



My Story

Eva Lorimer

This book is dedicated to the memory of my mother, Grete,
without whose love and selflessness I would not be here today



These are Eva'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

Eva Lorimer spoke to AJR volunteer Sharon Kronheim-George to share her story and we are indebted to Sharon for her contribution to the making of this book. Thanks also to Keith Rowe and AJR volunteers Bette Demby, Muireann Grealy, Shelley Hyams and Ekaterina Vyurkova.

This book was produced during the Covid-19 pandemic.

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My Story

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“Once on the train I stood by the window with the other children. I had my case in my hands and my knapsack on my back with my teddy bear’s head poking out at the top. Although I had known this trip was going to happen I don’t think I was fully able to believe it. I was in a state of shock and unable to shed a tear.”



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My Family

I WAS BORN Eva Toni Rhein on 10 August 1933 in Wismar, Northern Germany. My mother, Wally Friede Grete Rhein (née Pulvermacher), known as Grete, was born in February 1906 and my father, Peter Heinrich Hermann Rhein, known as Hermann, was born in November 1906.

My maternal grandparents were Jewish. However, they were not religious and considered themselves to be more affiliated to Christianity. They decided to convert, becoming Lutheran Christians. My grandparents and my mother were baptised at a special ceremony.

My mother was the youngest of four children. She had one brother, Max, and two sisters, Elsa and Lisbeth. She was the only child to be baptised when her father was. The rest of her siblings were not Lutherans, but they did not attend synagogue and had no affiliation with their Jewish background. Lisbeth married a dentist and after two years of marriage, at the age of about 40 years old, took her own life. Max was killed in the First World War. In 1918 when she was 12 years old, my mother's parents died tragically, one after the other, following Max's death.

My father was not Jewish. He was the youngest in a family of seven children that moved around the country because of their father's employment at a bank. When my father was nine his father took his own life, leaving the family impoverished. Although very young, my father undertook jobs to help with the family finances. He was a keen reader and when he was old enough became an apprentice to a bookseller, although the bookshop was unable to offer him employment when his apprenticeship ended.

Geburtsurkunde. Aa.

Nr. 257.

Wismar am 12. August 1933.

Vor dem unterzeichneten Standesbeamten erschien heute, der Persönlichkeit nach durch Vorlage seiner Eheschließungsbescheinigung anerkannt, der Buchhändler Peter Heinrich Hermann Rhein, wohnhaft in Wismar, Adolf Hitlerstrasse 27. und zeigte an, daß von der Wally Frieda Grute Rhein, gebornen Fulvermacher, seiner Ehefrau, wohnhaft bei ihm zu Wismar, Mecklenburgerstrasse 11, am sech-unddreißigsten August des Jahres tausend neunhundert dreiunddreißig, nach mittags um ein einhalb Uhr ein Mädchen geboren worden sei und daß das Kind die Vornamen Eva Toni erhalten habe.

Beglaubigt und unterschrieben:
Hermann Rhein.

Der Standesbeamte
in Vertretung:
H. Düsing.

Daß obestehender Auszug mit dem Geburts-Haupt-Register des Mecklenburg-Schwerin'schen Standesamts zu Wismar gleichzeitig @, wird hiermit bekräftigt.

Wismar am 12. August 1933.

Der Standesbeamte
I. V. *Düsing*

Schwerin
50
10
März 1926

Wismar
10
März 1926

My birth certificate



In my pram, May 1934

Landgericht in Hamburg

9 B. 123/35

U r t e i l

Im Namen des Deutschen Volkes !

Verkündet
am 4. Oktober 1935.
gez: Geilenfeld
als Urkundsbeamtin
der Geschäftsstelle.

In der Sache

des Ehemannes Peter Heinrich Hermann
R h e i n , Hamburg, Rolandsbrücke 4
bei Schwarzs,

Klägers,

Prozeßbevollmächtigte: Rechtsanwälte

Dres. R. Behn, Grimm und Bensch,

gegen

seine Ehefrau Wally Frieda Grete
R h e i n , geb. Pulvermacher,
Wismar, Adolf Hitlerstraße 27,

Beklagte,

erkennt das Landgericht in Hamburg, Zivilkammer
durch folgende Richter:

1. Landgerichtsdirektor Dr. Schirach,
2. Richter Dr. Wünnenberg,
3. Richter Dr. Bock

für Recht:

Die Ehe der Parteien wird geschieden und die Beklagte für den alleinschuldigen Teil erklärt.

Sie hat die Kosten des Rechtsstreits zu tragen.

(Unterzeichnet)

Schirach.

Wünnenberg.

Bock.



Dieses Urteil ist mit Urkundsbeamtin
rechtshilflich genehmigt
Hamburg, den 27. Oktober 1935
Die Geschäftsstelle des Landgerichts

Wünnenberg

Schirach
26. Markt. N. 2. 38. (100000 200)



für richtige Ausfertigung
Geilenfeld
Urkundsbeamtin der Geschäftsstelle

Mother and Father's marriage certificate



My mother's brother Max, August 1917





Left to right; Lisbeth, Max, Grete (my mother) and Elsa, 1906

I am not sure when my parents met, but I believe my mother agreed to marry my father after following him to Wismar around 1930, where he planned to open his own bookshop. My mother had also once been apprenticed to a bookseller and it made sense for them to open their own business. They married in 1931 and my mother used the savings that she inherited from her parents towards the financing of the shop. Both of their names were written over the door, identifying them as the joint owners.

My mother served in the shop until I was born. After that, she stayed at home with me in the mornings, prepared lunch for my father, then headed out to work at the shop in the afternoons. Whether I was left behind in the flat or brought to the shop to sleep, I have no idea!

After the Nuremberg Race Laws were introduced in 1935 it became illegal for Aryans to be married to Jews. Following this ruling my father divorced my mother, enabling him to keep the shop while my mother was forced to leave Wismar. ■



My mother, whom I called 'Mutti'



Pfarramtliche Bescheinigungen

1. Taufe

Kally Frieda Grate
Pulvermacher

Sohn, Tochter von Hugo Pulvermacher
u. Johanna Lennus
v. Behreut

geboren am 3. Februar 1906
in Glauburg

ist getauft am 20. Dezember 1907
in St. Gertrud

Neueschwan, den 10. März 1921
Chalybancs.
Pfarramt

My mother's baptism book



In my cot, 1937

Hamburg

MY MOTHER HAD grown up in Hamburg, so she returned there with me to be among the friends and family who were still there. Although my mother didn't feel it, we were considered Jewish by the Nazis because of her Jewish parents.

Friends helped find us a flat on Krohnskamp 3, Hamburg 39. As well as friends, my mother had her Uncle Walter who was my maternal grandmother's brother. He had been responsible for taking care of my mother when she was 12 years old after the tragic death of her parents.

Uncle Walter maintained his Jewish identity, although I am unsure whether or not he was a member of a synagogue. He was married with one son, Juan. After *Kristallnacht* Juan was deported to Dachau but later released and ordered to leave Germany immediately. He made his way to Argentina and wrote to his father begging him to leave Germany, but Uncle Walter considered himself immune from persecution because he had fought for the Kaiser in the First World War. He believed that Hitler would honour this military commitment and that he wouldn't be sent away.

Uncle Walter had an older sister, who we called Tante (Aunt) Kathe. She lived with Tante Toni (after whom I was named). Both Tantes had been teachers, but were now old ladies who dressed in black. Tante Kathe lost her job due to the Nazis and was unable to continue living with Tante Toni, who was not Jewish and didn't have the same restrictions imposed on her. At some point during our time in Hamburg Tante Kathe temporarily moved into our flat. My mother occupied the larger room in our two-bedroom flat and Tante Kathe slept in the same room with her. I slept in a cot in the smaller room until I grew out of it and my feet stuck out at the bottom. Many years later I learned that Tante Kathe was taken to Theresienstadt where she died after five days.

According to German law, following their divorce my father was obliged to make maintenance payments to my mother. However, I have a letter she wrote to him saying that he hadn't sent any money. My father claimed he visited us in Hamburg every fortnight but this wasn't true: he only came on rare occasions. He would invariably visit on a Sunday, taking the hour-long train ride from Wismar to Hamburg. Whenever my mother told me that my father was coming I would joyfully cry: 'Oh, my papa! My papa is coming!' In preparation for his arrival my mother would fuss around the kitchen,

cooking and laying the table. When he arrived, however, there was enormous tension between them and you could cut the atmosphere with a knife. I could never understand why and before it could make any sense to me, the visit was over and he would be gone.

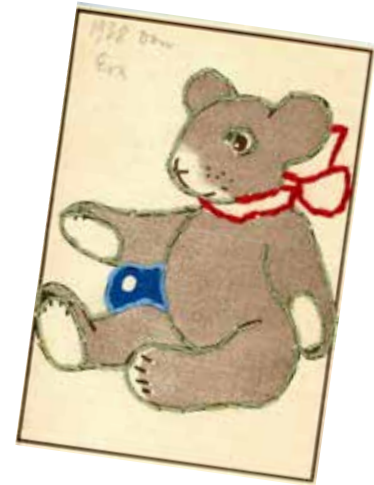
Sometimes my father would take me out and when I returned home I wanted to tell my mother about all the wonderful things we had done together, but she never wanted to know. Despite all of this, she did not poison me against my father and never called him a bad man. When I would ask why he was in Wismar, she would explain that was where his shop was, and without the shop there would be no money.

Being Jewish, my mother was not supposed to work. However, she was a natural linguist, speaking Spanish, English, French and Italian as well as her German mother tongue. It was her proficiency with languages that made her extremely employable. She worked for a bookseller in the afternoons while I was asleep, taking care of the translations and letters required when books were sent abroad. Obviously, this employment was unofficial and she was not listed on the payroll.

On the days she wasn't working, after my sleep my mother would usually take me for a walk. We would walk to the Alster, a large lake near to our flat, to look at the swans. On one occasion I clearly remember getting a little too close to a mother swan with her babies and the swan becoming aggressive and frightening me. (Later, when I was in my sixties, I had a tattoo of a swan on the top of my arm; I wanted something that reminded me of my mother). There were also sailing boats on



Aged three years old



My needlework, 1938



Me and my bear, 1935



On holiday in the Black Forest with my mother in July, 1936



In the sandpit at Stadtpark, Hamburg, circa 1936



Aged four, in the Black Forest, July 1937



Me and my mother, 1937

the Alster which I remember seeing when we visited the lake. I would draw pictures of those boats when I came to England.

I enjoyed the company of other children. There was a fair-haired little girl named Margit who lived in one of the flats close by, and sometimes I would be allowed to play with her. We would play on the stone steps outside. Sometimes my mother took us both to a local park, sitting on a bench while we played in the sand pit or went down the slide. I always enjoyed being with Margit and thinking of her brings back fond memories. My mother had a friend called Hannah who had a baby who I enjoyed pushing in the pram, but because the handles were so high up I could hardly reach them.

