would be in terrible trouble, but I wasn't. We simply changed the sheets; the bed clothes were sent to be washed through the family business and the duvets went to the dry cleaners.

Liesl had her puppies and she sat in a big cage, looking up at us. One puppy was so weak she couldn't attach herself to her mother to feed, so I used my dolly's bottle to feed the puppy until it grew. When Liesl recovered, Mummy had a big cage made to transport the dogs to Sweden. I wasn't allowed to keep a puppy as my mother and my grandmother had enough to deal with. ■

My mother leaves

MY MOTHER WORKED in the Social Democrats office. Her non-Jewish boss was aware that the Nazi Party was establishing itself and implored my mother to leave as soon as possible. He told her that no one must ever know that she was there, that he'd burn everything that related to her and would claim that he didn't know her and that she didn't know him.

There was a lot of talk in the house about Germany and the Jews – it was endless. One day in 1936, when I arrived home from school, my mother told me she had to leave within days. She took me by the hand and told me never to repeat what she was going to do. We went to a big paper shop where she bought the London Times to search for job positions advertised in Britain. After this, I remember walking up a winding circular staircase to an apartment. My mother told a man there that she was looking for a job in London and he said that he would write the necessary letters for her in English.

After that, we found a photographer to take her passport photo. We went home first for her to change into a nice dress and coat. After she had the photo taken, we both went home and she told her mother what we'd done that day. Mother had to wait for an affidavit with her new passport and copies of her birth certificate. Then it wasn't long before she bought a ticket to go to London.

“ One day in 1936, when I arrived home from school, my mother told me she had to leave within days. She took me by the hand and told me never to repeat what she was going to do. ”

Before she left, she took my brother and me out on a Sunday morning. It was a very religious morning for Catholics and the streets were busy. I wanted to visit the big amusement park but instead we walked to the woods to pick violets. There were mainly chestnut trees there, and the smell of the woodland was absolutely gorgeous. She and my brother collected lovely bunches of violets and I had a miserable few. My mother asked me why I didn't apply myself and to look under the leaves where the violets were. After this we walked to Grandma's house.

My mother wouldn't allow any of us to see her off. She went with a small trunk, because my grandmother told her this was going to be just a temporary thing.

I didn't have to tell anyone why Mummy was leaving. A lot of people were leaving at that time, because they didn't like what was going on in Germany. I told people that she had a good job in London and when I finished school, I would join her there.

It was very tough after my mother left. I was devastated. There was no more beautiful baking and we had no money. When everyone at school made gifts and wrote cards for Mother's Day, I burst out crying. I did the same on Father's Day. We had to rely on the money my mother earned in England and sent over to us and my grandmother would often pawn her beautiful jewellery on Praterstrasse. That street was where the *jugend* (youth) would gather to practice their marching when the Nazis came to power in 1938. I wanted to get involved and joined in with their marching once, but nobody saw me. ■

My mother's British life

THE JOB APPLICATION letters my mother had asked for help with back in Austria had paid off. When she arrived in London she had already secured a domestic job that had been advertised in the London Times newspaper and was hired by a family as a cook. We didn't know that there were Nazis in London, but these people were Nazis. They were delighted to get her, as they could work her to death, which they nearly did. She had the *sechel* (common sense) to go into the village of Northwood on the one day she had off. She went into a shop to ask if they had any job vacancies. It was an agency for domestic service and they found her a job in Northwood with people whose name was Binning.

The Binnings told her she shouldn't go back to Vienna but my brother and I were still there with our grandmother who was looking after us and Mummy was desperate to try to get us out.

In 1937, my mother wrote to her friends, a non-Jewish couple, in Vienna explaining her situation and told them she had saved up enough money to visit them. In those days there was privacy in a letter. When she arrived she told them the news reported in the British papers about what was happening to the Jews in Germany.

She returned to Vienna twice but we were forbidden to speak to or meet her. I remember having to stay on the other side of the pavement and make no sign of recognition. My mother having worked for the Social Democrats office and also being Jewish would have made it too dangerous for us to be seen together. ■

My experiences under the Nazis

I REMEMBER THE night of 11 March 1938 when my grandmother was in bed listening to the radio with her earphones on. She said that the Austrian Chancellor Schuschnigg had been arrested by the Nazis. He had struggled to prevent the Nazi takeover of Austria. His last words before he was forced to resign were: 'God Bless Austria'.

The next day, on 12 March, the Germans marched into Vienna and this is something I will never ever forget. Our house was set back from the house next door, so the wall of our neighbour's house blocked the view of the road. I had to lean right out from my bedroom window to see.

Our shop was trashed. All the glass in the windows was gone. The only things that remained had swastikas on them. I saw Jews being forced to climb the monuments in the streets to clean them with toothbrushes. I was so innocent I wanted to do it for an old man and I nearly got beaten up. He shoed me away and I cried and ran.

I never heard of the German Nazis making people scrub monuments with a toothbrush. I never heard of anyone doing that except the Austrians in Vienna. They hated us. The Austrians were the best Nazis in the whole of Europe. I don't know why they hated the Jews so much, but the story was that times were hard in the 1930s and the Jews could make a dollar, had savings and didn't have to drink all that cheap wine, like the Austrians.

“Our shop was trashed. All the glass in the windows was gone. The only things that remained had swastikas on them.”

One time, I was terrified being followed by a Nazi wearing an armband with a swastika. I was a very good runner, so I ran home, but I had to wait for the concierge to answer the front door and then had to get up two floors. The Nazi bided his time and then slipped in when someone else entered the building. He wanted me for no good reason. I ran three steps at a time to get away and when I reached the second floor fortunately a door opened and he ran away.

After this incident and after seeing a Jewish man hanging by his own leather belt, I wrote to my mother and told her that I would do away with myself rather than face that. My mother took that letter to the Jewish Refugee Office in London. They said to write and tell me that there was a permit on its way. On the strength of that, I queued for a passport every morning with my friend Liesl. She didn't get a passport because she didn't have a letter like I did. I didn't get a passport either, though. They said I wasn't an Austrian subject and therefore couldn't get an Austrian passport. They told me to go to the Turks.

I went to the Turkish office all on my own at only 13 years old. They shouted at me in Turkish and, when I evidently didn't understand, they asked if I spoke Turkish. I said no, and they asked if I'd ever been to Turkey. I said no. They said I couldn't get a Turkish passport then, as my father wasn't alive and so Turkey had nothing to do with me.

I was left not knowing where to go. Eventually, I learnt that there was such a thing as a stateless passport and so I applied for one of those and that's how I got out so quickly. ■

Uncle Arthur

WHEN I WAS leaving Vienna, Uncle Arthur came to the station with me and carried my little case. He put me on my train and I got a corner seat in my carriage, so I could wave to him. As the train left I saw that there was a Nazi on either side of him.

He never got home. His girlfriend and my grandmother found out afterwards that he was in a Viennese police cell, where Jews were held before being loaded onto trucks. Shortly after, the Nazis went to my grandmother's house and took my brother. They put him in the same cell as my uncle. My uncle took him to the very back of the cell and said if they stayed there, maybe the Nazis wouldn't get them. He told my brother to tell the Nazis that he was Turkish so they wouldn't take him. ■

“ He never got home. His girlfriend and my grandmother found out afterwards that he was in a Viennese police cell, where Jews were held before being loaded onto trucks. ”

My journey to Britain

I HAD A direct ticket to England, as I didn't want to have to stop anywhere. My grandmother sent my trunk ahead of me to London but it was never seen again, nobody knew what happened to it. My grandmother sent a telegram to my mother telling her that I had left but she never told her that her brother Arthur hadn't come home after taking me to the train station.

Mine was a regular train for ordinary people, but all people who were Christian had to wear the armband of the swastika. When the guards saw my stateless passport and that my uncle was a Jew, because he wasn't wearing the swastika, they guided me to a particular carriage, which was pretty empty. The whistle blew and the train puffed out.

