

WIENER LIBRARY NEWS

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WIENER LIBRARY OPENS BRANCH AT THE JEWISH MUSEUM, BERLIN

Dr Alfred Wiener, the Library's founder, was born on 16 March 1885 in Potsdam, just outside Berlin. It was in Germany's capital that he began his life's work of resisting right-wing antisemitism and making the evidence of Nazi persecution available for all to see.

With this in mind, 16 March 2008 was chosen to mark the formal launch of one of the Library's most exciting ventures – the creation of a branch library inside the Jewish Museum, Berlin. The Museum, housed in the famous Libeskind building, is surely a global symbol of Jewish survival and revival, and the most fitting partner possible for such a venture by the world's oldest Holocaust documentation centre.

This union has been the fruit of almost two years' work by the Library's Director Ben Barkow and the Museum's Archivist Aubrey Pomerance, who shared a vision of making

parts of the Library's remarkable collection available to scholars and researchers in the city where it originated.

The launch took place before an audience of approximately 100 guests. The presence of Dr Wiener's daughter, Mrs Mirjam Finkelstein, and his son-in-law, Professor Ludwik Finkelstein, brought the link to Dr Wiener alive. Mrs Finkelstein's speech was powerful and moving. It was preceded by a survey of the Library's place in German-Jewish studies by the doyen of the subject, Professor Dan Diner. His presentation was a tour de force which set the creation and work of the Library into its historical and cultural setting.

An informal reception in the Museum's covered courtyard brought the occasion to its conclusion.

The Library and Museum are now planning a joint event to mark the 70th anniversary of the November Pogrom of 1938 which will take place in Berlin.



From left: Ben Barkow, Mirjam Finkelstein, Professor Dan Diner and Aubrey Pomerance.

GERMAN NEWSPAPER SUBSCRIPTIONS

Long-standing newsletter readers may remember our appeal back in October 2006 for sponsorship of our German newspaper subscriptions. The Library had previously received German newspapers from the Goethe Institute once they had finished with them, but in 2006 owing to budgetary constraints, they had to cancel four of their subscriptions.

Last year, the four subscriptions were generously sponsored by individual donors and thanks to their support the Library has been able to continue its unique and long-standing newspaper archive.

We are now looking for individuals who may be willing to take on these subscriptions for the coming year. The four titles we are looking for sponsors for are: *Tageszeitung(TAZ)*, *Rheinischer Merkur*, *Berliner Tageszeitung* and *Frankfurter Rundschau*. If you are interested in sponsoring one of these, please contact the Periodicals Librarian, Marek, on 020 7636 7247, or mjaros@wienerlibrary.co.uk.

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CONFERENCE REPORT

On 28-29 April the Wiener Library and the Leo Baeck Institute held a joint conference entitled *Antisemitism in theory and practice: Legacies in cultural and political thought*. The conference was organised under the umbrella of the European Network for Research into Current & Historical Antisemitism, comprising the Wiener Library, the Leo Baeck Institute, Evangelisches Studienwerk Villigst, Hamburger Institut fuer Sozialforschung and CADIS-Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Science Sociales, but was organised by the Leo Baeck Institute and the Wiener Library.

This conference built on a workshop organised by the two partners in January 2005 which examined academic approaches to the study of contemporary antisemitism. Our latest cooperation brought together scholars and practitioners, in the expectation that each could illuminate and deepen the insights and experiences of the other. This approach produced a very rich interchange and some memorable exchanges between experts not habitually in dialogue.

The conference examined the Frankfurt School and the disciplines of sociology, history, theology, philosophy, social theory, psychoanalysis and political theory. Country reports covered Germany, Poland, Hungary, Russia, France and the UK. Participants included Professor Anson Rabinbach (Princeton), Dr Brigit Erdle (London), Professor Shulamit Volkov (Tel Aviv), Dr Alexander Verkhovsky (Moscow), Dr Jean-Yves Camus (Paris) and Mike Whine (London).

A publication based on the conference is in planning. The Wiener Library and the Leo Baeck Institute are grateful to the Rothschild Foundation (Europe), which supported the conference.