I attended a small nursery with around five other children. It was for non-Aryans as Jewish children were not allowed to attend a state nursery. Some of us were Jewish and others were non-Germans, like the Japanese twins who came to live in Hamburg because of their father's work. They were identical so the nursery nurses couldn't tell them apart and they would come to me for help identifying them. I particularly remember their fifth birthday when they threw a party in their flat, decorating it with Japanese lanterns and serving traditional Japanese food. I thought it was wonderful. I adored going to nursery and always questioned why I couldn't go there at the weekends. Back then I always wanted to know why there had to be a Saturday and Sunday. One of the nursery nurses would pick me up from home to take me to nursery each day. I don't remember how I would get back home, only that my lunch was waiting for me when I returned. My mother always cooked lunch herself: she couldn't hire a maid as Jews were prohibited from doing so. ■



On our balcony, May 1939

The *Kindertransport*

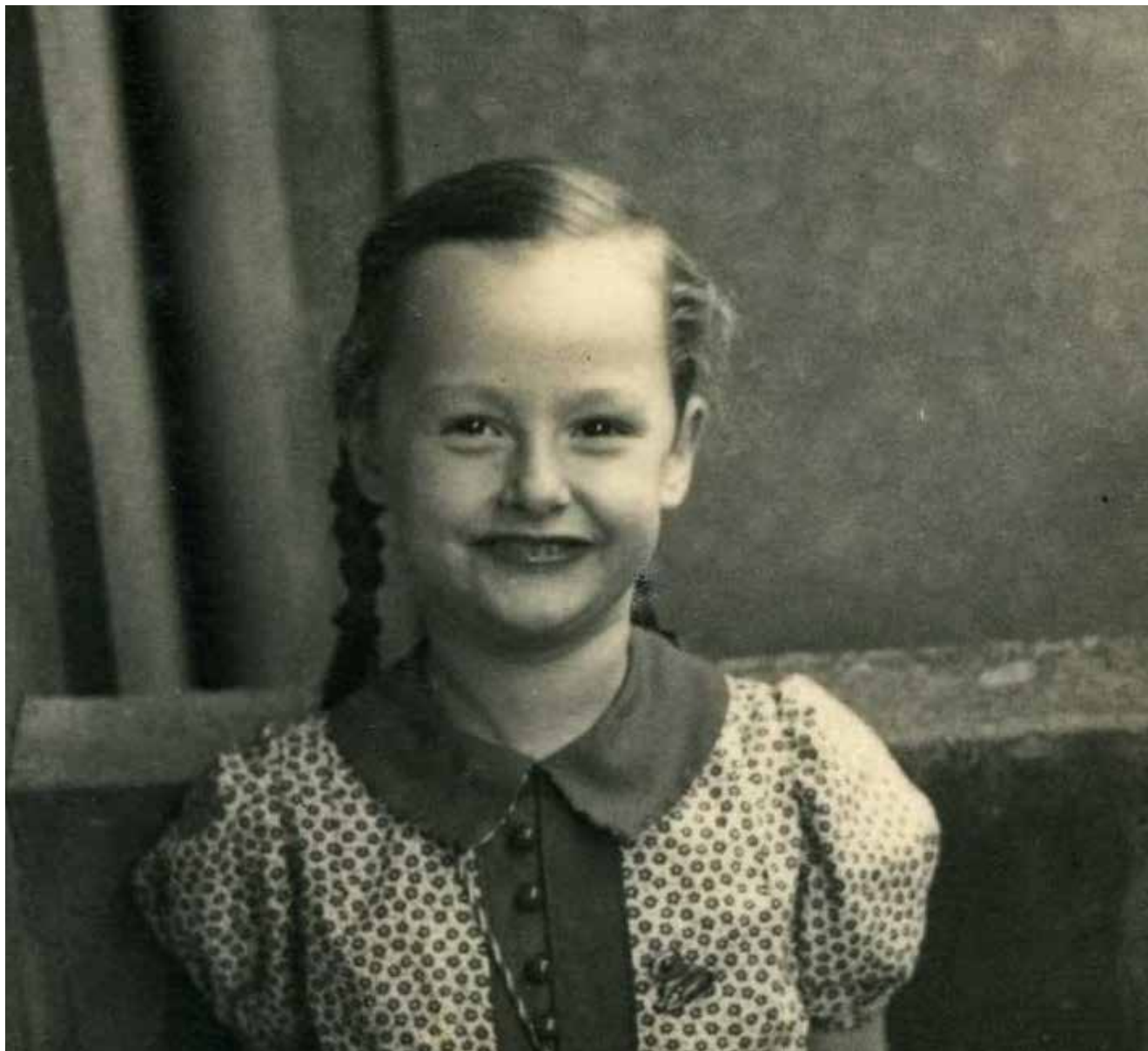
IT WAS AROUND Easter of 1939 when my mother first began talking about a trip to England. She told me I would be going to live in another country with different people and that I would have to learn to speak another language. She said I would initially go without her and that she would remain in Hamburg until she was able to get a job in England. She never told me why I had to leave and of course, I wasn't aware of the difficulties we faced in Hamburg: all I could see from our veranda were soldiers marching up and down the street.

Even though I was only five years old, I would be responsible for carrying my own suitcase on the journey to England. When we began packing, my mother's main consideration was whether I would be able to lift and carry it. We kept putting items in and out, making certain I had enough of everything. She also sent me down to the docks with her friend Hannah to look at the large boats. She feared I would be frightened to get on board a boat if I hadn't seen one before.

I felt extremely apprehensive at the prospect of leaving my mother and travelling to a new environment that would be very different. My mother was a brave woman and painted a picture for me of a loving and welcoming family in England who were ready to greet me. Many years later my father told me that my mother had travelled to Berlin and queued for the papers that would permit me to travel on the *Kindertransport*, but of course I had no clue about any of that then. My papers were prepared to enable me to depart in July 1939, but my mother felt that I was still too young. She wanted to defer the travel to a later date when I was a little older and better able to cope with the separation. Looking back as an adult I realise that our rapid approach towards war meant that she couldn't postpone my departure for too long.

One month later on 10 August, which was my sixth birthday, we set off for the Altona Station in Hamburg, where the *Kindertransport* train was arriving from Berlin. I can remember my *Kindertransport* number today, which was 8804.

Along with my mother there was another woman at the station, possibly her friend Hannah. I can't remember my father being there, but many years later when I saw him in the 1990s, he told me that he had been there. Before I boarded the train, I went over the plans for the journey with my mother and



Me on our balcony in August, 1939

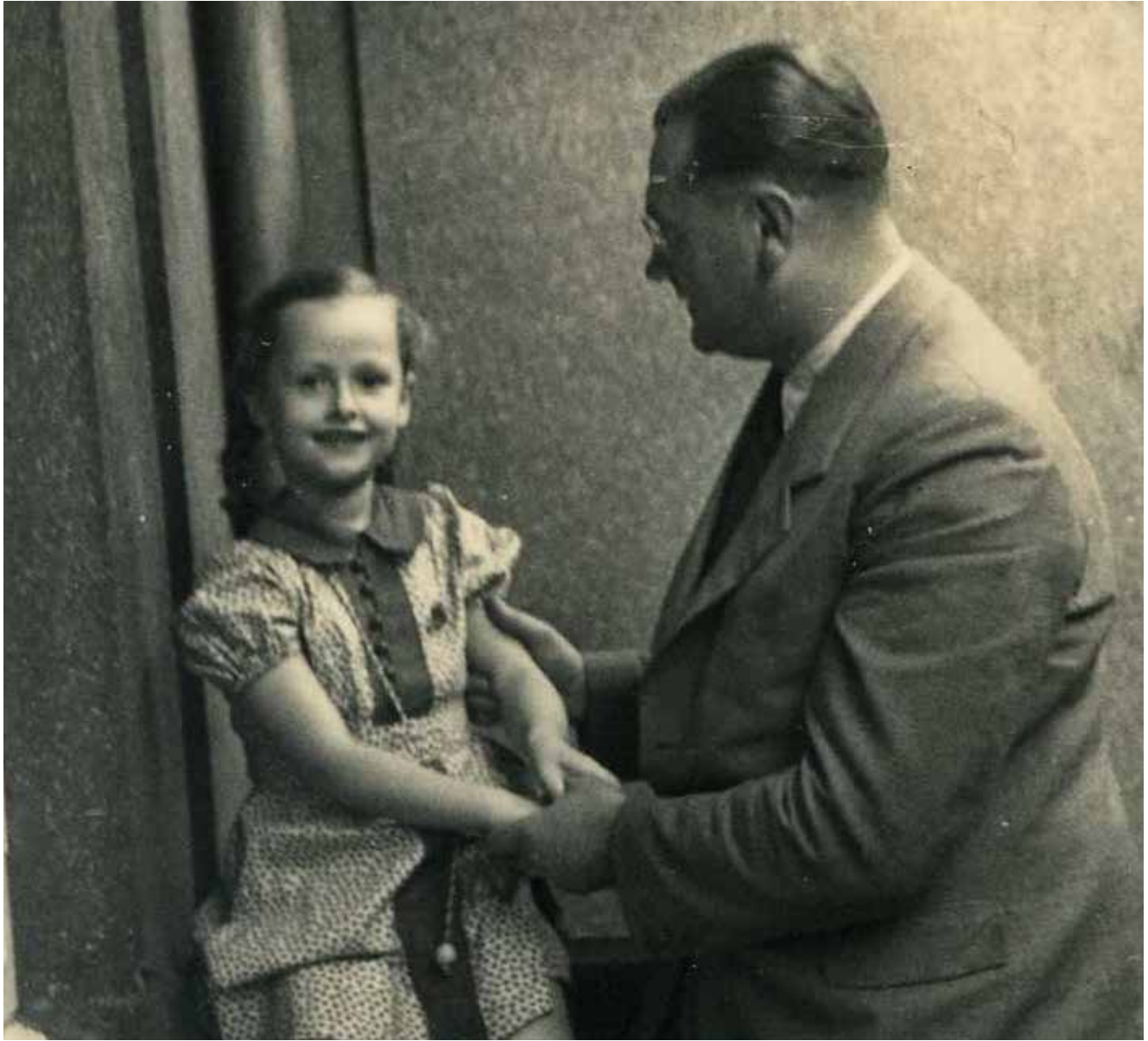
although there wasn't any kissing, she gave me a hug. Once on the train I stood by the window with the other children. I had my case in my hands and my knapsack on my back with my teddy bear's head poking out at the top. Although I had known this trip was going to happen I don't think I was fully able to believe it. I was in a state of shock and unable to shed a tear.

As I waved goodbye to my mother with the train slowly leaving, I saw her turn into the arms of the lady who was with her, laying her head on her shoulder. I assume that she didn't want me to see her in tears. If my father had been there it would have been unlikely that she would have turned to him. Their relationship was beyond repair at that stage.

Once the train departed, we were supervised on board by adults patrolling the corridors. Railway officials and soldiers also boarded and would open the carriage doors and look inside - they were not very friendly. The train only made one stop at the border and we had to show our papers.

When the train arrived at the Hook of Holland we disembarked and transferred to a boat. A girl of around sixteen years of age was allocated to look after me. Our cabin had bunk beds and before tucking me up for the night she wanted me to take off my dress and sleep in just my vest and pants. She said that if I didn't, my dress would become very creased and I would look like a wreck in the morning. I was adamant that I wasn't going to do as she suggested and I went to bed in my dress.

My mother had crocheted a little pink purse for me, tying it on a string inside my summer dress. Inside she had placed an English ten-shilling note (50p), a half crown (25p) and a florin (10p). She gave me strict instructions not to let anybody see it or try and take it from me. It was to be given only to Mrs Doherty, the lady who would be looking after me in England. This seemed like quite a burden for a little girl of six. My mother didn't specify who would be likely to steal my purse but I presumed that the girl looking after me could be a likely candidate, which was another reason that I didn't want her to touch my dress! ■



Me with Father on our balcony in Hamburg, 1939

Arriving in England

I ARRIVED IN Harwich on 11 August 1939, less than one month before the start of the war. We took a train to Liverpool Street Station in London. I was taken, along with other children, to a spacious hall to await collection. The ladies in charge couldn't speak any German and I spoke no English - even some of the older children who had learned English in school were not particularly fluent. I should imagine that by that time I looked pretty grubby and travel-stained and I felt more like a body that was being moved from place to place than a real person. I didn't know any of the other children. We just sat on folding chairs waiting for collection, but nobody came for me.

Eventually there was just me and another girl left. The ladies supervising spoke to us in English. They must have been asking who was supposed to be collecting us, but as I didn't speak a word of English, I had no idea what they were saying. These days we would say that I was traumatised.

After the other girl had been collected and it was just me left, somebody finally discovered a list which stated that I was due to be picked up by the Reverend William and Mrs Daisy Doherty from Worthing. As I hadn't been taught to tell the time, I have no idea how long I sat waiting for them before they finally showed up. They made no apologies for being late, saying they had been told I was coming on 10 August. They had clearly made no allowance for the time required for me to make the journey.

I was taken to a restaurant for afternoon tea. This seemed like a strange decision to make after collecting a six-year-old child who had been travelling for over 24 hours. Mrs Doherty took me into the toilet and tried to clean my face with a handkerchief and using sign language, indicated I should wash my hands. She wasn't very nice to me and didn't treat me in a kindly manner and I found that I was unable to eat any of the food on offer. Later we took a taxi to Victoria Station and then the train to Worthing. The Reverend Doherty was a large man, all rounded like a snowman. He wasn't much like my own father but I liked him. On the train I sat next to him and he put his arm around me until I fell asleep. It had been Mrs Doherty who had made all the arrangements to take me in, but I never viewed her as generous or loving, which was a constant source of annoyance to her. ■



My teddy that came to England with me, wearing the clothes I knitted for him



My mother attached this *Kindertransport* label to my coat. Mrs Doherty ripped the *Kindertransport* disc from my coat and damaged it slightly. I remember feeling that she had damaged something which my mother had so carefully pinned to my clothing.