In my little suitcase, I had a beret to give to my mother as a gift, sandwiches and a bottle of water. I had pipe cleaners in my hair, to make curls. I had a hat and had sewn ribbons onto it, so it would sit on top of my head and cover the pipe cleaners. There were three other people sitting with me. I don't know if one of the women was half-Jewish, but she took her swastika off when we crossed the border. Most on that journey were refugees traveling with domestic service visas. The woman next to me had a boyfriend in Vienna and hoped that he would be able to come and join her one day. There wasn't much conversation. Everybody was filled with sorrow.

“ My grandmother sent a telegram to my mother telling her that I had left but she never told her that her brother Arthur hadn't come home after taking me to the station. ”

When the train got to Aachen, Germany, the Nazis were waiting there. They shouted: '*Alle Juden raus!*' which means 'All Jews out!' I didn't get out. They didn't board the train, but many people did go out and some in our carriage didn't come back.

I wasn't frightened during the journey. I was happy when we got to Aachen because I knew that soon I wouldn't be in Germany anymore. I had my stateless passport and knew to say that I wasn't Austrian. Once we left Aachen, I could breathe, but I thought of the family I had left behind and that was hard.

The train moved on to Belgium. There was no disruption. I got off the train in Calais and dragged my little case to the big harbour, which was full of ships. I hadn't a clue which one I was supposed to be on. I decided to go where most of the refugees were going. I got on a ship and the harbourmaster was just about to close the gate when they took another look at my passport. He told me in French that I was on the wrong ship. I had learnt some French at school and fortunately I understood. He pointed to the next ship along.

I dragged myself to the next ship – it felt like a long way with my little legs! I told myself that wherever this ship was going, I would go there. There weren't so many people trying to get to Britain at that time: a lot of people went to America in 1938.

The journey to Dover wasn't very long. The gates were still locked when the harbourmaster went round the ship asking for someone called Alice Levee. I had very little English, but I heard my name. I never answered. My grandmother had warned me not to speak to anyone, so I didn't. After a while, he opened the gates and everybody got off except me. I still have to be told where to go, even today. I like to be last; it is ingrained in me. ■

Reunited with my mother

WHEN I FINALLY got off the boat, I spotted Mummy and her best friend from Vienna, Auntie Ilonka, who had nursed me on her knee. They were so relieved. It had taken so long for everybody to disembark and the harbourmaster had told her I wasn't on the ship. She had sent a telegram to my grandmother to check if I had got a later train. We caught the train to Northwood, where my mother was working for the Binnings. I was allowed to stay there with her. Mummy shared a room with the parlourmaid so we had to share her narrow bed, but we managed.

Mrs Binning was a beautiful woman – a real English type, tall and slim, grey-white hair and very charming and polished. When I got there, she made me welcome and I shook her hand and she started to laugh because I didn't let go of her hand. The Binnings had two sons and a daughter. The sons were studying medicine. The daughter was called Margaret; she was such a good person – you could see it in her face. She was training to be a teacher. ■

I move to London

THE BINNINGS HAD a parlourmaid and a full-time gardener who would come every morning with a basket full of vegetables. I only stayed the weekend at the house and then Mrs Binning said to her younger son, Donald: 'Cut plenty of roses and put them in the car and take Alice to London to her new digs. They are for the lady she is going to stay with.' This was Mrs Suede, a Jewish woman from Manchester who was renting out rooms in Kensal Rise.

The Inter-Aid Committee paid for my schooling but Mrs Suede was to feed me. She made sandwiches for me to take in a little bag to school. Later on she took a 16-year-old German girl, Ursula, who joined me in my room. Mrs Suede had two sons, one called Ian who lived in our house and was a film projectionist. The other son had tuberculosis and had spells of illness. He lived in Manchester and only came at weekends. He was a lovely pianist.

There was a little garden at the back of the house, and I remember Ursula asked what I was doing there. I told her that I had to learn English as no one was teaching me. I had been told to use a dictionary and learn with a book: a fairy story my teacher had given me.

Ursula had little short black gym pants and a short top. She told me to wear something similar and one Sunday morning we marched through the kitchen to the back yard for exercise. Mrs Suede was not very thrilled. It was not the 'done' thing to expose yourself in London but I didn't know that. She threatened to ring the Aid committee to send Ursula somewhere else so we stopped exercising.

“The Inter-Aid Committee paid for my schooling but Mrs Suede was to feed me. She made sandwiches for me to take in a little bag to school.”

I went to my mother every Sunday with my school uniform that had to be washed and ironed and dry enough for me to take back for the next day. I didn't get to spend the whole weekend there, only the Sunday. The Sunday train only went once an hour but I often walked from Kensal Rise to Willesden Green to catch the train. The Binnings never begrudged Mummy putting something on a plate for me. They were good people.

There was a little group of refugees from Vienna in Northwood and Pinner, all in domestic service. One of them, Lotte, was my mother's cousin and she was about to get married. Where Auntie Ilonka was working, the people were often away at the weekend and they told Ilonka she could have friends to stay, so I went there sometimes.

During my time in London I visited my friend Liesl who had arrived on the *Kindertransport* and was now working at her family's hairdresser's shop. Soon after my visit, I was evacuated. We kept in touch by letter for a while but we never saw each other again.

The last letter I received from her was during the early days of my nursing career. She told me she had joined the ENSA (Entertainments National Service Association). She worked entertaining troops when they came to London. She also worked in a sewing factory making khaki uniforms and developed a very sore arm from working with the very heavy material. She applied for a scholarship from the Royal Academy of Music and despite her very sore arm, she practiced for three hours after work every night and won the scholarship. She often played for audiences and one French resistance officer would always come with his hand on his heart to just look at her and listen. Apparently she married him and they moved to America. I never heard from her again. ■

School days in England

I STRUGGLED TO learn English, because the school I attended was a trade school, and they didn't teach standard subjects like English. The only thing I was taught at this school was cookery, as domestic service was the only trade I was allowed to go into.

As I was so small I was made to stand at the front of the queue the class had to form on the Monday morning, when every class marched into the hall. The teachers stood on the platform with the head teacher in the middle. It was good in the respect that I could hear what they were saying, even if I couldn't understand it.

After assembly it was time to start preparing lunch for the teachers. We were taught how to serve it nicely on a silver-looking platter. I always remember how the chops had to be arranged with the parsley in between and the vegetables on the side. Mrs Titwood was the cookery teacher and, one day, she gave me a bottle of milk and asked me to measure some out. I didn't know how much to measure. I stood the bottle on the scales and they realised that I didn't understand.

I loved to bake. When it came to December, we made Christmas cake. I would beat and beat the margarine. I gave it all I had and mine was the nicest cake. There was fruit and cherries and almonds in it. Another day we were given ground almonds and egg white and made marzipan and rolled it out to make it very even. Another day was the icing. That was my forte, because I could decorate it and art could come into it. I excelled in that.

To my surprise, at Christmas we were all allowed to take our cakes home. Naturally, I took mine to Mrs Binning. My mother was thrilled that I had made such a beautiful cake. It won first prize and I was very glad that I could show a thank you to the Binnings.

There was a parents' day at school and in came this lady in a grey suit, perfectly tailored, with a fox fur draped over her. I didn't recognise my own mother! She looked a million dollars. She had brought her suit and bag and shoes with her from Vienna in 1936. I won the school prize and she wanted me to shine. My mother got a little tea cloth and embroidered it to give to Mrs Titwood. There wasn't a thing she couldn't do. ■

Robert arrives

MY MOTHER WAS worried about my brother. She went to London to find a relative of the parents of my friend, Liesl. They initially offered to act as guarantor to enable Robert a place on the *Kindertransport* but later said they couldn't afford to help her in any way because they were poor and had just started a hairdresser's business.

My mother decided to ask Mrs Binning if she could loan her the £100 needed to bring my brother over to safety, which was the equivalent of £10,000 today. She said she would work this money off and Mrs Binning agreed to this. So, my mother pawned her life. She was getting less than £1 a week in those days. Employers to those with a domestic visa didn't have to actually part with any money; they only needed to show the government they had £100 to their name. Providing them with a job was enough to guarantee that they wouldn't become a financial burden on the state. Even so, Mummy felt the need to work for the family for years to pay off the debt she owed them for helping my brother to escape Germany. I used to say to her, 'Mummy, you can get a different job. You don't have to stay a domestic. You can pay off the debt.' She said she wouldn't do that because they had helped to save her son.

