The reception of Jewish refugee children in Shrewsbury/Oswestry
1939-1948 and in Otterden Kent 1933-1940

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Abstract
The reception of Jewish German refugee children in Shrewsbury/Oswestry 1939-1946 and in Otterden Kent 1934-1940

Shrewsbury, Oswestry, Wem and Market Drayton confine a 25-mile radius significant for the history of Kindertransport. Children were hosted either in the care of a committee set up by the Mayor of Shrewsbury or in Wem where a school for Jewish refugees had moved. Market Drayton was the birthplace of Oswald Mosley's mother and Oswald spend part of his childhood there. The time frame starts in 1933 in Kent, when the school emigrated from Germany with the help of Quakers and relocated to Shropshire in 1940. The public history of Kindertransport has been shaped by the changing political concerns of the twentieth century. This changed from a heroic tale telling reflecting national pride, over a remembrance culture promoting antiracism towards a deep analysis of the participation of government and non-governmental institutions. The main research about the reception of the Kinder concentrates on the contribution of Christian organisations and the role of women. The Churches, already doomed in the commentary of the religious census 1851, experienced a revival of their charity competence related to Kindertransport. Christian values are expressed in activities outside of the Sunday church visit. The local research shows that the small community of Quakers were significant in the help for the children. In 1933, when the Nazis gained power, the Quakers had already started to support refugees fleeing Germany. Religious motivation of the helpers was barely analysed in the Kindertransport literature. Women took on several functions inside of the Refugee organisation and were taking on all sorts of jobs including management roles. The historiography of trauma is applied to the welfare of the children and it will be argued that the children endured traumas which were neither diagnosed nor treated. The conclusion argues that the children had a better chance to prosper in institutions like schools/hostels compared with host families and that religious communities as well as women were vital in the Kinder rescue. Furthermore, is argued, that the fear of strengthening the fascists was responsible for the reluctance of Whitehall to help more refugees. The related propaganda could be proved locally. The concerns of the Secretary of state about increasing antisemitism could locally not be confirmed.
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I declare that this dissertation is my own, unaided work and that I have not submitted it, or any part of it, for a degree at The Open University or at any other university or institution.

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1. Introduction

This study will examine the reception and experience of Jewish refugee children from Germany in Shropshire between 1934-1946. Children came to the county either through a private school run by German refugees which operated in Wem between 1940 and 1945 or through the Mayor of Shrewsbury’s committee\(^1\). This local committee was part of the national Kindertransport initiative to help Jewish children at risk from the Nazis after Hitler succeeded to the Chancellorship in 1933.

The work and effect of the Mayor's Committee will be analysed in the second chapter, the experience of the children in the third one and the school in chapter four. Although the Kindertransport movement was launched as a national initiative, responsibility for the placement and care of children operated through a network of local and regional committees.

A key research question for this study is the motivation of those who chose to become involved in these initiatives. It is argued that religious motivation was important to several, either as individuals or as part of more organised Christian groups, notably the Quakers.

Among the factors shaping attitudes in the wider community ideas were circulated and promoted by British fascists. Oswald Mosley, the leader of the British Union of Fascists was born in Shropshire and lived at Betton House close to Market Drayton.

Subsequently, the focus is on a geographical triangle in Shropshire, whose vertices are Shrewsbury with the seat of the ‘Mayors Committee for the rescue of German Jewish

\(^1\) compare appendix a. excerpt of the meeting minutes
Refugee Children’, Oswestry with schools where some of the saved children went and Market Drayton, where the mother of Oswald Mosley, the leader of the British Fascists was born and where Mosley spent part of his childhood. Trench Hall School, a German Boarding School, run by German Jews was in the middle of the triangle. This school had already emigrated to the south of England with the help of the Quakers shortly after the Nazis came to power. As it is important for the understanding of the school history, some research went into the escape of this school to Bunce Court in Kent.