I received this photo of my mother when I arrived in England, August 1939

A New Life in Worthing

THE DOHERTYS HAD three children of their own and when we arrived at their home, the Christchurch Vicarage, they were waiting for us in the garden. Shelagh was fourteen, Ormonde was thirteen and David was eleven. Mrs Doherty's older sister, Miss Ethel Helen Sherwood, also lived with the family. Throughout the entire time I lived with them she was always referred to as 'Aunty'. The Dohertys were a well-to-do family and the first things I noticed were a swing, seesaw and slide in the garden. Here I was in a strange country with strange people. They spoke no German and I spoke no English and I somehow had to navigate myself around these new surroundings. What was the very first thing I did? I climbed up the steps and went down the slide. As we couldn't communicate it was hard to know exactly what they made of that!

The Vicarage was huge. There were five bedrooms upstairs and a mezzanine floor as well. There was a nursery and a music room as well as an additional bathroom located on the ground floor. I shared a bedroom with Aunty during my first few nights, but then moved to my own room on the mezzanine floor. It was a small room and must have once belonged to either a maid or a nanny.

“They spoke no German and I spoke no English and I somehow had to navigate myself around these new surroundings. What was the very first thing I did? I climbed up the steps and went down the slide. As we couldn't communicate it was hard to know exactly what they made of that!”

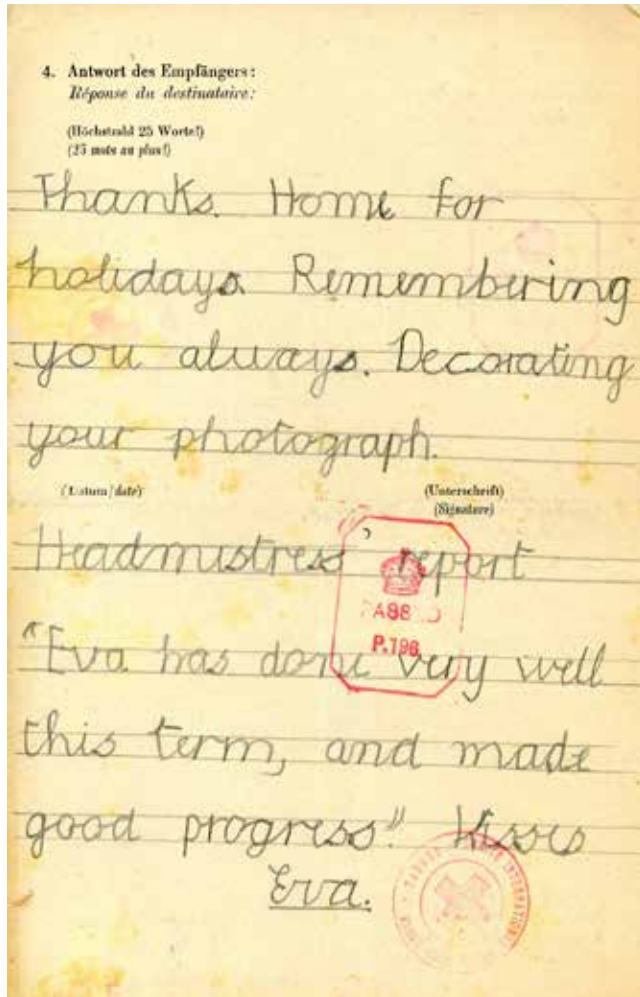
I have fond memories of Aunty, which include her making jam in huge bubbling pots in the kitchen and teaching me to knit and sew clothes for my teddy bear. I remember when I was around 12, she took me to the Post Office to open a savings account and showed me how to save the little money I had from my birthday and Christmas, given to me by Mary Maynard at the Worthing Refugee Committee. Aunty was always kind to me but would never go against the wishes of her sister, who was undoubtedly the boss of the household. Indeed, despite Aunty being like a surrogate grandmother to me, I would never have dreamt of complaining to her about Mrs Doherty.

Before a month had passed in my new home, everyone piled into the family car to go to a cottage in Mortimer, Berkshire, for a holiday. As the war hadn't yet started there was still enough petrol available to make the trip. The cottage was called 'Orchard Cottage' and was very small with just two bedrooms; I have no clue how we all fitted into it. It had a garden and an orchard filled with plum trees that were laden with fruit, some of which littered the ground. We were still at the cottage when war broke out on 3 September 1939. We heard the announcement on the radio and although I was beginning to learn English, I couldn't understand it, or know what it would mean for me.

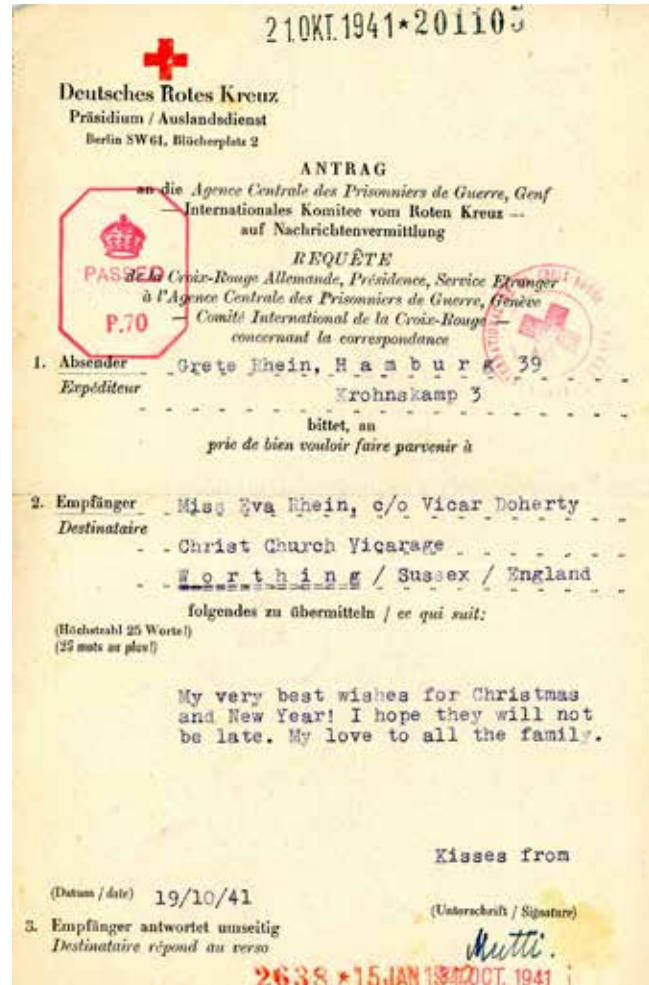
“Aunty was always kind to me but would never go against the wishes of her sister, who was undoubtedly the boss of the household. Indeed, despite Aunty being like a surrogate grandmother to me, I would never have dreamt of complaining to her about Mrs Doherty.”



From left to right: Peter Hennock, Shelagh Doherty, Ormonde Doherty, David Doherty and me, in Christchurch. Peter was 13 years old and had recently arrived from Berlin. His education was also funded by the Worthing Refugee Committee.



The Red Cross card I sent to my mother at Christmas



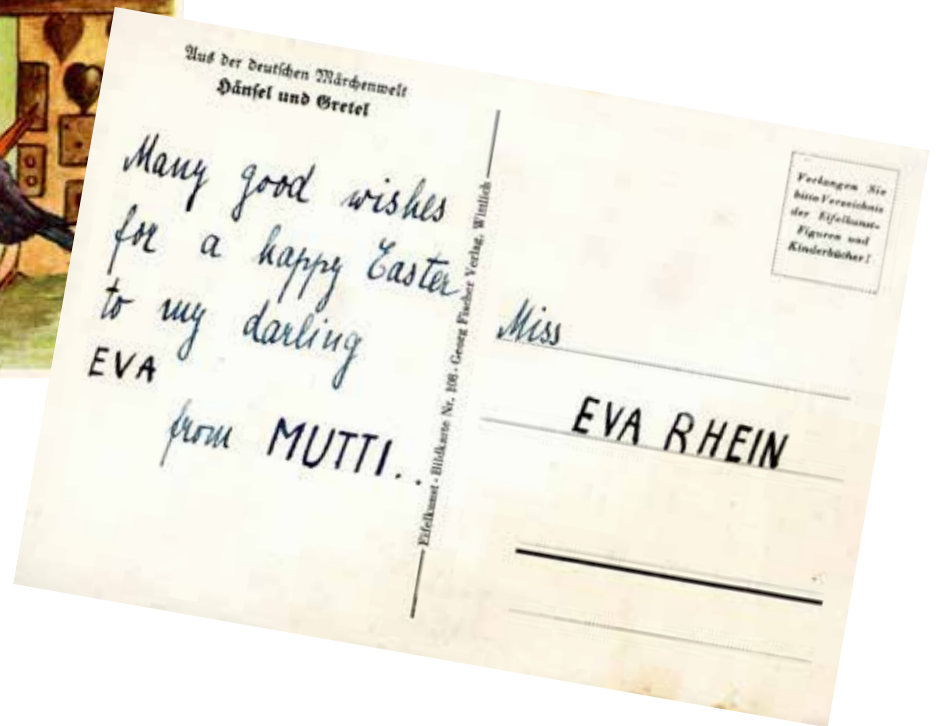
The Red Cross card I received from my mother at Christmas

As no one spoke any German it was a case of trying to fit in by copying what everyone else in the household did. I was a well-behaved child and had always been taught to touch with my eyes and not my fingers. Despite this, I quickly came to understand that in this house children must be seen but not heard and neither interrupt, nor ask questions. In Germany it had been normal for me to be read a story before going to bed. At the Vicarage however, I had to learn Bible verses by heart before going to sleep. Auntie would come to my bedroom to check whether I had learned the verses from the previous night, while being made to learn a new one for the following night. I can still recall the verses to this day, including a text in beautiful script above my bed, which read 'Thou, God, seest me'.

It's unclear to me what type of relationship Mrs Doherty had with her own children, but she had been the author of a sentimental book titled *My Treasures*, which declared her love for them. She had sent a copy of this book to my mother prior to my arrival in England, but I'm unsure how they came to be in contact initially. I do know, however, that the controversial figure of the Bishop of Chichester, George Allen Bell, had been involved in removal and rescue from Germany of non-observant Jewish children.

My relationships with the Doherty children were varied. Shelagh, the eldest, was often immersed in an imaginative fantasy world that she had created and which she even wrote stories about. As my language skills improved she would seek to include me in these games, which certainly helped me learn English more quickly. Ormonde, who was 13 when I arrived, was often left in charge of me. One moment he would act very kindly towards me, giving me books and teaching me poetry and games, and the next his mood would change and he would start behaving horribly. I found spending time with David, the youngest, was the most pleasant. He was practical and sensible and decided that I needed to learn how to read, but his endeavour to teach me himself, however well meant, turned out to be unsuccessful.

I missed my mother terribly. She and I always used to talk to each other and in England I had no one to talk to. My mother would often sit me on her lap with a book or wrap her arm around me while I stood by her side, leaning against her while she taught me to read. That seemed to me to be the correct way to learn. Instead of this I had to learn by sitting in silence at a desk, using a book with barely any pictures, while I had tears running down my face because I couldn't keep up. On Christmas Day in 1939, I asked Mrs Doherty when she thought that my '*mutti*' would come for me. She answered me brusquely, saying: 'She won't come now, there's a war on.' What could a war mean to a six-year-old child? It was only a word. There was no sympathy, no arm around my shoulder or a kind word



The Easter card from my mother, 1940

explaining that I would have to wait until the war was over before I would be able to see my mother again. It was so cruel.

I received an Easter card from my mother in 1940, but from then onwards, corresponding by regular mail with countries at war with Germany was prohibited. The International Red Cross had set up a message service which enabled emigrants to stay in touch with relatives who had remained in Germany, or had already been deported, if they could not use the regular postal service. The messages in the letters were limited to 25 words and had to be verified by the Office of Censorship. As soon as I was able, I began writing my own letters to my mother on a piece of paper that had lines drawn on it for me. My mother also had a close friend, Lisa Eck, from her school days in Hamburg who had relocated to Switzerland to escape the war. My mother wrote to Mrs Eck and asked her if she would enquire about me by writing to Mrs Doherty, as it was easier to send letters to England from Switzerland rather than from Germany. Mrs Doherty did reply to Mrs Eck but never made any effort to find someone who could speak to me in my native tongue. In fact, when the correspondence from my mother suddenly ceased, she mocked me and said that by the time the war was over I would have forgotten all my German.