Robert arrived in London. At that time people were being recruited for jobs because war was imminent but I don't know whether or not he came on a domestic permit. He arrived by train to the Binning house. Mummy wouldn't let me come to see him when he arrived. She gave him a bath and said he had terrible wounds on his back, but later on he said that wasn't true. I think she tried to blot those things out.

He stayed in London throughout the bombing and lived in a rented room. He did all kinds of things to make money. He dug Anderson shelters that were half buried in the ground with earth heaped on top. ■



My brother, Robert

War is declared and I am evacuated

IT WASN'T LONG until war broke out and the bottom dropped out of my life. My grandmother had been writing to me saying: 'Get me out', and how terrible it was and how they had nothing. She had moved in with her sister and must have been there a while when they were taken away to the camps and murdered. When we went to Vienna a few years ago, my son Adrian found their names listed in the synagogue's book of victims. The Rabbi said that my grandmother's name was recorded twice. The first time was where she lived and the second from where they *ferschlepped* her (dragged her away).

When war was declared, I ran into the street for the newspaper. I could hear them shouting, 'War!' I cried when I heard the news. It was a terrible time for such a lot of people. We were very quickly evacuated.

School decided who went where. I was sent by bus and train with a girl called Susan who was a proper Cockney. She was even smaller than I was; her hat was always perched at the back of her head, and she had rosy cheeks, and was lively and full of fun. We were to stay together. I took my school papers but didn't think I needed anything else. I didn't know what was going to happen, but at least I could show them what education I already had.

We were taken to Luton. Everybody found accommodation. I think that the British were wonderful to take in total strangers. Mrs Titwood was to find the people who were volunteering to take in evacuated children. Eventually she found somebody who had a double bed, and Susan and I went there. We got settled in. When night time came we were told to go to bed. In came the landlady with two apples, one she gave to Susan and she said to her, 'This is to clean your teeth. Now, get out of the bed and kneel on the floor and say your prayers, repeat after me...'

Then she came to me; she gave me the apple, and asked me to kneel down. I said: 'I'm sorry, I'm Jewish.' 'What?' she said. 'We are at war and a Jew from there is here! You are out in the morning.' I thought, 'Where am I going to now?'

Morning came, although I think I was up all night. I had my gas mask on and at about 11 o'clock, Mrs Titwood arrived. She said to me quietly, 'I had a terrible hard time finding you somewhere. Nobody wanted a Jew.'

I wasn't surprised. My mother started off in a Nazi house. I was the only Jew in the class. The school in London only took one refugee to each trade and then I wasn't allowed to choose anything but domestic.

Mrs Titwood found a house where I would be the only pupil taken in. They were a younger couple with a small child called Pamela. The husband was a traveller selling biscuits and they were very, very nice people. The lady had arthritis badly, hands and feet. In the evening, they sat round the fireplace and I could sit there. I was allowed to help in the kitchen.

Every morning I had to go to the park, no matter how bad the weather was, to meet my entire class under the bandstand. We were given a ball of wool and we had to knit gloves. I hated knitting and I still hate it to this day. I knitted the Austrian way, but I was told to knit the other way. I never managed it. We only spent one day a week at the local school.

I asked Mrs Titwood if there was a Jewish community I could join. She found out that there was a small one which held a Saturday morning service in a small house. I went there. Nobody spoke to me. It was nearly all men and I think now that they were probably businessmen who went there at the weekend to get away from London. ■

I go into service

I think I had a full year of getting schlepped about. The Government was in constant contact with the headmistress Miss Armstrong and Mrs Titwood. Miss Armstrong contacted Mrs Titwood and told her that there had been a call from titled people in Hampshire – Admiral and Lady Meade-Featherstonehaugh – who needed help in the kitchen because they were entertaining the Queen at the weekend. She told Mrs Titwood to send me.

So, I packed my schoolbag and was taken to London. From there, I was to meet Lady Meade's daughter, Miss Jane. She took me to the stately home, which was between Southampton and Petersfield. I was put into the basement where the big kitchen was. The stove was huge and had to be blackened and brassed. The cooker was fired with wood. There I was, using what I had learnt at school, cleaning vegetables – I can't tell you how many baskets came in. The best, of course, was for the table that the butler had to set. It was beautiful.

The loft was turned into servants' accommodation. I slept there alongside the kitchenmaid, the lady's maid and the parlourmaid. One night from the loft I saw German planes on their way to bomb the harbour at Southampton: no lights were allowed at night during the war, the windows were blackened, but you could get a wee slit and I could see the swastikas on the planes and I gave them a wee curse.

I was there for what felt like forever. We took off half-days on a Sunday in turn. I would go to the cinema in the village of Uppark. It was a long walk, but it was worth it because I could learn English from the films.

Finally, I wrote to the Jewish Inter-Aid Committee and said that it would soon be a year that I had been in service and I didn't really want to remain so for my life. My mother, in the meantime, had gone to Scotland and I would like to be near enough to visit her. Also, it was around the Jewish New Year holidays and I wanted to observe them so I asked if they could please find me somewhere to go. I posted the letter and they passed it on to Woburn House, for Jewish refugees.

I received a reply from a lady who said that there was only a small Jewish community, but she knew of a Jewish family who held a service in their house. She told me to contact that family and so it was arranged that on the High Holidays I went there. ■

Moving to Scotland and becoming a nursing assistant

WHEN THE WAR broke out, Mrs Binning, who came from Glasgow, told my mother they were not staying in Northwood: they already had a house in Pollokshields in Glasgow and offered to take my mother with them.

I missed my mother and I wrote to her to ask if there was a possibility for me to go there. She found an office run by a German refugee woman who was trying to place refugees to come up to Glasgow. I explained the situation to her that I didn't want to go into domestic service, but I couldn't get into the class at the polytechnic for nursing, because they were only allowed one Jew in each class.

She said: 'If you go in for nursing, it is like joining the forces. You can't come out of it. I suggest that you don't start training. If you go into a nursing home, you are not tied to the same laws and rules, so I suggest you try that.' She helped me get an interview at a nursing home called Redlands in the West End of Glasgow, where the patients, doctors and nurses were all ladies.

I told the matron I had no experience and my English wasn't very good, but she wanted a pair of hands. She said I could start right away which was good news to me and I accepted on the spot. I never even asked what I would get paid, or if I would get paid. I was just happy I had a job to go to that was just a couple of a tram rides to my mother in Pollokshields.

Medical terms didn't seem strange to me. We were an intelligent family but the English was very different in the hospital compared to school, and I didn't realise that they used a lot of slang. They used to call the place 'this joint'. On one particular day, there was a lady who was dying and I had to take some soup and feed her with it. I said, 'This joint is sending some soup,' and I got such a telling off. That woman never got better care. I washed her and cleaned her, and I thought that she would get better if I took care of her. She did live on a bit, but not for very long.

The nursing home provided me with accommodation and gradually I was working everybody's duty but I didn't notice. The others were sitting in the kitchen saying: 'Alice will do this,' and 'Alice will do that'. I did what I was told. I didn't know that I could have had a cup of tea, but I got nothing at all.

I became unwell with pain in my feet and my legs. I couldn't bend my feet due to acute rheumatism. Then I developed a sore throat and a temperature, and I was put into a bed. At night time I heard them discussing me in the corridor. I was afraid to say my throat was sore because in those days you had to pay for healthcare. I had nothing to pay for it. I was in a patient's bed and I was getting my meals and I was afraid. My room-mate Miss Blue came and said: 'Don't worry, they won't throw you out; they need you fit to work. But when you are able, after my shift I will give you treatment in my room.' Unbeknown to me, I had a friend.

Mummy and her friend visited me and they were not upset that I wasn't well because I was being taken care of. Later on, I did get better, thank goodness, and Miss Blue took me to her room and helped me to walk a bit better.