DAVID ALLTHORPE 1952 – 2008

It is with great sadness that we report the untimely death of David Allthorpe, a dedicated volunteer, who died after a short illness in March of this year.

David was born in Norwich in 1952 where he trained to be a Theatre Manager at the Theatre Royal before moving to Folkstone to become the Entertainment Officer for the city. He had to retire early from his last job as Events Manager for Exeter City Council due to ill health but he retained a lasting interest in the theatre as well as classical music.

It was in the early 1990s that David's interest in the Holocaust was sparked by the play *Anne Frank*. David first came to the Library in the mid-1990s to do his private research and to find material for his bibliography of the Holocaust.

As a regular reader he soon became familiar with staff and in due time got roped in as a volunteer. It was David who wrote to all Holocaust memorial and educational centres in Germany and Austria to request copies of their publications. Consequently we received a stream of very interesting material, often free of charge.

David was well-known for his work on the Holocaust in the Southampton area. He combined values of compassion and gentleness with a tireless dedication to our cause, representing us with dignity and grace in his local area. David regularly gave talks on *The diary of Anne Frank* and he created a short exhibition about the Holocaust which was often used around Holocaust Memorial Day in schools and public libraries. Once he even stood in for David Cesarani at the local radio station.

We will all remember David for his generosity and kindness and his willingness to carry heavy bags of apples and homebaked cakes all the way to London on the train. David bequeathed us his collection of books and videos about the Holocaust. He is survived by his wife Karen.

NEW LIBRARY RESEARCH FELLOW



Members of the JCIO staff in Amsterdam. On the far left are Margarethe and Alfred Wiener.

The Wiener Library is delighted to announce that Dr Ruth Levitt has joined us as a Research Fellow, to carry out a project on the Library's holdings in Dutch relating to the Netherlands and its own origins in that country.

Ruth's project has a four-fold aim:

1. Investigate the range, extent and broad topics included in the Library's Dutch material. Write a summary report for the Library on this aspect of the collections, supported by short abstracts describing selected items.
2. Develop some research questions that the Library's Dutch material could help to illuminate. Discuss and refine these questions with the Library and other experts, to clarify what might be the angles to pursue

that would be most productive, useful and of interest, given the context of other research in this area.

3. Undertake research on specific question(s), using the Library's Dutch material.
4. Write up the research for publication in academic and popular journals, give seminar presentations, and seek other routes to disseminate the findings.

Ruth has an impressive range of experience, both in and out of the academic world. She is currently Research Leader with RAND Europe, a non-profit policy research organisation, and has worked with organisations ranging from the Cabinet Office to the National Gallery.

We would welcome enquiries or suggestions about this project. Please contact info@wienerlibrary.co.uk

LIBRARY SITE

MOVE UPDATE

A number of our readers and friends have asked when the Library will vacate its Devonshire Street home – or indeed what its present location is! The Library's lease, which we took out over 50 years ago, expires in July 2009 and we will move out some time after that date. However, the precise timing remains uncertain and among the options we are exploring is the possibility of a short-term extension to our lease. This would give us added time to find the right new home and satisfactorily conclude negotiations.

So for the time being Devonshire Street remains our home and you may rest assured that we will let everyone know as soon as we have some news.

Of the potential long-term solutions to our future accommodation, both the major options – 29 Russell Square on the Birkbeck campus and the Bancroft Road Library adjacent to the campus of Queen Mary – are still being explored. Both involve complex legal, planning and conservation issues involving not only the two college authorities but also detailed discussions between the colleges and the London Borough of Camden and the London Borough of Tower Hamlets respectively. It is thus easy to see why substantive progress – while steady – is relatively slow. We realise that the lack of certainty may be frustrating for our well-wishers (as it is for us) but we ask our friends for their continued support and patience. We are very hopeful that an optimal solution will emerge over the coming months and then the real work of appealing for financial assistance can begin.

We are particularly grateful to our professional advisers who are so generously and willingly giving their time to assist the Wiener Library during this process.