There was a school across the road from the Vicarage called The Mount. The Dohertys very quickly sent me there as a boarder. I was still learning English and found it very difficult to communicate with the other children. Not long after starting there was an outbreak of scarlet fever and children had to return home. Although I never developed any symptoms, I was diagnosed as a carrier of the disease and was sent back to the Vicarage and isolated in Aunty's room, where my meals were brought upstairs for me. I remember this as an especially lonely time as I had become used to being around children at school and could now not mix with anyone, including the Vicarage children. Mrs Doherty was very protective of her offspring and insisted on shielding them. In fact I don't recall them ever falling ill with any of the childhood illnesses such as measles, mumps or chicken pox.

Shortly after being judged free of scarlet fever I was removed from the Vicarage once again, this time to have my tonsils out. Prior to the surgery I was sent to The Rusthall Beacon at Tunbridge Wells, which was a hostel for children who had arrived in Britain on the *Kindertransport*, but hadn't yet found a family to live with. I certainly had no trouble making friends there: the children were lovely and I could easily communicate with them. One of the best moments that I can remember at the Beacon was

standing in line to be given a spoonful of cod liver oil and malt - I loved that. I stayed at the Beacon for around a week until a place became available at the hospital. These were the days before the NHS, but some doctors agreed to operate free of charge on refugee children. I'm sure this must have been what happened in my case, as it seems unlikely that the Dohertys would have paid for my operation. Despite it being close to home, I never received any visitors and I was also disappointed to only receive blancmange after my surgery, instead of the ice cream which I had been promised.

After my tonsil operation I was sent to recuperate at a boarding house in Tunbridge Wells. Most of the other residents were adults who left for work after breakfast and did not return until the evening. I have very little memory of Mrs East who ran the establishment, but I do recall being looked after by the maid. She took me into the kitchen and let me help her by shelling peas and showing me how to peel potatoes and cut up cabbage.

“ On returning to the Vicarage, Mrs Doherty was unimpressed when she noticed that I had begun to talk and sound like the maid at the hostel. She continually urged me to learn and perfect my English speech and manners. For all her faults, I do believe that Mrs Doherty had my best interests at heart when she insisted on this. ”

On returning to the Vicarage, Mrs Doherty was unimpressed when she noticed that I had begun to talk and sound like the maid at the hostel. She continually urged me to learn and perfect my English speech and manners. For all her faults, I do believe that Mrs Doherty had my best interests at heart when she insisted on this. Mrs Doherty told me that she was my 'English mother' and instructed me to call her 'Mother' and the Reverend Doherty 'Daddy'. Reverend Doherty rarely ever spoke to me, although I have a clear memory of standing one day outside his study door (we were not allowed to go inside), and him handing me a crown of thorns that he had brought back from a visit to the Holy Land. 'Just think,' he said, 'how our dear Lord would have suffered with this upon his head.'

Every morning at 9.30am, Reverend Doherty led a religious service in the Vicarage. He would read a Bible verse and then invite us to explain and discuss it, following which we would kneel down and lower our heads onto our chair seats. The household servants along with the family were expected to attend these services.

Two sisters, named Gwen and Edna, were maids at the Vicarage, as well as a cook, whose name I can't recall. I don't think that the Dohertys were especially kind employers, as the sisters were often reprimanded for missing Sunday Church services because they hadn't finished the numerous cleaning tasks they had been set at the Vicarage. ■

The Worthing Refugee Committee

THE WORTHING COMMITTEE was an agency set up to oversee and fund the education and welfare of refugee children. Mrs Doherty submitted my name and was delighted when they agreed to pay for my schooling. The committee, which consisted of a number of local individuals, each donated half a crown on a weekly basis to cover the cost of my education, school uniform and other essentials that I required. The chair of the committee was Miss Mary Maynard, whom I referred to as 'Aunt Mary'. I had an excellent relationship with her and she would often take me to the shops on a Saturday to buy everything I needed, followed by afternoon tea. Other members of the committee were also kind to me, teaching me to play the piano as well as teaching me how to knit socks and gloves.

On one occasion, Miss Maynard bought tickets to take me to a pantomime. The Dohertys did not approve, as they were critical generally of music and dancing as well as the kind of people who visited pantomimes. Nevertheless, Miss Maynard insisted and I had a wonderful time - the show was enormous fun. I knew the Dohertys well enough by this time to make sure that I appeared suitably unenthusiastic on returning home! As the Dohertys generally turned off the lights and retired to bed around 9.30pm, my return at 10pm was not appreciated. ■

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The Kingsdene School

IN MAY 1940, at only six years of age, I was sent away as a boarding student to a new school called Kingsdene. It was a small girls' school located on Shelley Road in Worthing, a 25-minute walk away from the Vicarage. The school was situated in two detached houses, one where we had our lessons and the other where we ate and slept.

The large classrooms were poorly heated with only one small fireplace in each. It was so cold that I developed terrible chilblains on my hands that were incredibly sore and caused me a great deal of pain as well as dripping blood that stained my schoolbooks. The wellington boots that I wore in wet weather also chafed the chilblains on my legs and feet causing them to become infected. Gas heaters, which were much more effective at heating the rooms, were finally installed in the school, but not until I had already suffered from the cold for about three years.

We wore identity bracelets at all times, so we could be identified if the school was bombed. We had to learn the bracelet number by heart and I've never forgotten mine, EMJQ87/7. We also had to carry our gas masks everywhere we went. The school had a strictly regulated timetable which included the small amount of free time that we were allowed. Once the day's lessons were finished we had a small break for a cup of tea with bread and butter, after which there was a half-hour walk followed by homework, which had to be completed in silence. We had one hour a day left free for our hobbies, which usually included sewing and knitting, followed by an hour-long silent reading session before bed.

I slept in a dormitory with three other girls. Two were the same age as me and the fourth was an older girl of 12, named Bunty, who was supposed to supervise and look after us. When Bunty found out that I was German, she made life incredibly difficult for me. She continually said that as we were at war with Germany I should return there. She would repeat this night after night and threatened to box my ears if she found me awake by the time she came to bed. This stressed me so enormously that I couldn't fall asleep. In Bunty's eyes, everything I did was wrong, although I had already become used to this kind of treatment during my time at the vicarage. I fully understood that I couldn't go back to 'where I came from' and I reassured myself with the thought that eventually my mother would be able to find me. I unequivocally and wholeheartedly believed that she would one day come for me.

The teachers at Kingsdene were mostly kind and caring. They helped me understand the things I found confusing and taught me the way things worked in the real world. The Headmistress was Miss Violet Alice Lovell and I believe she understood the unusual circumstances of my position within the Doherty household. Although I can't be certain, I think my school fees were paid by the Refugee Committee, but most of the other boarders also came to school with 10 shillings of pocket money. Of course I had not been provided with this, but despite not being able to hand any money to Miss Lovell, she put a tick next to my name on the register as confirmation she had received ten shillings from me, so that I could collect pocket money like the other pupils. The money either came from the Refugee Committee or, more likely, she put the money in for me herself.

At the end of the Christmas term in 1940, Bunty left the school and I was finally able to enjoy a better night's sleep. However I would sometimes lie awake wondering what would become of me. Shortly after this I woke one night in the pitch dark to find myself standing over the bed of another girl who told me that I had been tugging the bedclothes off her bed. I had been sleepwalking and this was the beginning of a period of somnambulation that continued to affect me during my time at school and for most of my adult life, only stopping around twenty years ago.

As time passed and my English improved I was gradually able to establish myself at school and to fit in. We were all allocated patches of ground to cultivate and I grew radishes and lettuces, tomatoes and marrows. We also looked after chickens, cleaning the hen houses, changing the water and collecting the eggs. The school had recently installed gymnastic apparatus and I very much enjoyed using the bars and the beam. I especially loved climbing the ropes, which I had learned to do from David Doherty back at the Vicarage. He would place pennies on the cross beam of the wooden post as an incentive for me to learn to climb the rope! I also joined the Brownies. One of my teachers was the Brown Owl and I was the happy recipient of a second-hand Brownie uniform. Although I thoroughly enjoyed Brownies I had no real desire to progress onto being a Girl Guide. Guides often went camping and the whole idea of that terrified me.

Happily, I also made some friends at school, firstly Maureen McClure and then, when she left the school, Felicity Amore, another day pupil who lived nearby. Miss Lovell suggested that I ask Felicity to come to school on Saturdays and join in the weekend activities with the boarders. I initially found this a strange proposal, as I couldn't understand why Felicity would wish to spend more time in school

rather than at home. I would have loved to have had the opportunity to spend time with my mother but I felt that Miss Lovell would not understand that. So, despite never finding out the answer, the pleasing outcome was that as well as sitting next to me in class, Felicity now joined me on a Saturday too.

It was from Felicity, however, that I contracted mumps when I was around nine years old. Mrs Doherty refused to let me return to the Vicarage, due to the fear of her own children contracting any kind of illness. I was therefore quarantined in the school's attic all by myself. Although I did not feel terribly ill, I was considered to be contagious and could not be near to anyone. A maid would bring up my meals on a tray, call out for me to collect them from the top of the stairs and then instruct me to return the dishes there when I had finished. The days spent in the attic were certainly long, boring and extremely lonely. I was not given any schoolwork to complete or anything to amuse myself, such as books to read. I spent my days mostly standing on the cold linoleum by the window looking out longingly at my schoolmates as they played netball during the afternoons.

At night, the air raid sirens would sound and the noise of enemy planes flying overhead would wake me. Worthing was not on the priority list and German aircraft usually passed over on their way to bombing raids above London and other major cities. Occasionally, though, returning planes would carry out hit and run raids on Worthing and dog fights between the RAF and the Luftwaffe would take place above the town. During these long sleepless nights, I would ask myself: 'Where do I belong? Why am I here? Who do I belong to? Am I German or am I English?' I was finally allowed to leave the attic. My isolation for the mumps had lasted for two weeks but certainly felt much longer.

Around this time I began learning French. The teacher was a French lady who lived in England and came to school to teach us the language one or two afternoons a week. After a few weeks, while happening to be alone in the cloakroom, I overheard Miss Lovell ask the French teacher how the classes were progressing. She replied that although everyone was doing well, I appeared to be picking up the language more quickly than anyone else. Miss Lovell replied: 'Oh, these Continentals! They pick up languages very easily.' I had worked so hard over the last three years trying to be English. I spoke the language, read the books, ate the food and played the games. I was stunned that I was still considered to be a Continental. Unfortunately, following this exchange my progress in French

deteriorated, resulting in my poorest grade in the School Certificate. I should have realised that listening in to other people's conversations rarely does you any good!

By the time I turned 11-years-old I had been a boarder at Kingsdene for five years and there were times when I found the place absolutely unbearable. One day in the late spring of 1944 I had enough and decided to run away, making for the local park, with which I was familiar, as we had visited there with the school. I ran all the way, feeling out of breath when I arrived, but free and happy to be away from school. I very much enjoyed the sensation of doing something forbidden without anyone reprimanding me. However, after some time in the park I realised that I didn't have anywhere else to go. Obviously returning to the Dohertys at the Vicarage was out of the question and returning to school would mean a scolding without anyone trying to understand what had compelled me to leave. Eventually I resigned myself to returning, ready to face the Headmistress's interrogation. What I didn't expect was to discover that nobody had noticed that I had gone! I had broken the rules and left the school, but nobody had even missed me. I truly felt that absolutely nobody cared about me and I was overcome with sadness, thinking: 'Where do I go from here? How do I get through this? How will I overcome another day?' ■

“ I had broken the rules and left the school, but nobody had even missed me. I truly felt that absolutely nobody cared about me and I was overcome with sadness... ”

School Holidays at the Vicarage

MY LIFE DIVIDED into two contrasting elements: my life at school and my life at the Vicarage during the holidays. At school I had the opportunity to enjoy cinema, theatre and concerts. The Dohertys deemed all those activities to be wicked and sinful and therefore not allowed. Similarly, none of us were ever allowed to bring friends to the Vicarage, although occasionally I would be given permission to visit the homes of girls from school. On my return Mrs Doherty would always attempt to quiz me about the visit and I always tended to purposely 'forget' the details, which did not please her.