Eventually I was put onto night duty and day duty and then I was shifted to the maternity ward. That was an experience. I had to help with confinements. I knew nothing whatsoever, but they told me what I had to do. The staff were not what you would expect; many of them had head lice, but there was always a pair of hands to help me. ■

I make a friend for life

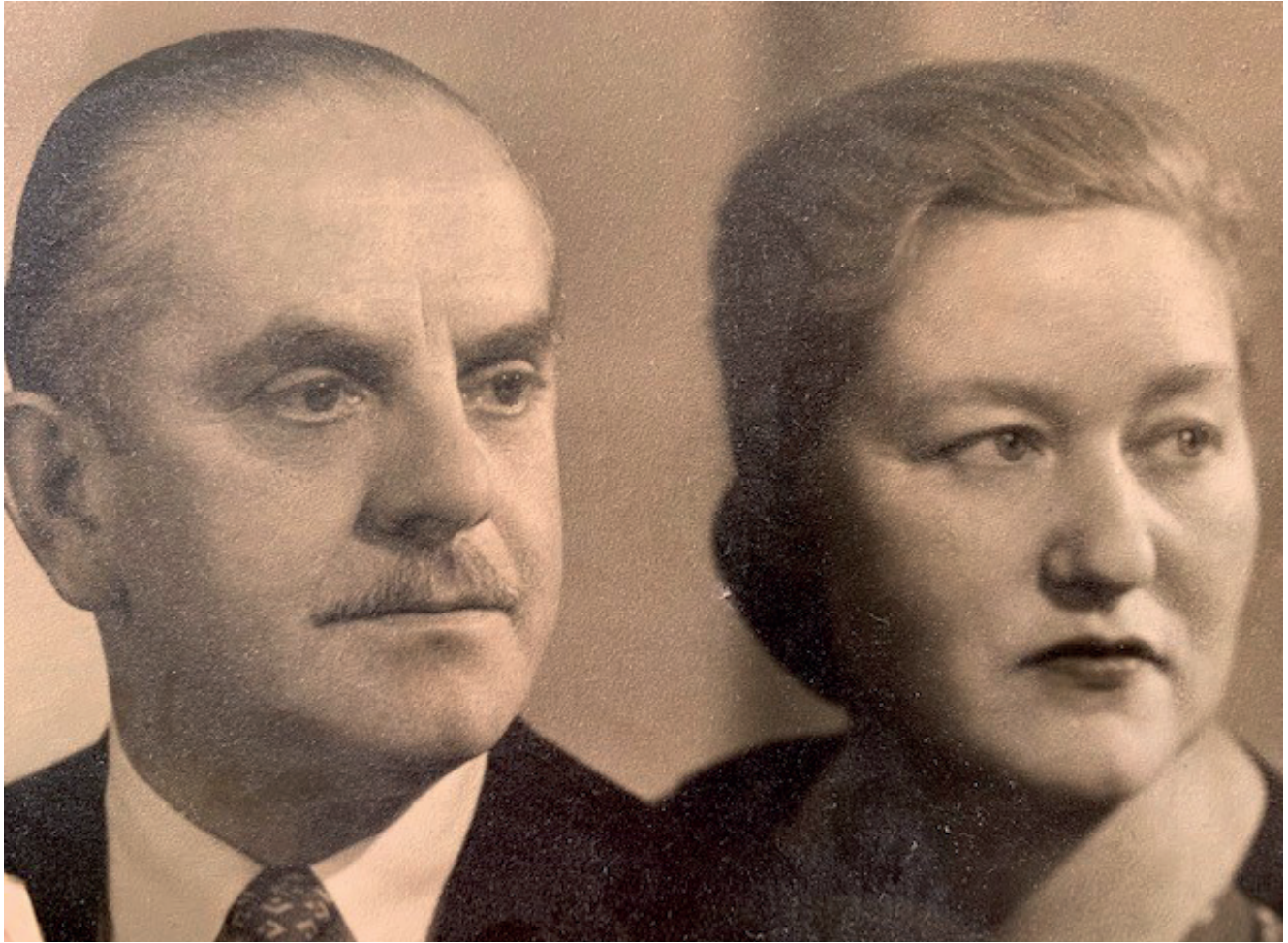
IN THE GYNAECOLOGICAL ward I got shifted about where I was needed, I was very willing . There was a beautiful lady patient with blonde hair drawn off her face and piercing blue eyes. In later years I discovered that her mother was Egyptian – that explained her features. She spoke beautiful English with a very posh accent. In the evening, a gentleman came to visit her with their son who was the double of his mum, with big ears and blue eyes.

One day this lady said to me: ‘You’re a Jewish girl, aren’t you? I am Jewish, too. All my life I have been called a *shiksa* (non-Jewish woman).’ Her name was Esther Green. She said she would like me to visit her after she left the hospital. That is how I met Esther and Walter, and their son Harvey, who eventually took me under their wing.

My mother and I visited Esther many times. They were Londoners. Walter had been sent to Scotland to make fur linings for the airmen’s jackets and Esther helped him with that. She was a designer and dressmaker, she made clothes for performers in London and she could sew anything.

Esther helped and guided me. She encouraged me to apply to do my nurse training at a hospital. My mother also helped. She was still working for the Binnings; while out walking the Binnings’ Scottish terrier in the evenings she met an Austrian lady who was walking her employer’s dog. Mummy happened to say to her that I was making a student nurse application to a hospital and I would need references, one from a doctor and one from an MP or someone of similar status. This lady said: ‘My brother is a doctor in Stobhill Hospital. His name is Solomon Horovitz.’ Mummy said: ‘That’s a doctor from the Praterstrasse in Vienna!’ The lady said: ‘I’ll tell Sol about your daughter, no problem.’

I applied for Stobhill and I met up with Dr Horovitz beforehand. He advised me to schmooze the matron Viennese-style at my interview. And that’s exactly what I did. She asked me why I had chosen Stobhill, so I said I had heard that it was the finest run hospital in Glasgow.



Walter and Esther Green

The date was set for me to start on 1 September 1942. When I told Miss Paton, my supervisor at Redlands, what my plan was and that I wanted to leave in two weeks, she nearly exploded. She called me a traitor! I didn't know what to say. I was nearly in tears right there in front of her. But I was not going to let her see me getting browbeaten. I was coming up for 18 and there was a war on. So, I duly left and shared my mother's bed again at the Binnings'. ■



Me and Esther, 1947



Left to right: my mother, Buba (Esther Green's mother), Walter, Esther and their son Harvey

Becoming a trained nurse and midwife

I REALLY DIDN'T want to continue sharing Mummy's bed again because I couldn't think straight there. I knew that I needed to use these few weeks to get ready for my studies.

Esther told me there was an English lady, Golda Gordon, who had married a Scotsman. Mrs Gordon's mother, Mrs Levy, ran the household for her daughter and they were looking for a nanny for their baby, Seymour. I went along to their house in Merrylee and got the job where I stayed until I started nursing. I never had a day to myself. I loved it. Time went very quickly. The weather was nice and I would walk with the pram to Esther and Walter's house in Seyton Avenue, Giffnock.

At the initiation at Stobhill, we were told that for the first month we would be in the wards at weekends and at school during the week. The girl beside me, Jean, was from New Aberdour, Aberdeenshire. Her parents organised dances and functions to raise money to help Jewish people coming out of Europe. Her father was headmaster of the school there. He had wanted her to become a doctor but she fought hands and feet against it. She said: 'I don't know what to do, but I'll take up nursing to please you.'

She sat with me and shortly afterwards said to me: 'Alice, you seem to have a knowledge of the medical terms and I have none of that. Will you be my friend?' I said: 'Yes, but I want you to know that I am Jewish.' She said: 'That's fine with me, but not everybody would say that. Don't keep on about it, because they don't like that.' I said: 'But that's what I am, Jean, and I don't want you to get criticised for being friends with me.'

Jean found the studying very difficult and unfortunately, she failed. You were not normally allowed to have a resit, but her father wrote to the hospital and they gave her a second chance. I worked harder with her than before, and we got friendlier and friendlier.

We decided to make plans to move to New Zealand together because the grass seemed greener over there. Her father had written to the hospital we were to work in and asked if there was a Jewish community there. There was and they were thrilled they were getting another member.