This research is based on documents from the Shropshire archives such as meeting minutes of the Shrewsbury committee for the rescue of German Jewish children, contemporary newspapers, further archived material from the National Archives and the Wiener library. Several documents were found in archives of the Leo Baeck institutes and other Holocaust related institutions in Berlin and New York. Oral interviews are available in the IWM or the British Museum. Published and unpublished memoirs were used to understand the view of the children. Although Kindertransport occurred in the last century, and one would expect a complete set of archived material, this is unfortunately not the case. As the rescue of the Kinder was mainly down to private initiatives, only fragments have survived in archives.

One of the very first books about Kindertransport was Barry Turner's ‘... and the policeman smiled’. This book misses the source references that academic work requires and is therefore of reduced value to the historian. Furthermore, Turner had free access to the archives of the World Jewish Relief Fund, where the files of the children and their hosts have been stored. These days the archives are only accessible to the children and their
families². The Kindertransport-related documents are scattered around and, as it was primarily an initiative carried out privately, the survival of these documents depended purely on coincidences. The bureaucracy for admitting these children into the country and to schools can be traced by more than 100 documents found in a small north London school archive. Nothing of this kind had survived in Shropshire. The status report of all children rescued by Great Britain by July 1939 has been found in the Leo Baeck archives in Berlin. Traces of three siblings escaped in December 1938 from Hamburg could be found in the Leo Baeck archives in New York. With the census 1941 cancelled due to the war, the only source to prove who was where in that time, was the population count based on the National Registration Act 1939. Unfortunately, no children were registered. Because of that, the only sources mentioning specific children are oral testimonies, archived in several institutions, newspapers or memoirs. Barely anything survived from the foster families. Bunce Court School is different in this respect, as various reports of the headteacher, memoirs of a teacher and several written testimonies of the children have survived. The majority of the related Quaker documents, although archived, are not accessible because of data protection, because they contain personal or financial information. The historiography of the Kindertransport will be reflected below, from the point of view of the Kinder, the helpers and the local institutions.

Kindertransport Historiography

Kindertransport is a part of the holocaust, which should be looked at in connection with the racist ideology and politics of national socialistic Germany. The awareness and the historic research of the holocaust and the Kindertransport has undergone dramatic changes in the last 40 years starting with the publication of Anne Frank's Diary followed by the trial of Adolf Eichmann in Jerusalem in 19613 and the Auschwitz trials 1963 to 1965. This was followed by the US series Holocaust in 19784. These events created awareness of the holocaust with the universal message that Europe was liberated and with Europe, all humanity from the yoke of National Socialism5. The rescue of ca. 10,000 children through the British Kindertransport movement fits well into the bigger picture with rescue, integration, gratitude, heroism and salvation6. A. Williams links this growing awareness of Holocaust and Kindertransport to the conservative governments of Thatcher and Major, focussing on the glorious British past. The 90's saw a flood of books, memoirs and historical research mainly focussed on values like openness and tolerance7. With Labour coming into power by 1997 the political spin of the relationship between Britain and the holocaust changed towards promoting Europeanism. On the occasion of the Holocaust Memorial Day, T. Blair remarked that out of the 'profound crisis in human civilisation', 'a democratic, just and tolerant society8arose. The public history of Kindertransport has been shaped by the changing political concerns of the twentieth century. In 1999 a plaque in the House of Commons was revealed stating ‘In deep gratitude to the people and parliament of