During the holidays my relationship with the family was as difficult as ever. The Doherty siblings could often be both incredibly nice and extremely nasty towards me. 'Why are you still here?' and 'You don't belong in our family' were the type of hurtful comments that I regularly had to contend with. During one of the school holidays, David received an air rifle as a birthday gift. While I was playing in the garden, David leaned out of his bedroom window and shot me in the leg. I wasn't taken to the doctor because Mrs Doherty was anxious it shouldn't be known that her son had shot a refugee child. Auntie removed the pellet from my leg and dressed the wound. Although years later David stated he had no recollection of the incident, I still have the scar on my leg to prove it.

This was not the only time that David caused trouble for me. On another occasion I was summoned by Mrs Doherty and questioned about my knowledge of a smashed pantry window. As I had been playing with a ball in the garden, it was assumed that I must be the guilty party and despite protesting my innocence, I was accused of telling lies. It has to be said that I did sometimes tell lies to avoid getting into trouble, but on this occasion, I was telling the truth when I said that I had nothing to do with the breakage. As a punishment for my perceived crime, Mrs Doherty refused to speak a word to me for five days. Afterwards, Auntie told me that Mrs Doherty had actually known that I hadn't broken the window, because David had confessed to the deed. Although Mrs Doherty began speaking to me again, she never apologised for falsely accusing me and for not accepting my truth.

Mrs Doherty considered her family to be special and quite superior to other families. She was very conscious of other people's opinions, wanting to create a good impression and maintain a certain high standard and image as the vicar's wife. One example I remember which illustrates this point was a

day out with the family in Worthing. A woman approached Mrs Doherty and said: 'What four lovely young children you have.' Mrs Doherty replied: 'Oh yes, these three are mine' and then pointing at me: 'And this is the one I saved from Hitler.' Contrary to the impression she tried to convey, I always considered Mrs Doherty to be the wrong type of person to take care of a refugee child. She showed no warmth or understanding of my needs and was insensitive to how wounding her cruel offhand comments could be.

When I returned to the Vicarage during one school holiday, Mrs Doherty informed me that I was old enough to do my own washing and ironing, even though no one had shown me how to go about this task. The other children had their laundry taken care of by Aunty. This was just another example of the persistent 'me versus them' mentality that I had to endure during my time there. Mrs Doherty appeared to adore her sons. I sometimes wonder if my experience with the family would have been different had I been a boy.

I did attempt to make life easier for myself by trying to be a helpful and useful child. If I was sent to the shops I could be relied upon to return promptly in time for the food to be prepared for lunch. I also ran errands for the family. On one occasion David had an accident in the Vicarage and broke his leg. In such circumstances most people would have used the telephone to call for medical assistance. Mrs Doherty, however, instructed me to run to the doctor's surgery and summon them. The surprised receptionist asked if we had a telephone. We did have one, but Mrs Doherty much preferred to use me as her messenger.

“ I did attempt to make life easier for myself by trying to be a helpful and useful child. If I was sent to the shops I could be relied upon to return promptly in time for the food to be prepared for lunch. I also ran errands for the family. ”

On Sundays I attended church with the family. Reverend Doherty gave long and rambling sermons and although I sometimes went outside with the Doherty children, often I was made to sit and listen to them. When I first attended the services, everything was completely new to me as I had never been inside a church before. I was unaware of the proper rules of conduct and probably didn't behave as I should on my first few visits, but soon learned what to do by copying everyone else. The church had north and south transepts, positioned above the main hall and separated by a staircase, which is where the family sat. I was given crayons for colouring in Biblical texts so I wouldn't misbehave during services, although it was unlikely that anyone would have been able to see me high up inside the transepts. The church had a boys-only choir in which Ormonde and David sang. Ironically it was Shelagh, who was unable to join the choir because she was a girl, who had the best voice.

One particular Sunday, Aunty told Mrs Doherty that it would be better if I did not attend church that day. Aunty explained that there was going to be a gentleman attending who would be talking about the situation in Germany and she thought that it would be difficult for me to listen to. Mrs Doherty insisted on taking me to church, however, as there was no one to stay behind to look after me. Once in church I quickly realised that the gentleman was going to speak about something that should very much matter to me and I listened intently to his words. The visitor spoke about how the Jews in Germany were suffering, that they were being taken away and nobody knew where. Although I didn't consider myself to be Jewish, I was beginning to realise the information being relayed was relevant to me. I appreciated Aunty's kind attempt to spare me. Unfortunately, there was no one I could talk to about what I had heard. If I ever asked Mrs Doherty for information, her standard reply was: 'Don't they teach you anything at that school?' ■

After the War

WHEN THE WAR ended I grew desperate to see my mother again, but no one spoke to me about it or gave me any information or hope that she would be coming to collect me. One afternoon, Mrs Doherty suddenly said that Shelagh was going to take me to the cinema. We saw Richard Dimpleby's newsreels of the liberation of Bergen-Belsen concentration camp. I wasn't spoken to about what we saw and as a 12-year-old I found it impossible to comprehend that my mother could possibly be there.

When the world found out about the existence of the concentration camps, Worthing churches began collecting clothes and the older pupils at my school were dispatched to a church hall one Saturday morning to pack the clothes into sacks to be transported to Germany for the camp survivors.

At that time, Shelagh and I both attended Crusaders, a Christian youth organisation. When the war came to an end the group voiced their opinions that as I had the good fortune to have been saved from the Nazis, it was my God-given duty to return to Germany to help rebuild and support the country. This also appeared to be the sentiment of the majority of the Dohertys' church-going friends. It illustrated very well just how little understanding or compassion they had for my situation. I was only 12-year-old, I no longer spoke German and, as far as I was aware, had no one waiting for me should I return to Germany.

“ We saw Richard Dimpleby's newsreels of the liberation of Bergen-Belsen concentration camp. I wasn't spoken to about what we saw and as a 12-year-old I found it impossible to comprehend that my mother could possibly be there. ”

I found out much later that, despite not telling me anything, Mrs Doherty had in fact received a letter from my father in 1946 saying that he didn't know what had happened to my mother. In the letter he thanked the Doherty family for looking after me and said that he wasn't in a position, either mentally or physically, to take care of me himself due to the deprivation he had suffered during the war. Mrs Doherty sent the letter from my father to my school, urging the school staff to take on the responsibility of supporting me emotionally when I realised that it was likely that only one of my parents was still alive. I never saw my mother again.

Apparently, my father had tried to write to me three times before I successfully received a letter from him, the previous letters never reaching their destination. In the following years I continued to receive two or three letters a year from him, usually on my birthday or at Christmas. The correspondence mostly consisted of self-pitying letters about himself, describing how he was the unluckiest man in the world and how everything was wrong and terrible in his life. He would usually finish off his letters by remembering to enquire if I was well and doing satisfactorily as school. I would very much have appreciated a small amount of warmth from my father in his correspondence - all I wanted was some love, of which I was in short supply.

In 1948, I discovered that my father had remarried and had fathered three more children, Hannah, Micha and Christian. Tragically, his second wife died from a combination of tuberculosis and starvation due to the appalling shortages and living conditions in Germany at the time. After her death my father married Hannah's school teacher and had a son named Alan. His third wife succumbed to breast cancer, but before she died, my father had already met Lottie, who would become his fourth wife, at a book fair in Leipzig. It was clear that my father needed someone to be by his side all the time, requiring both support and company. ■

Changing Circumstances

REVEREND DOHERTY WAS approximately 19 years older than Mrs Doherty and had been married before. A bequest from his first wife (who had died from Spanish flu shortly after the First World War) eventually enabled him to leave the Vicarage and relocate with the family to a new large five-bedroom house on Langton Road. One of my major concerns about moving from the Vicarage was that if my mother was still alive she would not know how to find me. The worry of this made me feel quite deranged and I remember asking Aunty about what would happen regarding the post when we moved. She calmed and reassured me that the Post Office would forward any mail to our new address.

Around that time Reverend Doherty had begun writing a book. However he only managed to complete 10 chapters before he suddenly died of a heart attack in January 1947 at the age of 73. Mrs Doherty believed that he had been taken to heaven because he had discovered a secret that God didn't want him to reveal. In normal circumstances this would seem like a strange and outlandish assertion, but it was quite normal for the Doherty family. The fact that the Reverend was in poor physical shape and that this that may have contributed to his heart attack, was entirely ignored.

I was never informed directly about the Reverend's death. My school hadn't re-started after the Christmas holidays so I was at home at the time. In the usual manner I was called upon as a messenger and dispatched to Shelagh's school to deliver the news and request that she come home. Even in such circumstances, Mrs Doherty refused to use the telephone. Mrs Doherty was distraught after the death of her husband and did not leave her bedroom for a week. If it hadn't been for Aunty we might all have starved, as none of us knew how to cook. I was not permitted to attend the funeral as Mrs Doherty made it clear that it was for family members only and sent me away to school for the day. I felt more excluded from their bubble than usual and from then onwards life in the household became, if that were possible, even more difficult for me.

I found out many years later that sometime after the death of her husband, Mrs Doherty had approached the Worthing Refugee Committee and informed them that she no longer wished to be my guardian. Although by this time her own children were grown up, she used them as an excuse for not having enough time to devote to my upbringing. The committee informed her that she could not

now just abandon me and that they would pay her an extra £1.00 per week to continue having me in her household.

Although the Refugee Committee insisted I should remain with the family and paid Mrs Doherty a premium to keep me, the death of the Reverend marked a clear change. From then on, I was sent away as much as possible during the school holidays, only spending the briefest periods of time at the beginning and end of the vacation period with the Doherty family. I remember spending one holiday with a vicar and his young family and another at a Christian camp, paid for once again by the Refugee Committee members. However only a week out of the fortnight camp was covered and when the money ran out, I was forced to work as a maid for the remainder of the two-week period, joining in the camp activities only during the afternoons. ■

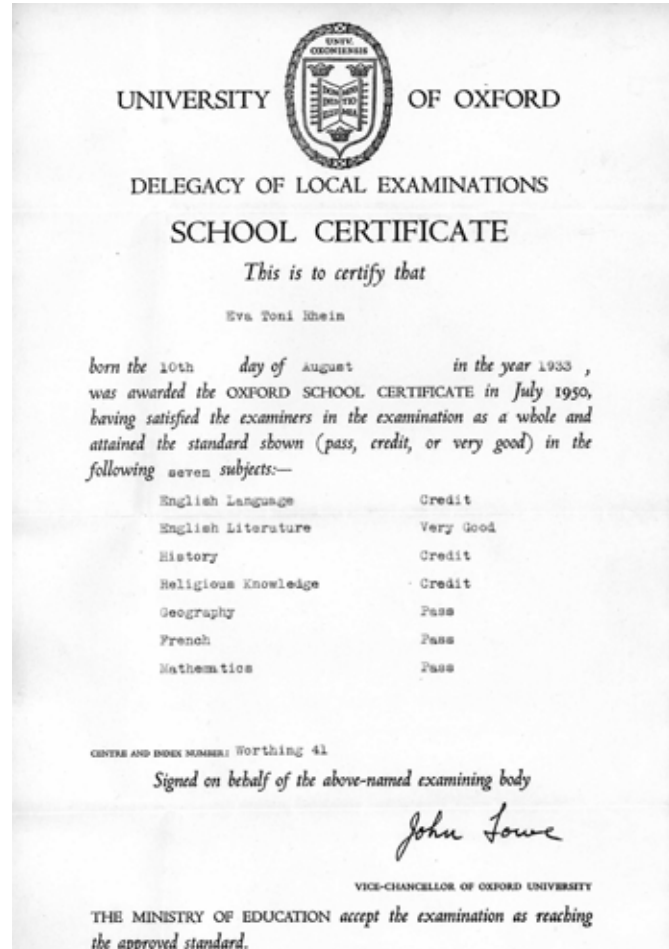


Mrs Doherty (right) with her sister Aunty, standing outside 7 Langton Road in 1949

Finishing School

IT'S HARD TO say how good a pupil I was at school as it's quite difficult to judge one's level of competence in a tiny boarding school. However, I always received decent reports at the end of the year and have kept them to this day. Copies of the reports were sent on to the Refugee Committee as they continued to fund my education.