In the meantime, Jean took ill with a nasty throat condition and at that age it wasn't easy to have a tonsillectomy and she was very ill with it. As time went on, I began my midwifery training and she was behind with that, so we were kind of separated workwise.

Training at Stobhill was four years, three general nursing and a year for midwifery. When I was about to finish, I made enquiries as to what kind of work was open for me. There was a baby boom in all the nursing homes and everyone was looking for trained staff so I took on a job as a trained sister and Jean was just starting training for midwifery.

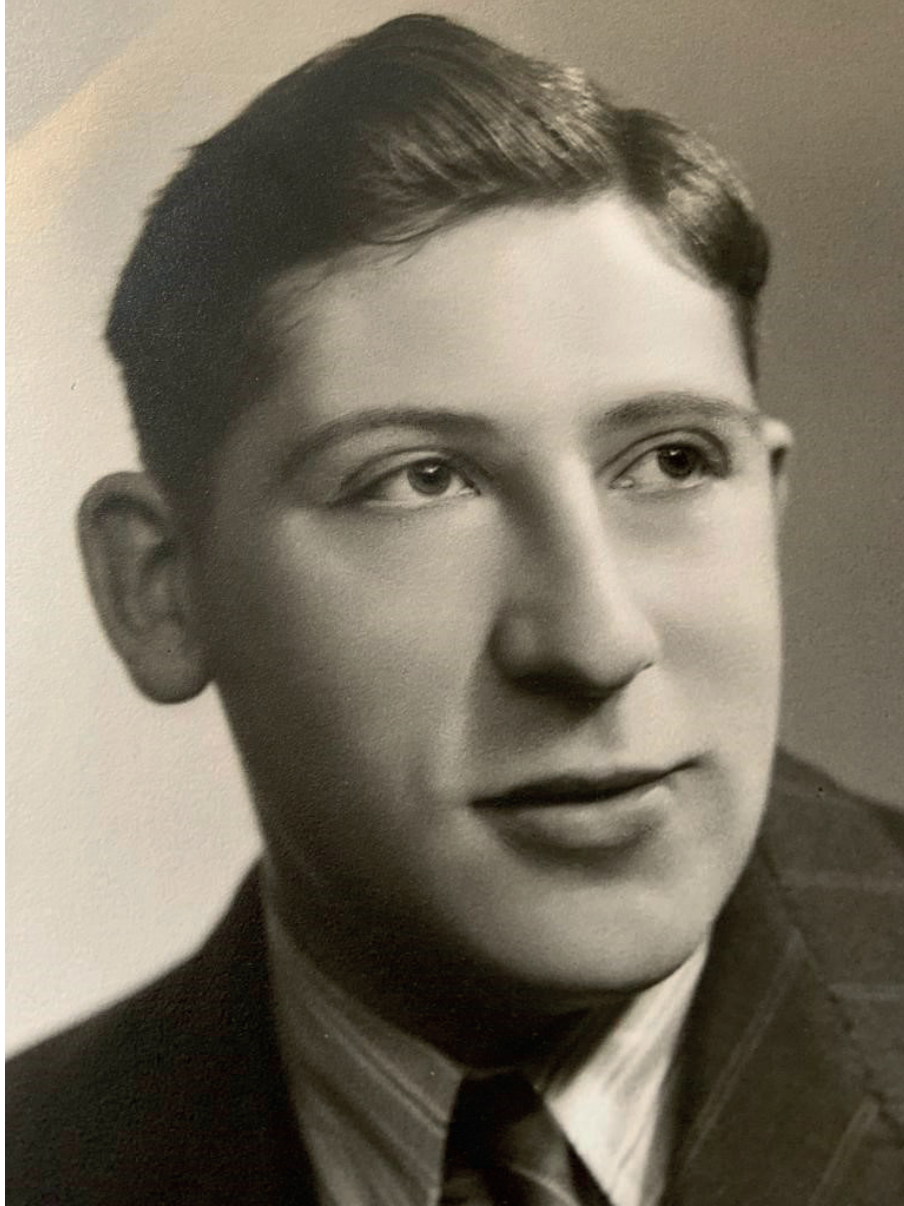
I lived with Esther and Walter and walked to the Millbrae Hospital for my work. When they went on holiday Esther used to say: 'I don't want you to feel responsible for the house.' So I used to stay in the nurses' section then.

Like everywhere, we were completely short-staffed. There was no resident doctor and nurses were not yet allowed to do a delivery themselves, although we knew how. If there was a complication a doctor would come, but in the nursing home the patients employed a doctor for the confinement.

Once Jean qualified, she became a sister in Stobhill. She did go to New Zealand, and she met her fate on the boat over there: she met her husband who had come from Greenock, he was a chiropodist and they opened two shoe shops there. They bought a house and then another, and they adopted two girls. Both girls did very well: one became a farmer. Jean helped on the farm and worked in the shop. ■



I am standing in between my fellow nurses at Stobhill Hospital, circa 1945



Cyril

Meeting my husband

IN MY OFF-duty time I used to look at the Jewish Echo and see what was going on in the South Side of Glasgow. That's how I learned that the Tudor Ballroom held Jewish dances. While Jean was busy training, I went there and met Cyril Mendelsohn. We loved dancing together. Cyril loved the tango but he had two left feet. He was tall and handsome and all you could wish for.

He had trained in Glasgow at the Radio College and was a radio officer in the Merchant Navy. He won many medals at sea.

Esther and Cyril's mother were both members of the committee that was trying to build a proper synagogue in Giffnock. I got to know people in the Jewish community, which was something I had always wanted; to be mixing with other Jewish people.

Cyril seemed a bit unreliable. He didn't write to me when he was at sea. He said to me times were so dangerous on the ships, he didn't want to tie me or himself down. So I went on other dates. I had three boyfriends at the same time! One was from Vienna, and there was also a Polish-Jewish refugee doctor who was extremely interested in me. He kept telling me how his parents would have been pleased, but he was actually in love with a non-Jewish girl who had emigrated to Canada.

“We loved dancing together. Cyril loved the tango but he had two left feet. He was tall and handsome and all you could wish for.”

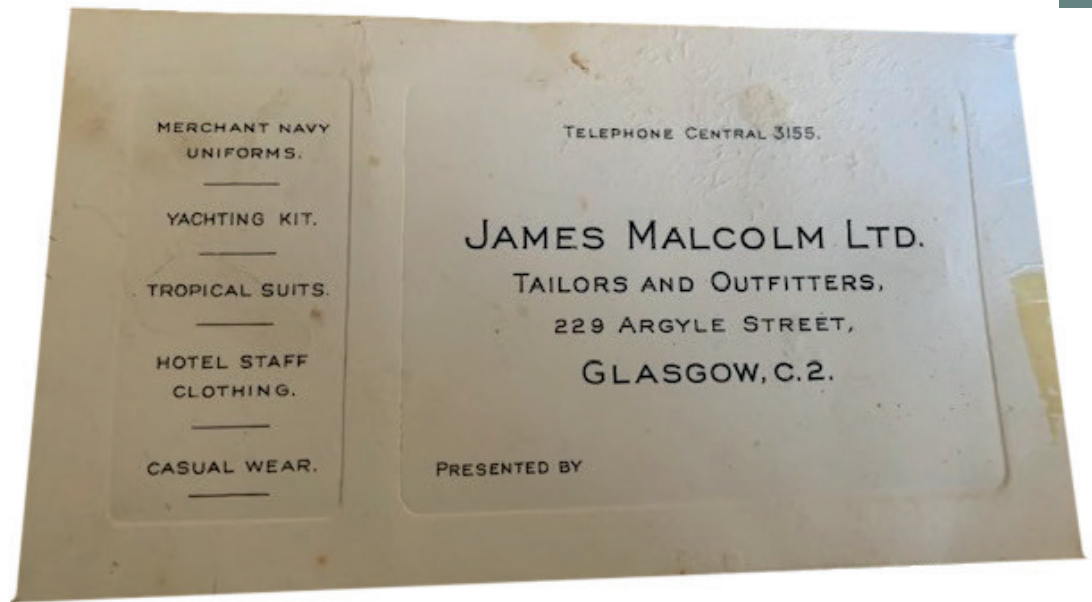


On our engagement, 1947

One night I went with him to a Jewish Institute play. Cyril was there as well, on his own, and I introduced them to each other and then I left with the young man I was with. The next day the phone rang at Esther's house. It was Cyril, asking to come over to chat with me. So, he came and we chatted all together, then Esther and Walter left the room and he had one question for me: 'Why are you going out with this guy?' I said: 'Why shouldn't I go out with him? I don't have a contract with you.' He said: 'That's it, let's have a contract. Don't go out with anyone else anymore. I'll go home and tell my folks we are engaged.' And that's how it was.