ACQUISITIONS UPDATE

NEW PERIODICALS ACQUISITION

Thanks to a generous grant from the Kessler Foundation, the charity arm of the *Jewish Chronicle*, the Library has been able to purchase 31 microfilm reels of the *Allgemeine Wochenzeitung der Juden in Deutschland*. The reels cover the years 1946 through to 1986, and along with our subscription to the printed version, the Library now has a complete set for this important title that provides valuable information on the reconstruction of the Jewish community after the war in West Germany.

The Library continues to work on substituting the delicate or damaged items within its collection of periodicals to ensure that they remain accessible to our readers. We are currently seeking funding for the purchase of further microfilms that will enhance the collection.

NUREMBERG MEDICAL TRIAL MICROFICHE

The Library has recently bought a microfiche copy of the 1946-7 Nuremberg Medical Trial records. The records include transcripts of the trial and material of the prosecution and defence, as well as related documents. The records are available in both English and German.

The Library is now one of very few UK institutions where these records are available, and they have made a valuable addition to the collection, already attracting considerable interest from readers and other organisations.

SHAHID MALIK MP VISITS THE WIENER LIBRARY



Ben Barkow and Shahid Malik MP at the Wiener Library.

On 12 June we were very pleased to welcome Shahid Malik MP on his first visit to the Wiener Library. Mr Malik is the Member of Parliament for Dewsbury, West Yorkshire, and since 2007 has been the Minister for International Development.

Mr Malik was taken on a tour of the Library, and shown a selection of items from the collection. He was very impressed by the Library's work, and keen to help the Library develop its role as a vital educational resource. Mr Malik said:

"My visit to the Wiener Library had a profound impact on me. The Holocaust material at the Library is one of the most important reminders of the depths of depravity to which man can fall. It is an absolutely essential asset for young and old alike – by never forgetting the horrors of yesterday we maximise our chances of a peaceful and prosperous tomorrow."

We very much look forward to working with Mr Malik in the future.

THE VALUES OF THE WIENER LIBRARY

In November last year the Library organised a strategic thinking workshop for all members of staff. One of the outcomes of the day was a long list of organisational values. This was distilled to eight values detailed below:

TRUTHFULNESS & INTEGRITY

We recognise the complexity of historical reality, and the importance of being objective and truthful in representing the past.

KNOWLEDGE & AUTHORITY

Our collections empower us and our users to make authoritative statements, based on the depth of knowledge embodied in our holdings.

INDEPENDENCE

We value our independence as an institution and the independence of thought and judgment this bestows on us.

RESPECT

We respect the victims and survivors of the Holocaust and other genocides, honouring their memories and legacies.

OPENNESS & TRANSPARENCY

We seek to make the Library's materials accessible to all, and aspire to be open to new ideas and challenges, and to being transparent in our relations with others.

INCLUSIVENESS

We work to widen the circle of those who share our values.

HUMANITY & DECENCY

We recognise the rights and sensibilities of all we come into contact with and seek to offer appropriate support to our users where it is needed.

SERVICE & QUALITY

We are committed to offering a professional service of a high standard to all our users.

These components of the Library's philosophy will guide our future development and provide a framework for both internal and external relationships.

WE SAY FAREWELL

MARGARET DALY

In June Margaret Daly, Ben Barkow's PA and Administrative Co-ordinator, left the Library to take up a challenging role as a fundraiser for another charity.

Margaret had been with the Library for two years and made a remarkable contribution, not only as an extremely efficient PA, but in areas far-removed from her core duties. Most particularly she oversaw and co-ordinated the project to re-design and re-structure our website – a major undertaking which required close attention to detail. Margaret also did much to streamline the way in which the Library administers its fundraising activities, and was closely involved in two major fundraising events.

She was a very popular member of our team, enjoying a close working relationship with Ben (so much so that they were profiled together in *The Times*). She was admired above all for her hard work and cheerful disposition. We wish her every success in her challenging new career.



RONNIE ROBERTS' EXTRAORDINARY LIFE

Occasionally the Wiener Library receives offers of papers which fall outside our usual area of expertise, 'Jewish European experience', but are no less interesting and qualify under our collecting remit 'victims of Nazi persecution'.