I obtained my school certificate when I turned sixteen. I had been afraid of letting the Refugee Committee down, as they had been paying for me all these years, but I received some credits and distinctions. Unsurprisingly, my best subject was Scripture (religious education) and I also received a distinction in English literature and a credit in English language. Miss Burgess, who taught English, was a most inspirational teacher and instilled in me a lifelong love of literature. I was not particularly gifted at maths, although I did receive a credit for history, in which I had little interest, but attribute my success to decent teaching practices. ■



My school certificate, 1950

An Important Journey

DURING THE SUMMER of 1949, I was invited to take part in a school exchange visit to Switzerland. I am still uncertain how I came to be included in the trip or where the money to pay for it came from, as I wasn't acquainted with any of the girls or Yolande, the woman in charge of the trip. Nevertheless, I found myself joining a group travelling by sea to Holland and then continuing by train, firstly to Berne and then on to Zurich. Upon arrival an old school friend of my mother, Lisa Eck, came to greet me. I had never met her before, but we had been corresponding for a number of years and she invited me to stay at her home in Amden, St. Gallen, a mountain village.

Lisa Eck was an artist and her husband Frederick was a freelance journalist. Neither were Jewish, but sometime after 1933, when they saw what was happening to the Jewish population, they made the brave decision to leave Germany for Switzerland.

The Ecks were not a wealthy family and they now lived in a farming community, a far cry from the sophisticated city of Hamburg. It must have been a very different lifestyle from the previous cultured and cosmopolitan way of life they had enjoyed in Germany prior to the war. However, staying with them proved to be a marvellous experience. It was lovely to be wandering in the gorgeous scenery of the mountains, listening to the sound of the cow bells ringing. Mrs Eck and I spent our time mostly talking and shopping while endeavouring to get to know each other better.

“It was lovely to be wandering in the gorgeous scenery of the mountains, listening to the sound of the cow bells ringing. Mrs Eck and I spent our time mostly talking and shopping while endeavouring to get to know each other better.”

Before I returned to England the family generously gave me a wristwatch as a gift. It wasn't an expensive watch, but it was the first one I had ever owned and I loved it. Mrs Eck also gave me a book about the seasons called *Jahr-y-und us* by Gobi Walder which she had illustrated herself and I still have that treasured gift to this day. I continued to keep in touch with the Ecks long after my return from Switzerland, writing them letters of gratitude for the lovely holiday and generous gifts.

My only regret is that the decade I had spent living with the Dohertys had repercussions on my behaviour and personality. I had turned into a closed-up person. I had built a protective wall around my feelings, unable to show emotional warmth and had no idea how to break this down. The Ecks were not fluent in English, which was challenging, but despite this they tried to draw me out of my shell and encourage me to talk about my life in England, my sleepwalking habits and how much I missed my mother. I'm sure that Mrs Eck would have dearly liked me to have asked her questions about her friendship with my mother, but I simply found it impossible to enquire about such sensitive and intimate subjects. ■

Career and College

WHEN IT CAME to choosing a career path following school, the Kingsdene girls usually found they had just two options: nursing, where one would be paid while training, or secretarial work. I hated the idea of being stuck in an office all day and so decided to try nursing instead. I felt sure that the Worthing Refugee Committee would welcome my decision, as they would no longer have to pay for my training or be responsible for me, as I would live in a nurses' home.

I remember going on an excruciating train journey to London with Miss Lovell, the Headmistress, for an interview with the Matron at King's College. Miss Lovell could be terribly sarcastic and made me feel worthless by instructing me what to say or not to say. After years of virtually ignoring me at school, she now felt it opportune to place herself in a positive light by showing off my ability to become a competent nurse. While other girls had their mothers accompany them in the interview, I had to contend with Miss Lovell.

I also found it embarrassing that my personal circumstances had to be explained to the Matron. She asked me for my height and I replied that I was five feet five and a half inches tall. After looking me up and down she pronounced that couldn't be correct and that I was surely only five feet five inches tall. Once again, I found myself in the familiar situation of not having anything I said accepted, if it did not correspond to the other person's opinion. In the end however, I was offered a place on the nursing course. The only stumbling block was that I couldn't begin the training until I turned 18. As I was only 17, this was still a year away - what was I supposed to do in the meantime?

It was then that Miss Lovell made a suggestion that changed the course of my life. She offered me the opportunity to stand in as a temporary teacher for the Infants' class at Kingsdene. The regular teacher, Miss Jones, was due to have surgery and during her absence from work I would be given the chance to look after the four- and five-year-old pupils. The job incorporated structured play and pre-planned games that were appropriate for the age and learning needs of the students. I shared the role with Ann, another ex-pupil and prospective nurse and together we danced with the children, pretending to be anything from fairies to elephants as well as doing jigsaw puzzles and playing ball games in the garden.

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BOGNOR REGIS TRAINING COLLEGE

CERTIFICATE IN EDUCATION

THIS IS TO CERTIFY THAT

EVA TOBI REEIS

having satisfactorily completed the Two-Year
Course of academic and professional training
at the Bognor Regis Training College, and
having satisfied the Examiners in the following
subjects :

EDUCATION (including PHYSICAL and HEALTH EDUCATION)

DIVINITY

is awarded the Certificate in Education of the
University of Southampton
Institute of Education

W. E. R. Hildes

SECRETARY TO THE BOARD

DATED THIS 30th DAY

of November



D. G. James

CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD

W. R. D. Macklin

PRINCIPAL OF THE COLLEGE

My university certificate

I found that I loved this work and was encouraged by Miss Jones to consider a teaching career, for which I clearly had an aptitude. This caused me some concern as the Refugee Committee were continuing to pay for my education and I felt they might be reluctant to consider a new option. However, I was pleasantly surprised to discover that grants were available from the local authority for suitable candidates. Thankfully my grant application was successful and it paid for my tuition, board and lodging and also the books I required in both my first and second year of teacher training.

Miss Maynard, the head of the Refugee Committee, put me in touch with Miss Connie Farbridge, who had undertaken her teacher training at Bognor Regis Training College. Connie assured me that the college principal, Mr Macklin, was a lovely person and that she had greatly enjoyed her time studying there. I was delighted to hear that a place was available and Connie drove me in her car the 28 miles to Bognor Regis. While we were walking around the college grounds we came across a man digging in the garden. He turned out to be none other than Mr Macklin himself. He escorted us inside and conducted my interview in his lounge while wearing his gardening clothes! In 1951 I was delighted to commence my two-year teaching course, specialising in Religious Studies, at Bognor Regis Training College. I lived on campus during term time and only returned to the Dohertys during the holidays.

On the day I left for college Mrs Doherty handed me a letter from the Refugee Children's Movement which dealt with underage *Kindertransport* children. Mrs Doherty had made enquiries from the movement in 1946 regarding my mother. She received a reply that stated my mother had been deported to Riga on 4 December 1941 and had never returned. The letter went on to say that the committee very much regretted having to convey such distressing news and that they would leave it to Mrs Doherty's discretion as to whether it was advisable to inform me or whether I should wait for any further news. Mrs Doherty had decided to wait until six years had passed before showing me this letter, but to a young person of my age it was the equivalent of having to wait forever. In subsequent years I never received a definitive confirmation of my mother's death. At the age of 80, when in discussion with my therapist, I finally heard the words 'your mother is dead' and was able to acknowledge them for the first time as the truth. ■

Life After College

AFTER COMPLETEING MY two-year course and passing my exams, the college advertised teaching posts for which we were qualified to apply. Two areas of the country were in desperate need of teachers, Luton and Birmingham. I knew very little about either place, but did have a friend from college named Frank Peet who came from Birmingham. He promised that if I applied for the job there, his mother would help me find suitable digs in the city. It seemed like an ideal solution so I applied for the teaching post in Birmingham.

Mrs Peet was as good as her word and helped me to secure an attic room at 7 Tennyson Road, where I lodged with Mrs Trippas. Once I had moved in I received a box from Mrs Doherty. It contained every item of my belongings that still remained in her house. It felt as though Mrs Doherty was finally washing her hands of me and throwing me out of her house for the last time.

As graduating students, we were obliged to sign a pledge stating that we would use our training to teach in schools and be of service to the country. This certainly felt fair, as we had received our training for free. The only stumbling block was that my declaration stated 'I promise to teach if I am allowed to remain in the country'. The only way for me to ensure this was by becoming a British national. I decided I would be naturalised as soon as I turned 21. I hadn't realised that I was no longer considered a German citizen, as Hitler had declared that any national residing outside the country in April 1941 would lose their citizenship.

My first teaching position was at Cockshut Hill Primary School in Yardley, where, despite my specialised training in Religious Studies, I would teach junior school children. My first day was in September 1953 and I was among a number of new teachers gathered outside the staffroom, waiting for the head teacher to allocate us our classes. I was to be responsible for a class of seven-year-olds who had just left infant school and were making the transition to junior school. That period in time was known as 'The Bulge', thanks to the high birth rate that followed the war, and there were now exceptionally large class sizes. There I was, a newly qualified teacher, fresh out of college, facing a class of 50 children with no help or assistance. I would earn £5.50 a week, out of which I had to pay £1.62 for my lodging and around seven old pence for my bus fare to school. I made some good friends among the other new young teachers who joined at the same time as me, but ultimately I only stayed


at the school for two years as the hierarchy and attitude of the older members of staff were sometimes challenging.

By the time I reached the age of 21 in 1954 I felt established as a teacher and was ready to begin the process of naturalisation. This involved a visit to a local police station where I was questioned on a number of topics. As well as being asked if I could speak English (which of course I could) I was asked if I had any illegitimate children! Although it wasn't news to me that unmarried women could become mothers, I was still shocked to be asked, as it wasn't the type of topic I would usually discuss. After completing the relevant paperwork, I was told to report to the Commissioner for Oaths at the Central Police Station, who would hear my pledge and request to become a British citizen. At 10.30 one morning I proceeded to read the oath out loud and promised to be a law-abiding British citizen, loyal to the monarch. The Commissioner presented me with my certificate and I could finally call myself British. I left the building with a stern warning to take care of my certificate because if I mislaid it I wouldn't be able to get a replacement and that no one would believe I was British without it.

Later that year I wrote to Mrs Eck, my mother's friend, and asked if I could come and visit them in Switzerland. She invited me to spend Christmas of 1954 with them and it was wonderful. By this time the Ecks had moved to Filzbach, Glarus, a village surrounded by gorgeous scenery which was covered in snow and looked most picturesque. The family made me feel exceptionally welcome and I felt myself finally begin to thaw, the wall of coldness that the Dohertys had constructed around me began to melt. Despite this I still felt slightly inhibited and was never able to put my arms around Mrs Eck and give her a tight hug that would have greatly benefited us both. My inability to do this saddened me for many years afterwards.

“The family made me feel exceptionally welcome and I felt myself finally begin to thaw, the wall of coldness that the Dohertys had constructed around me began to melt.”

Certificate No. **BNA 36880** Home Office No. **B.5307.**



BRITISH NATIONALITY ACT, 1948.
CERTIFICATE OF NATURALISATION

Whereas *Eva Tomi Rhein*
has applied to one of Her Majesty's Principal Secretaries of State for a certificate of naturalisation, alleging with respect to *herself* the particulars set out below, and has satisfied the Secretary of State that the conditions laid down in the British Nationality Act, 1948, for the grant of a certificate of naturalisation are fulfilled:
Now, therefore, the Secretary of State, in pursuance of the powers conferred upon him by the said Act, grants to the said *Eva Tomi Rhein*
this Certificate of Naturalisation, and declares that upon taking the Oath of Allegiance within the time and in the manner required by the regulations made in that behalf *she* shall be a citizen of the United Kingdom and Colonies as from the date of this certificate.

In witness whereof I have hereto subscribed my name this *8.* day of *March*, 19 *55*

HOME OFFICE,
LONDON.

J. A. Newsam
MINISTER SECRETARY OF STATE.

PARTICULARS RELATING TO APPLICANT.

Full Name	<i>Eva Tomi Rhein</i>
Address	<i>110, Pinner Road, Pinner, Middlesex, England.</i>
Profession or Occupation	<i>School Teacher.</i>
Place and date of birth	<i>Stassfurt, Harzgebirge, Germany. 1906 August, 11th.</i>
Nationality	<i>German.</i>
Single, married, etc.	<i>Single.</i>
Name of wife or husband	<i>- - -</i>
Names and nationalities of parents	<i>Father: Heinrich Rhein, German; Mother: Gertrude Rhein, German.</i>

Oath of Allegiance

I, **EVA TOMI RHEIN**
swear by Almighty God that I will be faithful and bear true allegiance to Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth the Second, Her Heirs and Successors, according to law.


(Signature) *Eva Tomi Rhein*

Sworn and subscribed this *18th* day of *March*, 19 *55*, before me.