We went on our first proper date - I borrowed a dress and we met at the corner of Bath Street. We had cocktails first at the North British Hotel followed by dinner. I was so proud of him with his lovely big brown eyes. After dinner, we caught the number 3 tram to the Plaza Ballroom. It was a wonderful evening. I knew he meant business and the story of the romance continued.

By this time Cyril had started working for his dad, at the naval and gentlemen's outfitters Malcolm's in Argyle Street, alongside his brother. But there were three people trying to make a living out of one shop. So his father opened a second shop, a tropical outfitters in West Nile Street. Cyril's shop sat underneath the railway station which was very noisy and very dusty, and when the doors were closed rats would come up from the station. When they opened the shop in the morning, everything had to be brushed down from the mess left behind from the rats. ■





Our wedding day, 1 July 1948

Married life begins

ON 1 JULY 1948, I married my heartthrob, Cyril. We were married in Giffnock *Shul*, by Rabbi Rubinstein. My mother came, along with my brother who was living in London and working for the London Electricity Board at the time. Auntie Ilonka also came with her nephew who was a child refugee.

Esther dressed me like a princess. I bought my own material with her help: silver lamé. The dress she bought me for my engagement was made by professional designers. I had the most beautiful wedding dress, and Esther and Walter were my *Unterfierers* (the couple who traditionally stand under the wedding canopy with the bride or groom).

Cyril and his brother played the football pools and won £1,000. We were able to put down a £500 deposit on a house in Orchard Park and I was very happy.

Our son Adrian was born in October 1949, and our daughter Vivien in May 1954. I couldn't have any more pregnancies after that, because I developed a poisoned leg that could have killed me.

We lived in a four-apartment house. A few doors down from us was a Jewish woman who didn't admit to being Jewish. Her son was the same age as my son Adrian, and she used to bring him to me to look after because she was busy cleaning her house. I used to get furious with her. A woman across the road, who wasn't Jewish, thought: 'I'll take my boy to her as well,' and I ended up looking after these children as well as my own. It wasn't fair, but I didn't know how to say no. I was still under the impression that whatever I was told, I had to do, because I was a refugee.

Every couple of weeks, I had to call for a plumber because the plumbing system didn't work. We were landed with a big bill that we couldn't pay, so we had to sell the house. Everything was put into storage except for the cot and the pram. We found a place in Troon, about 40 miles south-west of Glasgow, where we rented one small bedroom. Adrian had to share a room with the son of the house and we slept in the living room.



On our honeymoon in Paris, 1948

Cyril didn't like his name. His father had used the name of his shop, Malcolm, for his middle name. In 1962, he decided to change his name by deed poll. He knocked off the name Mendelsohn and kept Malcolm so we both became Mr and Mrs Malcolm. ■



Holding Baby Adrian, 1949



Adrian and Vivien, 1954



In the countryside with Adrian and Vivien



My mother with Adrian and Vivien



Celebrating Adrian's *bar mitzvah*, October 1962



My mother (right) with Auntie Ilonka (left), circa 1950s

Finding our family home

WITH CYRIL'S WAGES, we just about managed to cover things. Every day on his way to work he would look for a place for us to move back to Glasgow. For a long time it didn't happen. We needed a ground-floor apartment or a bungalow, because of the problem I had with my leg. At last, an estate agent found a house that had sufficient room downstairs. My husband asked his mother to come with him to look at it and bring him luck, and she did.

The house was owned by a Jewish couple, Mr and Mrs Nutt. They shook hands on the sale of the house and that worked out in time for Christmas. The day before, we moved into the house I'm sitting in now. It was not like this back then. There was a fireplace, wooden flooring, and a very small kitchen. The children slept in what would be the front room and there was a very small bedroom for us which we couldn't even fit a wardrobe in.

Eventually we took away the fireplace and chimney in the front bedroom, and that left enough room for two beds.

Cyril's father's shops were failing and by the mid-1970s they closed down. Cyril wanted to go back to sea but I was very downhearted about that. I didn't want to be without him. It turned out that he was considered too old to be employed. It was around the time when shipping companies were hiring cheaper foreign personnel rather than British which was also one reason the shops went out of business. Cyril was very disappointed that he had to give up his plan.

Cyril tried a few jobs that were not very successful. That was a great shame but we managed to get by. He found part-time work at an electrical transformer company. He had learned French on the ship and could speak German after picking it up from my mother. He would open up the business every morning and was able to take the orders from customers on the continent.

I kept the home and family by working two jobs. I needed to be around for the children so I found work at a printer's shop in the Saltmarket owned by Jack Caplan who had been a prisoner of war in Japan. I worked the night shift for Marie Curie Hospice, nursing children with leukaemia. ■



Left to right: Cyril, me, my mother and step-father, Jack Goodson. circa 1950s

The end of my mother's life

I WENT BACK to the Victoria Infirmary to work in the gynaecology department part-time. By this time my mother had paid off her debt and so occasionally she would help me with the children. In fact, she helped everyone. The local church called my mother a little heroine for helping others.

I have fond memories during summertime in the afternoons, around the time I was collecting the children from school when Mummy would often wait for me by the seats outside Langside Halls Park. I would park up and we would have a wee chat.

She had remarried in the meantime and was living in Waverley Gardens in Shawlands. My stepfather, Jack Goodson, worked in a tailoring factory doing piecework and certain jobs that no one else liked to do such as pockets and things like that. He had an area for his own work, employed his own staff and was independent in that respect.

My mother also had to work. She was a multi-talented lady, but her love was for children and children sensed this wherever she went. Esther opened a shop in Newton Mearns and Walter had a fur shop on Skirving Street. They also had a shop on the Ayr Road called Estwal. This was a ladies' gown shop and Esther opened up an area for childrenswear for which my mother was the manageress. Children wanted to come in and play with 'Auntie Erna' while their parents looked through the rails of clothing.

In 1973, when it was our silver wedding anniversary, we took a family trip to America and met up with Uncle Arthur. By this time, my mother was very ill. They said she had sciatica when it was actually terminal cancer of the spine that had affected her nerves and other organs. This was only diagnosed in America, when her brother took her to the doctor. My uncle phoned me and told me that I had to take her straight back to Scotland.

It was a terrible shock but I coped. I had my husband and my family here. I was very glad that I could extend the kitchen, and make it into Mummy's bedroom. I looked after her. She never, ever complained. It was only in her last two days that she was taken into Victoria Infirmary where she went into a coma. ■

Life moves on

I FINALLY RETIRED from nursing when I was 60. Up until then I had only had a short spell without work and then I didn't really even have that because the doorbell never stopped with people asking for help. I said, no way, I am retired, but if someone was in need of course I went. Cyril and I decided to open a kosher bed and breakfast from our house, using the children's vacated rooms for guests and we ran this together in our retirement. I continued to do this until about 2013. I volunteered for *Bikur Cholim* (visiting the sick) and *Tahara* (preparing bodies for burial) at Glenduffhill Cemetery, Glasgow.

My husband had played bridge in the Navy and eventually I took it up, too. We didn't play as partners because he had a different system, so I had my partner and he had his.

For various birthdays, I bought him a radio station at home and eventually we chopped a wee bit of space off my son's room and put a window in there and he had his own room just for his radio equipment. His radio knowledge would have stood him in good stead today.

When Cyril eventually took ill, he was wrongly diagnosed. It took three years to discover his condition and meanwhile he was being treated for another condition. The disease related to rats due to the environment he worked in for so many years at his father's shop. I lost him far too soon. 19 years on and it doesn't get any better. I miss him more and more.