The Library recently acquired perhaps one of its most unusual collections to date, namely the papers of a former mixed race Barbadian/German, born in Rostock in 1921. The collection, whilst not particularly large, is fascinating for the rarity of the subject content, the quality of some of the photographic and documentary materials, and for the extraordinary narrative of the collection's protagonist, Ronnie Roberts.

Ronnie Roberts' father, Evander Roberts, arrived in Rostock in 1911 on a scholarship to study music. He met and married Alma Karbach who ran a milliner's business in the city. During the First World War Evander was interned as an enemy alien as, Barbadian born, he was a British subject. He spent the entire war in Ruheleben camp just outside Berlin. Shortly after his release in 1918, he formed a large show band which toured the top night spots of Europe. He became very rich, acquiring a large villa in Wiesbaden replete with servants. The two children Beryl (b.1919) and Ronnie were born into the lap of luxury. This did not last long, as Evander soon vanished from the scene, leaving the family destitute. Thereafter the family experienced the hardships not only of poverty but also racism.

Ronnie's and Beryl's childhood years were, however, not without their happy times. In particular they befriended some local siblings of a similar age with whom they played at every available opportunity.

With the increasing popularity of the Nazis, Ronnie, in his natural desire to fit in, joined the local branch of the Deutsches Jungvolk. As he admitted much later, to his shame, he would join in the rabble-rousing, often antisemitic songs, though not fully comprehending the true import of the lyrics. This illusion of camaraderie burst when he was stripped of his role as standard bearer in the parade to celebrate Hitler's seizure of power on account of his apparent racial 'impurity'.

He was subsequently taken out of music school and forced to join the labour force building motorways. Accused of racial defilement (*Rassenschande*) he was summoned by the Gestapo and threatened with castration. He spent the next few years pursuing a quasi-fugitive existence on the periphery of society, obtaining work where he could as a musician or 'living doll' at carnivals and fairs in Switzerland and Germany. Having again got into trouble with the Gestapo after a fight with Hitler Youth members he fled to Vienna, where his sister Beryl was married and the owner of a night club. On his return to his mother's in Wiesbaden, and contrary to her advice, he resolved to flee to England.

He spent a miserable few months in London, where the army did not want him and where he was forced to resort to busking to support himself. He demonstrated characteristic resourcefulness and ingenuity in his efforts not only to survive but to save enough money to return to Germany.

His desire to go back to Germany was rewarded by imprisonment after the outbreak of war on account of his British status. He spent the entire war years in various camps, initially hard-labour, later civilian internee, including periods of solitary confinement on account of several escape attempts. On one occasion

he was given the opportunity to be a part of a supervised work detail on a farm in the locality. He met and fell in love with a young woman, Elizabeth, whom he promised to marry after the war. He also made it his ambition to be a cocktail waiter in a top hotel after the war. To this end he set about memorising the ingredients of some 400 different cocktails.

After the end of the war he spent a short period working as an interpreter in various DP camps in Germany. He contacted his mother in Wiesbaden but there had been no communication from Elizabeth and so he concluded that she had lost interest. Afterwards he returned to his sister in Vienna and through her met and fell in love with her friend, Hermine. They were married in 1946. Whilst in Vienna he embarked on his planned career as a cocktail waiter, eventually securing the prestigious position at Hotel Sacher, one of Europe's top hotels. Ronnie's Bar became one of the most popular spots amongst the Viennese night-clubbing public.

Ronnie and Hermine managed to acquire a repossessed apartment in Vienna, becoming the owners thanks to a newly enacted piece of legislation and, after emigrating with the capital they made on the property, were able to buy their first home in Kilburn, London. Through their hard work and resourcefulness they built on their fortunes and soon were the owners of five London properties.

In 1956 Ronnie discovered that his first love, Elizabeth had given birth to their daughter, Monika, who was 12 years old and living with her step family near Detmold, Germany. (Elizabeth had died in 1943.) Ronnie went to see her as soon as he could. They instantly hit it off and Ronnie resolved to bring her back to England, where he and Hermine officially adopted her. Unfortunately, Hermine couldn't cope with the competition of this new-found family member and she left Ronnie and returned to Vienna.