(Signature) *Gordon James Boregwanath*

Justice of the Peace for *the City of Birmingham*
Gordon James Boregwanath

Name and Address (in Block Capitals) **Gordon James Boregwanath, Esq.,
The Victoria Law Courts, Birmingham**



Unless otherwise indicated hereon, if the Oath of Allegiance is not taken within one calendar month of the date of this Certificate, the Certificate is of no effect.

HOME OFFICE
29 MAR 1955
REGISTERED

My naturalisation certificate received in 1955



I still have the book Lisa Eck bought me on our trip to Zurich

I had also brought with me some German documents given to me by my father that I was hoping the Ecks could translate and explain to me. I handed them my parents' marriage certificate which had something written in the top left-hand corner and when Mrs Eck saw this she began to cry, which distressed me greatly. She explained to me that the words written on the top of the certificate stated that my parents were divorced, which she hadn't been aware of. It now became clear to her how my father had managed to retain the bookshop that was partly financed by my mother. It would have been confiscated if he had remained married to a Jew. What upset her the most was that it appeared that his business meant more to him than his wife and child.

Before returning to England, Mrs Eck and I travelled to Zurich to visit an exhibition of the work of Wilhelm Busch, a German humourist, poet, illustrator and painter. Mrs Eck bought me a copy of one of his most famous books, *Max and Moritz*, which tells of the adventures and troubles of two naughty boys. I still have this book with Lisa's inscription to me at the front. ■



The inscription and sketch of me by Lisa inside the book

Marriage and Motherhood

IN 1954 I met my future husband, Robert Lorimer, at a dance hall called *The West End*. Robert was a Protestant man from Bellaghy, a small village outside Belfast, and was five years older than me. He was trained as a motor mechanic and was working in a factory when we met. Robert seemed to be very fond of me and introduced me to things that I hadn't been able to experience while living at the Vicarage, such as dances, the cinema and the theatre.

We married in St Mary's Church in Acocks Green, Birmingham on 31 March 1956. I told the Dohertys that I was getting married and as I had no other relatives, David Doherty gave me away. Mrs Doherty chose not to attend. Robert and I rented a home in Acocks Green which consisted of a sitting room and kitchen, a bedroom and an outside toilet. The first two years of our marriage were very happy. I genuinely believed that he cared for me more than anyone I knew in England. We were both working, but the factory environment wasn't good for Robert's health due to the dust, so he switched to becoming a car mechanic instead. We used his wages to pay for our living expenses, while putting my salary towards the purchase of our own home.

Robert's parents, who lived in Bellaghy, obviously wanted to meet me and we used some of my savings to fly to Northern Ireland. When we arrived, my mother-in-law opened the door and before we had even stepped over the threshold she looked me in the face and asked: 'You're not Catholic, are you?' Only after assuring her that I wasn't would she let me into the house. Robert told me afterwards that if I had been a Catholic she really wouldn't have let me in. This infuriated me. Robert and I were already a married couple, but she would nevertheless have barred her daughter-in-law from her home. Needless to say, our stay there was a short one and lasted for only three or four days.

I carried on teaching until the end of the summer term of 1958 and our son, David Frederick, was born in the October of that year. I chose the name David because I liked it and Frederick as a tribute to Lisa Eck's husband. I couldn't afford to take my new-born son on a trip to Switzerland, but I sent the Ecks a photograph of him.



With Robert at Coalport

In 1959, I received a letter from Lisa Eck informing me that she was in hospital suffering from advanced bowel cancer. This was the last letter that she ever sent me. Frederick Eck who had long-term heart problems died the same year. Their deaths affected me deeply as they were the only link I had with my mother. They had always been kind, generous and loving towards me and even if I had found it challenging to express my feelings for them, I had always greatly appreciated them.

Not long after this, the relationship between Robert and me began to change. For a little while after David's birth, Robert had been proud about his new status of being a father. Then one day he returned home from work and told me: 'Put him away now, I'm home.' His attitude concerned me: it was as if David were a toy which could just be removed and hidden away. I tried to talk to Robert about this, but his response was always negative and he had the opinion that it was the woman's job to look after children and not the man's. It was a challenge for me to make Robert understand that David was the child of both of us, that we had become a family of three, but it never really felt like we were a proper family.

After David's birth, Robert decided that he didn't want me to return to work. He didn't want anyone else to take care of David and feared that he may have to start helping with childcare or housework if I wasn't at home. Robert was the youngest and extremely spoilt only son in a family with two older sisters and consequently he couldn't or wouldn't do a single thing within the home, not even make a cup of coffee for himself as he considered even that to be woman's work. The only job which he didn't mind doing was polishing shoes, as he saw this as a man's job. Ironically despite all the other work which I had to take on, I also actually enjoyed polishing shoes.

In 1959 the United Restitution Office was allocating reparations to people who had come to Britain as *Kindertransport* refugees. I applied and was awarded £500 to compensate for the death of my mother. As David had already turned one year old and was beginning to crawl around, we need a more suitable place to live. We ended up using my restitution money to pay for the deposit on a new house. Robert did the house hunting and eventually found us a three-bedroom, semi-detached house in Valley Road, Solihull. The house cost £2,000. ■



Me in the garden of 64 Valley Road, August 1965

Contact with the Dohertys

DURING THE ENTIRE time that I lived in Birmingham, from teaching to getting married and having children, I only had occasional contact with the Doherty family. To be honest, one of the reasons I was keen to move away from Sussex when I qualified as a teacher was to make it more difficult for the family to make demands on me when their need arose. I thought it very likely that they would turn to me with the excuse that they had taken care of me as a child and therefore it would be my duty to return the favour.

Mrs Doherty died from a brain hemorrhage in 1958. The family asked me if I would attend the funeral but as well as not having enough money to make the journey, David was only a few months old and it would have been difficult. Over time the gaps between our correspondence had lengthened and I had never travelled down south to show my baby son to the family.

When we moved into our new house, David Doherty called to say he and his wife were going on holiday and they wanted to bring the now 90-year-old Aunty to stay with us. With a small child and a difficult husband, taking on board an elderly person was out of the question, so I refused.

David Doherty died about seven years ago and I am still in contact with Evelyne, his widow. They did not have children. Shelagh Doherty moved to Stafford to work in the library. I visited her there with my daughter, Jo, and Shelagh also occasionally came to visit me in Birmingham. She never married and I attended her funeral in Stafford probably sometime in 1995.

Ormonde Doherty was ordained as a Church of England curate and married a lady called Margaret. They had three children. Ormonde converted to Catholicism and became a school headmaster. He died sometime after Shelagh but I did not attend his funeral. ■

A Difficult Marriage

I WAS A stay-at-home mum until David turned four when I heard that a morning-only, part-time teaching post had become available for one school term. The idea of returning to teaching absolutely thrilled me and would also provide us with some extra income. Although Robert wasn't fond of the idea, I contacted the school to accept the post and was pleased to find out that David could attend the Reception class while I was teaching.

Life at home, however, was becoming more difficult. Robert began objecting if anyone was in the house when he came home from work. If David had a friend over to play, Robert would immediately get the child's coat and take him home. When David started school, I met other mothers at the school gates, but Robert didn't want me socialising with anyone. It made all the usual activities that I could have done with friends, like meeting for tea or going to the cinema, impossible. I couldn't ask anyone to the house to look after David, and Robert would purposely never tell me what time he would be coming home from work which made me too nervous to invite any potential friends home in case they were still there when he arrived back.

I did manage to maintain one friendship, with a lady whose husband was a policeman. She was very sympathetic and realised that Robert's behaviour was having a serious impact on my mental health. I had lost a huge amount of weight from the stress and my friend was kind enough to get me some new clothes that fitted me, as I didn't have enough of my own money to buy anything. Life lost all meaning for me and I would sometimes not even have enough energy to do anything but just sit. Although teaching made me happy it was only a few hours out of a life that consisted solely of getting David ready for school, taking him to school, doing housework, collecting David from school and then preparing an evening meal for my husband. I had no money, no independence, no one to talk to and no opportunity to ever have fun. Consequently, after David had been in school for around a year, I suffered a severe mental breakdown.

I was finally able to get treatment at the Uffculme Clinic, which is now part of the Birmingham and Solihull Mental Health NHS Foundation Trust. The clinic suggested that I try reasoning with Robert, in the hope that any kindness and understanding I showed him would be reciprocated. It was not a successful plan as, despite the treatment I was going through, Robert blamed the situation entirely on

me. He felt that he deserved to be looked after and treated in a certain way and was never in any way supportive. After attending the clinic for around one year, my case was passed onto the Chief Medical Officer, who was extremely understanding and helped me enormously. I found myself able to talk to him as I had never been able to speak to anyone before. With his support I became mentally much stronger.

Despite the difficulties in our marriage, in 1970 I gave birth to our daughter Joanne. I was delighted to have a daughter and hoped that it would make us a real family at last. Sadly, this was not the case due to Robert's callousness and complete lack of understanding for my feelings. I was 36 years old and considered leaving with the children, but I didn't have anywhere to go or anyone to turn to for help. Robert cruelly said that it would be impossible for me to run back to my mother if I was unhappy. His words hurt me terribly.

Despite the 11-year age gap and differences in personality between David and his sister, they got on well. By the time Jo was two years old, I had to make sure that she was the one not doing her brother any harm! If David did something that she didn't like, she would just poke him in the eye with her fingers. Joanne was indeed a very independent little girl: even at five years old she insisted that I didn't

“Despite the 11-year age gap and differences in personality between David and his sister, they got on well. By the time Jo was two years old, I had to make sure that she was the one not doing her brother any harm!”

need to walk her all the way to school. Once I had helped her learn how to look out for traffic and cross roads safely we arranged that instead of coming to school to collect her, I would wait by a letter box on the road not far from home. She announced early on that she wanted to have her ears pierced, just like the other girls at school. I told her that she was too young, but rashly promised she could have her ears pierced when she turned nine. She never forgot my words and as her ninth birthday approached, she insisted that I kept my promise, which I did.

Despite the objections from Robert, I had continued to teach. From Woodlands Infant School I transferred to Ulverley Primary School, where I remained until my retirement at the age of 58. When Jo was around 13 years old, Robert lost his job and was unable to find another. He would sit on the sofa all day while I was at work, unwilling or unable to complete even simple tasks such as going to buy a loaf of bread. He was becoming increasingly unreliable and unpredictable and we realised we couldn't depend on him for anything. He finally left home on the pretext of trying to find employment down on the south coast.

After five years I was granted an unconditional divorce and it was only later that I realised he was suffering from early onset dementia, which may well have accounted for some of his unreasonable behaviour. Jo and David visited him in the latter stages of his life, but I chose not to attend his funeral when he passed away a few years later, leaving my children to pay their last respects to their father without me. ■

Meeting my Father

AFTER THE BERLIN Wall came down in 1989, I received a letter from my father demanding that I come to Germany to visit him. He would have been around 83 years of age and I was certainly not keen to meet him as I didn't consider he had ever treated either my mother or me kindly. I was also finally getting on well in my own life; David was married and Jo was in college. The only person who I felt able to discuss the possibility of this visit with, was my GP who told me if I didn't go, I might regret it for the rest of my life.

It was therefore with a certain amount of hesitancy that, with David, I flew to Germany in October 1990. From Hamburg we travelled 68 kilometres by rail to Lübeck, to meet with my father for the first time since 1939. As we were approaching our destination I became increasingly anxious. When we finally arrived, I saw my father waiting for us; I recognised him immediately but I was reluctant to greet him. David put his hand on my back and gently propelled me up the stairs towards my father. It certainly felt strange saying: 'Hello father', when I was finally standing in front of him.

I looked around in search of Lottie, my father's wife, but she had hidden so as not to interfere during the first moments of our reunion. My father took us to a restaurant where Lottie joined us. She told us that her English was limited and she wouldn't be able to actively participate in the conversation, although this turned out not to be true. I found that I could barely eat anything while sitting in front of my father.

We were, in effect, complete strangers to each other. My father had fixed concepts and ideas about my life that were completely inaccurate. He seemed convinced that I neither knew nor remembered anything about the life I'd had in Germany with my mother. He also believed that my life in England had been absolutely wonderful, growing up with compassionate people who were kind to Jews. My only thoughts were: 'Who is this man?' and, 'Why does he think he knows everything about me, when in reality he knows nothing and has never been interested in getting to know me?'