I continued to play bridge and took up arts and crafts which I was told I showed some talent for until my eyesight deteriorated. ■

Overcoming fears

ON HOLIDAY IN Jersey I had swimming lessons. The teacher told me she had a senior class with a doctor and solicitor. She put a belt around them and shoved them into the water. I said to the teacher that I didn't like it when I didn't feel terra firma. I knew what to do but didn't like it when my feet didn't touch the ground.



On our Hawaiian cruise

I did it for Cyril and got the certificate. I told him: 'If you want to go on a cruise, I don't mind going.' He said: 'I was a naval officer. Pay for a cruise? They should pay me!' We did, however, go on a cruise around Scotland, from the Shetlands to Aberdeen. We went from Aberdeen to Lerwick and from there we caught little boats to other islands which I found most interesting.

Finally, after touring round America, we caught a ship and cruised around Hawaii. I really enjoyed that. I never liked to have too much water around me but when Cyril was with me, I was fine. ■



With the help of the Red Cross I contacted my family in Istanbul, Turkey. Uncle Pepo and his wife Elvira (left) came to London to meet Robert and me (right), 1966

My children

MY CHILDREN ARE the blessings of my life and I didn't appreciate that they would suffer because I was different. But it did reflect on them. Adrian got snidey remarks about who he was – not only being Jewish but having a refugee mother and things like that.

He always wanted to put the world to rights, and he got into trouble at one point. I had to phone the headmaster to tell him that a few boys had threatened to push him off the train at Crossmyloof Station. He often took the train from there to Giffnock to get home. I didn't know he got into a fight at a local park. He thought he could fight them all. He only told me this recently.

He was very clever and he passed the entrance exam for Hutchie School. School encouraged him to take both Greek and Latin but he was always building and creating little games so we suggested that he should do architecture. He did as we suggested but he didn't like it. Then he took up psychiatric nursing and became a staff nurse. Later, in his forties he studied for a master's degree in forest product design and technology.

He moved to Cambridge many years ago and likes it there. He has always been a good person. He does a lot of gym work and gardening. Adrian worked on the land, which is his love to this day. He is an outdoor boy, even if it is raining.



Left to right: Vivien, me, Cyril and Adrian

Vivien sat the exam for Glasgow High School. I never thought that she would get in so when she passed, Cyril said: 'Without any influence from neither you nor me, she passed!' I asked her what happened when she was in the room with Miss Barker, the headmistress. She said: 'She sat me at a desk and gave me paper and pencil and said draw me something.'



Left to right: Vivien, Cyril, me and Adrian

Apparently most children draw a house with a garden, but she drew a puzzle for the headmistress to solve. Then she asked Vivien to stand up and sing and Vivien sang a Hebrew song. She got in by herself, all by her own efforts.

The deal was that if Vivien passed the entrance exam Cyril would buy me a car, and he did but it was impossible for me to get both children to their different schools on time. Cyril would drop them there in the mornings and I picked them up in the afternoon.

Vivien never had much spare time. When she was small she had a nasty break in her leg and missed a lot of schooling. The consultant in the Victoria Hospital said the best exercise for her was skating. So, I was either taking her skating or to an art class or to a piano lesson at home. There was never much time between us all. I bought a piano for her when she was young. My mother's husband was a tailor and her best friend from Vienna, Auntie Ilonka, was also a dressmaker and tailoress. Between them, Vivien learnt a lot and I bought her a sewing machine and I used to hear her early in the morning on the machine, making her clothes.



My four grandsons. Left to right: Jonathan (Yoni), Joshua, Daniel and Samuel

We took Vivien and Adrian on a holiday to Israel with the Clarkston *Shul* and it gave them both the appetite to live there. When Israel started looking for volunteers, before the Six Day War in 1967, they both became volunteers. They were at two different *kibbutzim* but they were very close by and would often meet up and go out together.



My grandson, Danny with his daughters– my two great-granddaughters, Sophia and baby Ella

They both came back, but Adrian went out twice more and Vivien has been coming and going ever since. She has never given up on it.

Vivien met her American husband, Richard, in Israel and they settled in Queens, New York. She has recently retired as an occupational therapist. They have four sons. The eldest, Danny, lives in Los Angeles and has two daughters. Their second son, Joshua, is a chef. Son three, Sammy, is a chiropractor and married to Dana. Son four, Yoni, works in finance, is married to Jordana and they are expecting a baby in the summer.

When Cyril and I went to visit Vivien in New York, many years ago, we got talking to a policeman who turned out to be Jewish and also a radio expert like Cyril. He was sitting the exam for Morse code. Cyril decided to take it too, and got 100%. I'm not sure who offered him a job but they wanted to employ him right away, and I know he would have liked to have stayed there. He would have loved the life but I said: 'No. I've been a refugee once and I don't want to be an immigrant.' I like Scotland, so I stayed put and he then settled down. ■

Returning to Austria

I WAS FIRST invited to go back to Austria a few years ago. They were very keen to bring people back. I didn't want to go to Vienna in the winter, and I also wanted some security about the politics. I didn't go until I learnt that the current President, Alexander Van der Bellen, was a good sort.

On the plane there, I sat next to a young woman who was with her granny, who also came from Vienna and although not Jewish, she was persecuted because her father was Jewish. She is now also a member of the Association of Jewish Refugees, in Newcastle.

My children joined me on the trip. Adrian really loved it, especially the wonderful coffee. After a few days, my grandson, Danny, who lives in Los Angeles, also came to join us. He is very religious, so he got up early every morning to go to the beautiful synagogue that happened to survive the war because it was protected between two houses. It has absolutely wonderful stained-glass windows and three flights of galleries and lovely seats. One Friday night we were invited there for dinner.

The President said that we would find Austria a very different place from the one we had to flee. We would find liberty and freedom and we would be made welcome as citizens. I never wanted to go back to live in Vienna, but I was very impressed by what I saw. Everything was spotlessly clean and everywhere we went there were flowers, and we heard classical music coming out from everywhere. It was absolutely like the music I remembered. I wasn't educated in music, but everybody there is, because it can be heard just walking along the street.

“The President said that we would find Austria a very different place from the one we had to flee. We would find liberty and freedom and we would be made welcome as citizens.”



Left to right: Vivien, Ambassador Turner, Adrian and me, Vienna, Austria

We were invited by the President to Hofburg Imperial Palace, the official place for the politicians. They honoured me by having a Jewish boys' choir come along. They sang in Hebrew and the little children absolutely melted my heart. The President told us in his speech that they often have the choir for *bar mitzvahs* (13-year-old boy's coming of age ceremony).

I took the family to see the flat where I lived with my grandmother but there was no one there. The building looked dirty and neglected from the outside. A young woman came out and after I explained the situation she invited us in. She lived on the same floor as I had. She made us coffee and played the violin for us. I would have liked to have shown the children the actual apartment where my grandmother managed to put us all up. I was able, from the neighbour's window, to show my family how I could lean out and see the Nazis marching in. ■



Meeting Austrian President Van der Bellen and his wife, Doris Schmidauer

My brother

MY BROTHER, ROBERT, changed his name from Levyi to Lester. After he arrived in England, he always lived in London. He spoke like a Cockney and people couldn't believe we were brother and sister, with our different accents. He was clever and never got the chance to show it. He should have done accountancy, but he ended up working in the complaints department of the London Electricity Board for decades. He was an amazing table tennis player and won many tournaments while representing the company.

Robert liked to visit us here in Scotland. One year, after he had appendix surgery, I told him to come to me for recuperation. While he was here in Glasgow, he met Helen Black, who became his wife. They married here a few months later and he took her back to London. Unfortunately, there was a history of heart problems in her family and they only had 15 years together before she had a heart attack aged 48 and died the same year as our mother. He was absolutely devastated. Towards the end of his life, he was very ill. Eventually, he had a fall and broke his leg and was taken into hospital, where he contracted pneumonia and died in November 2000. We arranged with the Sephardic synagogue to bury him in their cemetery in London, in the same grave as his wife. ■



My brother Robert and his wife Helen



This photograph was taken at Robert's retirement party. Cyril and I came to London to celebrate with him

Friends and family through the years

UNCLE ARTHUR ENDED up in Dachau, which was being built by slave labourers. The Nazis made them dig the ground with their hands in winter. He lost multiple fingers and a toe, as his shoes were worn out. Those which were left weren't in good shape. Arthur had been a good student and had a good knowledge of Italian and they wanted him alive as the Nazis had plans to head towards Italy, so he would have been useful to them.