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5 Caroline Sharples, p. 16.
6 Amy Williams, Memory of the Kindertransport in National and Transnational perspective, (unpublished doctoral thesis, Nottingham Trent University, 2020), p.6
7 ibid., pp. 54-55
the United Kingdom for saving the lives of 10,000 Jewish children. Louise London's study in 2000 ‘Whitehall and the JEWS 1933-1945’ showed that parliament and government had, if at all, only little part in the rescue of the children. The words on the plaque ‘and parliament’ were removed in 2003. Historians like London and Kushner did in-depth research of the years before the war and the conditions set by the government for the rescue of European Jews. This research was not quite as complimentary as the popular belief has been. One of the main reasons was the economic situation and the subsequent unemployment. The refugees should not compete with the British for jobs and mass immigration should not strengthen the fascists. Restrictions to immigration and employment for immigrants were therefore set up in the time before the war. At the same time historians started looking into those helping Jewish refugees and Kinder. Until the beginning of the nineties, narratives of Kinder and rescuers were just documented but towards the end of the decade more research-driven work appeared, such as the articles written by W.D. Rubinstein and H.L. Rubinstein in 1998 or David Cesarani in 2000 about the motivation of the rescuers. This research argued that faith driven motivation of supporters for the German Jews started as early as 1933. These events were predominantly organised or attended by clergies and lays of all denominations and increased after 'Kristallnacht' in 1938.

11 Tony Kushner
12 House of Commons, Racial, Religious and Political Minorities, Volume 341, 21 Nov. 1938, Column 1469.
13 Louise London, pp. 38,263.
15 ibid, pp. 22-25.
The second research question is: How important were women in the rescue of the children? Several narratives have been written by Sybil Oldfield, starting in the nineties with a description of women's work in Britain and focussing in a journal article about several women facilitating the Kindertransport\textsuperscript{16}. The reasons for the women taking on this life-saving work is better understood in relation to their own education, limited professional opportunities and faith.

And finally what effect had the separation and the placement in foreign surroundings on the children? Despite the quite early analysis about trauma and Kinder by Rabbi J. Newman in 1992 for Yad Vashem, it needed at least another decade for historians to recognise the suffering of the Kinder and the challenges to succeed in their new life without the support of their loved ones. Kindertransport literature such as the books from J. Craig-Norton (2019) and R. Clifford (2020) analysed in detail the ordeal the children went through\textsuperscript{17} and presented newer approaches to the children's experiences. Current trends go into more detail about the challenges the children and the foster parents were facing. This study will reflect these trends in the situation of the ca. 100 children, which were placed either individually or with the School in Shrewsbury and its surroundings.

\textsuperscript{16} Sybil Oldfield, \textit{This working day worlds}, (Routledge: Oxon, 1994) and Sybil Oldfield, ’It is usually she’: The role of British Women in the Rescue and Care of the Kindertransport Kinder’, Shofar-Special issue: Kindertransporte 1938/39, Vol. 23, No. 1, (2004), pp.54-70.

\textsuperscript{17} Please compare bibliography and chapter 2 for details.
2. The Mayor’s Committee for Jewish Refugee Children in Shrewsbury Shropshire

This chapter will examine the work of a refugee committee, which was founded by the Mayor of Shrewsbury after the Kristallnacht pogrom and the following appeal of Lord Baldwin. Various newspaper articles or letters to the editor of the Shrewsbury Chronicle will help to understand the public mood and opinion regarding refugees. They will elucidate the composition of the refugee committee as an example for the regional and national Kindertransport movement, regarding religion and feminism in the British society at that time. The meeting minutes of the Mayor’s Committee for Jewish German Children in Shrewsbury give an insight into the organisation and financing of the committee. The work of the committee mainly focussed on raising money for the deposit of £50 per child, which was demanded by the government and to check out potential foster parents. Afterwards, these foster parents, together with the children, were continuously monitored. The importance of religion for the committee members is analysed as well as the role of women in the committee. Both will be contextualised with the historiography of religion and feminism. A special view will be the role of women in religious organisations.

Help for refugees on national and regional level

Since Nazi Germany defined Jewish people not only by faith, but by a pseudo-scientific race doctrine, more people were persecuted. In November 1938 an organised pogrom took place in Germany, the ‘Reichs Kristallnacht’. This pogrom, organised by the authorities,
showed that there were no locations left in Germany where non-Aryans could live in peace and not fear for their lives. Based on this cruelty, the parliament debated the issue of Jewish refugees on 21st November 1938 and the home secretary Sir Samuel Hoare, who was a Quaker 1, cleared the way for persecuted children to find refuge in Great Britain2. In the same speech the home secretary declared that he had the 'invaluable assistance of ...a committee, ... upon which are represented the principal Jewish organisations, the Quakers, and organisations of the Christian churches'. Soon after that Lord Baldwin3 appealed for the help of the public and the first transport of children from Nazi-occupied Europe arrived in Harwich on December 2nd with 200 children4. Transport after transport followed, and the children were distributed to different locations all over Great Britain. Committees for the help of refugee children were established. These committees raised money and evaluated possibilities of hosting and educating the children.