He seemed thoroughly surprised when I told him that I remembered much from my first five years with my mother. He seemed unable to understand the unhappy nature of my relationship with the Doherty family and despite our long-term correspondence by letter after the war, there was no

connection between the two of us. Despite the strained atmosphere between us Lottie drove us to their home in Wismar and insisted that we stay the night. They lived in a lovely spacious house which my father had built according to his own design and of which he was extremely proud.

My father told me that he and my mother had shared a deep love for one another and that he had promised to remarry her once the war was over. What he didn't realise was that amongst a box of documents in my possession was a copy of my parents' marriage certificate and also a letter from my mother congratulating him on his second marriage. I was perfectly aware that he had married a second time before my mother was deported. I was deeply hurt when I had found those letters: I found it so unkind of him to make a promise to my mother that he had no intention of keeping. My father also insisted that he never knew my mother's fate. He said that he always understood that she had been taken to Auschwitz. I knew this not to be true, as I had received the letter from the Refugee Children's movement, stating that my mother had been deported to Riga in 1941 and had never returned.

The tension between us did ease somewhat the next day. We walked around Wismar and David and my father forged a bond thanks to their shared interest in choral music and admiration for churches and architecture. They began to enjoy each other's company and in the meantime I went shopping and sightseeing with Lottie. I appreciated that she was a lovely and caring woman who loved both my father and her stepchildren.

My father was a very needy person and constantly required reassurance of his own worth from those around him. He craved company and found it difficult to be on his own. Two of his siblings, who he had been closest to, had died before the fall of the Berlin Wall and I think this increased his anxiety and desire for a family member to visit him before he became too old. I suspect that this is when he thought of me: he wanted his daughter to appreciate the difficulties he had experienced during his life. After staying at his house for a couple of nights, we made an excuse to leave. I thanked my father and Lottie for their invitation and hospitality, saying all the things that a well brought up English person would say. When putting my arms around my father just before setting off, he told me that I was very hard. I probably did appear that way to him, but I felt that he had also been hard on me, never having made me feel loved or wanted, or indeed understanding or empathising with the experiences that I had lived through.

We took the train back to Hamburg and David observed that once we left Lübeck and the awful dread of meeting my father was finally over, I became a different person. Nevertheless, meeting with my father had a profound and long-term effect on my mental health, throwing me into turmoil. I was in a terrible state, unable to continue teaching and forced to retire due to ill health.

In 1993, my father died at the age of 86. He had fallen into a coma following unsuccessful surgery for a brain tumour. I heard the news from Lottie, who wrote telling me how sad she was and describing the funeral to me in detail. Her words failed to bring out any feelings of sadness in me.

It transpired that my father had not intended me to be a beneficiary of his will, but German law prevented this. After no doubt being informed of this clause, my father had seemingly added an additional amendment to his will in accordance with the law's demands and my small inheritance was transferred to an English bank. Despite my trying to claim the money to which I was entitled, the bank denied any knowledge of the documentation pertaining to the legacy. In all honesty I no longer cared about the money. I had only ever wanted affection and acceptance from my father, the money meant nothing to me.

A few years after my father's death, Lottie invited me to return to Wismar and we spent some delightful days together as friends. Ironically, it was actually Lottie who willingly left me a monetary bequest in her will. ■

My Trip to Israel

DURING THE 1990s I became a member of the Birmingham branch of the Council of Christians and Jews. They planned a study tour to Israel in October 1999 and I decided to join the trip. I was interested in visiting Israel because of my mother's heritage and I wanted to learn more about Judaism.

We flew to Tel Aviv and travelled to Kibbutz Lavi in the Lower Galilee for the first few nights. We then drove through the Judean Desert, where we enjoyed refreshments with the Bedouin Arabs. In Jerusalem we explored the Western Wall, the Mosque at the Temple Mount, The Church of the Holy Sepulchre and the Convent of the Sisters of Zion. We also visited the beautiful Church of Ecce Homo on the famous Via Dolorosa, which impressed me greatly. At Lake Tiberius, also known as the Sea of Galilee, I collected some tiny and beautifully unique stones from the shore which I brought home with me.

We also visited Yad Vashem. It was here that I was able to verify that my mother's name and details were included amongst those murdered in the Holocaust. I was most upset at seeing the cattle trucks. The mere thought of my mother being in one of them, terribly frightened and with no access to food, water or a toilet, greatly distressed me. I have no idea if she knew any other people from the Hamburg community who were also deported, or whether she had to endure this horrific situation alone.

I'm glad that I went to Israel and very much enjoyed the trip, but being there did not especially help me feel more connected to my mother. In my mind her history belonged elsewhere. ■

Visiting Riga

WHEN I WAS 67, I received information that the AJR (Association of Jewish Refugees) was planning a trip to Riga in Latvia to visit the memorial to the Jews who had been murdered there. I was determined to go and didn't tell anyone about my plans other than my children. David was concerned after witnessing the effect that the trip to see my father had on me, but I knew deep in my heart that I had to go. I needed to see with my own eyes the place where my mother had spent her last days before being killed.

The memorial project was the initiative of Eric Herzl, originally from Vienna, whose wider family had perished in Riga. I made contact with a lady from South Wales named Ellen Kerry Davis. She had also come to England on the *Kindertransport* and we travelled to Riga together in November 2001. It was very cold, temperatures were around minus six degrees centigrade and the pavements in Riga were coated thickly with ice.

The morning after our arrival, we were taken by coach to the site of the Riga Ghetto. The Ghetto, which is still very much intact, had been located in a small area within the Maskavas Forstate neighbourhood. Jews from Latvia, and later on from Germany, were forced to live there, within an area that became known as the German Ghetto.

My mother was deported from Hamburg on 4 December 1941. Along with 996 other people she was taken by train across northern Germany to Riga in Latvia. We were taken to the station where the train would have terminated, the final destination for my mother and other Jews deported from Hamburg. Young men were taken off the train and mostly sent to do hard labour at the Salaspils concentration camp, which was originally known as Salaspils Police Prison and 're-education through labour' camp. Many women, children and others deemed unfit for manual labour were forced to walk to the Bikernieki Forest. Once there they were stripped of their clothes, shot and thrown into deep pits. The mastermind responsible for this appalling atrocity was SS Commander Friedrich Jeckeln. His instructions were that the pits should not be dug too deeply, so that the corpses would not contaminate the drinking water for the Riga population. I could hardly bear to contemplate the evilness of this act.

Our final part of the trip was to visit the memorial within the Bikernieki Forest. It commemorates the memory of the 35,000 individuals murdered there and it is the largest mass murder site in Latvia. Separate stone memorials marked the places from which the Jews killed here had originated. Despite not having been raised with a knowledge of Judaism, I knew enough about the traditions not to bring flowers to leave on the graves. Instead I placed one of the stones that I had collected from the Sea of Galilee on the Hamburg marker in honour and remembrance of my dear mother.

On our last evening, Ellen and I attended a Strauss and Brahms concert at the Great Guild Hall in Riga, conducted by Olari Elts. It was absolutely wonderful and helped to distract us from the intense thoughts and emotions we had experienced when visiting the forest memorial.

Before I embarked on the trip I had read a book titled *The Holocaust in Latvia* by Andrew Ezergalis which had given me a basic understanding of what had happened there, but my knowledge of events was amplified after seeing for myself where the atrocities against Jews had been perpetrated. The visit brought about a profound difference to my life and world view: although I had long ago accepted the knowledge of the suffering that my mother had experienced, I had often maintained a detached attitude towards the information. Following the trip, the events became more personal and visiting the place of her death helped me to fully acknowledge what had happened to her. Although I am uncertain where exactly in Riga my mother died, the memorials that I saw there symbolised my mother's last resting place and I felt as though I had finally achieved some sort of closure. ■

My Family in Argentina

SOME YEARS AGO, David began to compile a family tree. He discovered that although no exact details were known, my great-uncle Walter had survived the war and died in Johannesburg in 1953. His son Juan had managed to escape Germany for Argentina, had married and started a family there. Early on during the war, Juan had written to Mrs Doherty enquiring about me and asking her to inform me that he had survived and was living in Argentina. He wanted me to know that I had at least one relative alive and safe. Mrs Doherty informed me of this letter to which she had replied, but at that stage I was too young to read it.

A number of years later, I decided that I would very much like to try and trace my relatives still living in Argentina. I contacted the AJR to seek advice on how to do this and was put in touch with a lady who said she would arrange for an advert to be placed in a Jewish magazine in Buenos Aires asking for information.

By the time I placed the advert, Juan had passed away, but he had a son named Enrique who responded. Enrique was married to Karen and they had three children, Martin, Jackie and Gabriel. Enrique called me, although the conversation was rather difficult as his English was somewhat limited and I didn't speak any Spanish. However, his daughter Jackie was planning to study at Oxford University and she arranged to meet me and Jo in Birmingham when she came to England. This initial meeting proved to be quite awkward as my upbringing with the Doherty family had left me with a 'stiff upper lip' mentality, afraid of becoming too emotional. I'm happy to say that we did meet up with members of their family again a few years later. This time it was Gabriel with her mum Karen and the meeting was much easier and more enjoyable. ■

My Life Now

THE DEAREST PEOPLE in my life are by my side: my son David, my daughter Jo and her two children, Archie and Gaby. I am very close to them all and love them enormously - they bring delight and pleasure to my life.

David became an engineer and, with his marvellous singing voice, he is also a member of several choirs. Jo works as a music administrator at a boarding school and I am delighted that my family have such musical interests.

My grandchildren are very precious to me - they represent the power of continuity. Although David does not have children of his own he has a wonderful relationship with his nephew and niece, always making time for each of them, which pleases me greatly. As David is an engineer he is able to connect with Archie over their mutual interest in cars and he and Gaby both share a passion for music.

Both of my children are knowledgeable regarding the Holocaust, but don't ask me many questions because they understand how painful this subject is for me. When Jo was a child, she did once ask if I would have preferred to stay in Germany with my mother or move to England on my own. I told her that my preference would always have been to have stayed with my mother.

“Both of my children are knowledgeable regarding the Holocaust, but don't ask me many questions because they understand how painful this subject is for me.”



From left to right: Joanne, David and me, with Gaby and Archie, August 2013



Me and Archie, 2007

When each of my grandchildren turned six, the age at which I was sent away, I tried to imagine what it would be like if they were forced to be sent away due to circumstances that might put their lives in danger. When my own children were that age I was too preoccupied with trying to feed and clothe them to consider it, but with Archie and Gaby it was almost too painful to contemplate.

I have been a Quaker now for more than a decade. I am known as an Attender, not a fully devoted member of the movement. However, I enjoy going to the meetings and find the other members incredibly friendly and welcoming. I have also attended St Nicholas Church of England in Elmdon, Sheldon where I used to volunteer twice a week. David and later Jo both sang in the church choir in spite of my husband's objections and David recently told me that enabling him to do so was the best thing I could have done for him.

I am a member of two different reading groups and a historical appreciation group called Chinnwags (named after the Birmingham historian Carl Chinn). We meet once a month to discuss both the history of the Hall Green district of Birmingham and any other subject that takes our fancy.

I have always enjoyed socialising and have a great interest in people and how their personal stories shape the characters they become. ■

Thoughts on the Bikernieki Forest Memorial

by Eva Lorimer

Tall, straight fir trees
Seeking the light
In that dark place
The bleakness spreads
From '41 forever.
Snow, cold, icy wind
Sweeps along the man-made path
Now snow covered.
Then it was cold
So cold
Now the ice is inside as well as outside.
Looking around
I see strength
In old age
Fortitude, perseverance
For sixty years
Waiting, waiting
For recognition

Of happenings here.
Mother, Father
Brother, Sister
Aunts, Uncles and Cousins
All were here
Alive.....but
Marked with J.
Then shots were fired
Down they fell
Dead.
Forever gone
Gone from us
The survivors.
Standing herenow mourning
Where do thoughts go?
Where do they lead?
Unspeakable murders
And in such numbers
Too much for me
Who dies again inside

Don't die alone
I want to be there
Just to hold your hand.
No chance of that.
Were you alone?
Someone to speak to
To reach out to you
Before oblivion.
Careful walking
Around the memorial
Little paths
Among the place names
Berlin, Vienna
Kassel, Hamburg.
So many places
So many souls
Lost, gone forever.

I want to record my thanks to The Worthing Refugee Committee, especially to Miss Mary Maynard, chairperson, secretary and treasurer, who saw to it that I always had the correct school uniform, to Miss Raven, who took me out and taught me to play cards and to Miss Bell, who knitted long socks for me each winter and taught me how to turn heels and knit gloves.



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.