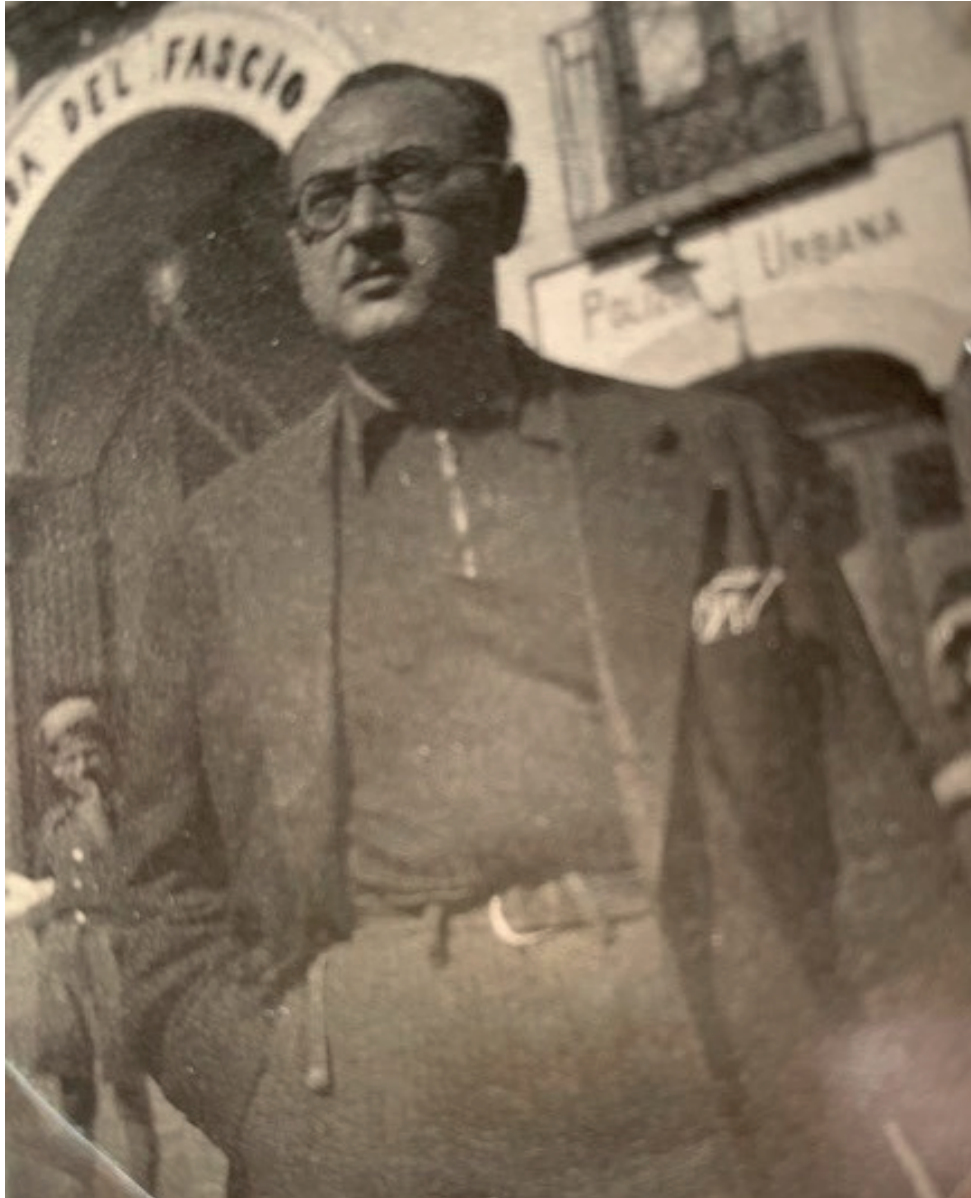
He survived Dachau and after the war he settled in San Francisco, America. He had saved someone's life in one of the concentration camps. This man said: 'I have what is called a plant in America. If I survive, I will send an affidavit for you,' and that is what happened. He eventually married a German Jewish lady who had a daughter. Many years later, my mother and I went to meet up with my uncle, but he wouldn't tell me what he did during the war. I only knew what I saw: I could see that he had to bandage his feet because toes were frozen or missing, and I also saw that as well as missing fingers, one was frozen on one hand because he'd had to dig the garden in the winter with his hands.

I feel blessed in the friendships and opportunities I have had. After having first met while training to be a nurse at Stobhill, Jean and I remained lifetime friends to the very end. She died only a few years ago. I miss her very much – we phoned each other, and she visited me whenever she came home to see her family. We were very, very close.

The Greens were wonderful people. For many years Walter and Esther were like my parents and always included my mother. I was a poor girl who had no raincoat, but I had a fur coat thanks to Walter, which I think is funny.

I still keep in touch with their only son Harvey who is now 87. His grandmother was born in Cairo, Egypt, and Esther had this wonderful, regal appearance. I said to Harvey: 'Your mum cooked especially for you when you had jaundice.' He said: 'You remember that?' I said: 'Yes, that and many other things.'

Cyril's sister's daughters, Sue and Jackie, are my nieces and I don't know what I'd do without them. They are very sweet and always make themselves available for me. ■



My mother's brother, Uncle Arthur



Vera Bleier (left) with me and Cyril in Fruin Glen, Scotland, 1968. Vera was a refugee from Germany, adopted by the Neiman family in Glasgow. We became lifelong friends when we studied nursing and worked at Stobhill Hospital together. After Vera passed away in Israel in 2020, her sons have stayed in regular contact with me



Visiting Vera in Israel, 2006



Celebrating my 90th birthday with Esther and Walter Green's son, Harvey



Meeting with the Mendelsohn family in Edinburgh, Scotland, 2019



All dressed up at my grandson Sammy's wedding to Dana in New York, 2015

Reflections

I FEEL SCOTLAND is now my home: I love Scotland, regardless of the climate. I remember meeting Margaret, the Binnings' daughter, on the Glasgow Metro from St Enoch to the West End. She was on her way to the university, where she was teaching. She said: 'You're very happy here, aren't you, Alice?' and I said yes, I was and that I loved Scotland. I like the Glaswegians – I think they are the most hospitable, kind people. If in England you talk to strangers, they give you a wide berth – they think you are strange. Not here. If I hesitate at a crossing, somebody will say to me: 'Do you mind if I help you across?' It's wonderful.

Mostly, life is what you make it, but life gives you deals that you don't expect – sometimes nice, sometimes not so nice. I had practically no relatives but I had my children and my husband who was my friend, my everything. ■



My everything



Celebrating Yoni's wedding to Jordana



With Vivien and grandson Joshua



Celebrating my grandson Samuel's bar mitzvah



At my grandson Danny's bar mitzvah



On holiday with Cyril



Cyril and me on Vivien's wedding day



My grandchildren, Vivien and me were all on our way to a close family friend Sara Flint's wedding, 1999



About the AJR

Founded in 1941 by Jewish refugees from Central Europe, The Association of Jewish Refugees (AJR) is the national charity representing and supporting Holocaust refugees and survivors living in Great Britain. Primarily delivering social, welfare and care services, the AJR has a nationwide network of regional groups offering members a unique opportunity to socialise in their local area. Members receive support from volunteers and can obtain advice and assistance on welfare rights as well as on Holocaust reparations.

The AJR is committed to the education of future generations about the Holocaust and is now the UK's largest benefactor of education and memorialisation programmes and projects which promote teaching and learning about the Holocaust.

About 70,000 refugees, including approximately 10,000 children on the *Kindertransport*, arrived in Great Britain from Nazi-occupied Europe in the 1930s. The AJR extends membership to anyone who fled a Nazi-occupied country as a Jewish refugee or who arrived in Great Britain as a Holocaust survivor. We also welcome the descendants and spouses of the refugees as members.