Eventually Ronnie met and married Carol and they bought a hotel in Devon, where they had two children and spent many happy years together. Ronnie, the suave, debonair raconteur was in his element, regaling his guests in the bar with stories from his early years.



Clockwise from top left: Professor Evander Roberts' band, Maxim's, Paris, 1920; Beryl Roberts, c1940s, Switzerland; Ronald Roberts; Ronald Roberts in an advert for the nightclub 'Sansibar' where he worked in the 1950s; Ronald and Beryl Roberts, Germany, 1928; Alma, Ronald and Beryl Roberts, Rostock, 1924; Ronald Roberts with a guest at the entrance of his hotel in Ilfracombe, 1970s.



FORTHCOMING EVENTS

WIENER LIBRARY LECTURES

The academic year 2007/2008 has seen a number of impressive lectures held with different partners, namely Birkbeck, University of London, Kingston University and the Leo Baeck Institute. This collaborative work will continue in 2008/2009 with lectures to be announced in the early autumn. Future speakers include Professor Christopher Browning and Professor Michael Mann.

In our series on *War and race*

with Birkbeck, lecturers have included Professor Ian Kershaw on *The uniqueness of Nazism's racial war* and Professor Jay Winter on *The degeneration of war*. Our ongoing series *FilmTalk* with the Leo Baeck Institute continues to draw a wide and loyal audience.

Highlights have included Professor Ginnette Vincendeau on '*Au revoir les enfants*': *Personal memory and national history* and Dr Michele Aaron *From*

Yidl to Yentl... and the long history of the effeminate Jew.

It has been particularly encouraging to see that so many of our Devonshire Street Wiener Library audience have joined us for lectures at Birkbeck, indicating that lectures will continue to attract a dedicated audience, even with a change of venue. All lectures have been taped and are available to listen to in the Library.

SECOND AND THIRD GENERATION WORKSHOP

The black mystery of what happened in Europe is to me indivisible from my own identity. Precisely because I was not there. (George Steiner)

In recent years there has been increased understanding and acknowledgement that some offspring of Holocaust survivors and refugees have been profoundly affected by the attempted genocide on their families that took place prior to birth.

As the second generation born post-War ages, and parents the next

and 'third generation', the issue of how this generation connects with the experiences and inheritance of their grandparents' and parents' past is also now being examined.

The Wiener Library is hosting a workshop, *When speech forms a bridge*, led by Dina Wardi on:

20 September 2008, 9-10.30pm

21 September 2008, 10.30am-5.30pm

22 September 2008, 7-9.30pm

This unique workshop invites second and third generation descendants to discuss together the impact

and effects of the past. Led by the renowned Israeli psychotherapist Dina Wardi, the workshop will provide a forum for the two generations to meet and talk in an open, yet confidential way. Numbers will be strictly limited to 14 and participants must agree to attend all sessions at the times detailed.

The cost to attend the workshop is £30 and this includes refreshments and lunch. Please email Katherine Klinger at k.klinger@wienerlibrary.co.uk to discuss participation.

CHANGES TO THE NEWSLETTER

The Wiener Library is pleased to announce that it will soon be making some changes to its existing newsletter format. Following this current edition, there will now be two Wiener Library newsletters each year – one in Autumn/Winter, and one in Spring/Summer. These improved newsletters will be bigger than our existing ones, and although they will continue to keep

our readers updated on developments at the Library and new projects, it is hoped that they will also contain longer articles on new acquisitions, lectures and research projects.

In addition to the two printed newsletters, the Library will also be introducing its first free e-newsletter to inform our readers about events and developments at the Library. If

you would be interested in receiving the new Wiener Library e-newsletter, or know a friend who might be, please visit our website or send your email address to Bridget on bmcging@wienerlibrary.co.uk.

If you have any questions please do contact Bridget – she will be very happy to answer any queries you might have about the proposed changes.