Firstly, it will be enlightening to look at the history from below to compare the fears of the government in opening the gates for refugees and the local reaction to the Mayor’s appeal in Shrewsbury. Secondly this research investigates the participation of the various religious communities of the Children's Refugee Committee and how its daily work was organised.

Sir Samuel Hoare argued in the debate after 'Kristallnacht' that unemployment was still high and recognised that for many to make their livelihood was not easy. He expressed concerns about an underlying fascist movement, which would have been strengthened by a

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2 House of Commons, Racial, Religious and Political Minorities, Volume 341, 21 Nov. 1938, Column 1469
higher immigration rate\textsuperscript{5}. Subsequently, employment restrictions were set up for refugees which made it very difficult for any immigrant to become self-sustainable. Louise London's research shows that the Home Secretary was very concerned with an increasing antisemitism based on a higher intake of Jewish refugees from Germany\textsuperscript{6}. After the Mayor of Shrewsbury's appeal was published, a discussion developed via letters to the editor. Most letters were against any help for refugees and emphasized the needs of the poorer or unemployed population in Britain or in the dominions. Some of the letters were directly signed with 'Britain First' or 'Anglo Saxon' or 'Interested'. The immigration critical stance, spiced with some antisemitism went on until 24 June 1939. It was claimed that there was no need to help the Jewish as they were very wealthy. Arguments that the Jews assimilated easily into their host communities were denied. Clearly economic concerns were mixed with racist biases\textsuperscript{7}.

One letter, published on 18 February 1939 and written by a P. Slater in Chester (quite far away from Shrewsbury and Wellington), argues against the statements of the anti-immigration movement. He corrects the numbers of Jews that fled Germany since 1933 from 175,000 to 20,000, having come to Great Britain and describes correctly how the German Jewish citizens were robbed of their wealth by the German state before emigration.

The letters to the editor give the impression of an overwhelming support to the fascist anti-immigration movement. But was this reflecting the real situation? To consider this in more detail it is worth looking at the British Union of Fascists, their leader Oswald Mosley and his Blackshirts in the area.

\textsuperscript{5} House of Commons, \textit{Racial, Religious and Political Minorities}, Volume 341, 21 Nov. 1938, Column 1468.
\textsuperscript{6} Louise London, pp.38, 263.
\textsuperscript{7} The Wellington Journal and Shrewsbury news, \textit{Letters to the Editor}, 18.2.1939, 4.3.1939, 11.3.1939, 8.4.1939, 29.4.1939, 24.6.1939.
Oswald Mosley's mother originated from the Market Drayton gentry. Oswald was born on 16th November 1896. After the separation of his parents in 1901 he went to live with his mother in Belton Hall near Market Drayton. After service in the armed forces, he became politically engaged and between 1918 and 1931 he was a Tory, an independent and a member of the Labour Party. In 1932 he decided to found a New Party and after suffering a defeat with the new organisation and a visit of Benito Mussolini he established the British Union of Fascists. The British fascists copied the idea from the Italians to dress all supporters in a uniform with black shirts. This gave them a distinctive appearance. In 1934 and 1935 some rallies were conducted in Market Drayton, Shrewsbury and Whitchurch. Mosley gave an interview to local newspapers in 1934 which remarked that he, having lived at Market Drayton, will be embraced as a local lad. Contemporary witnesses remember how Mosley mingled with old friends after the speeches and that locals started to wear a black shirt the next day. This success was not sustained. Five years later, in April 1939, a rally was held in Wellington, and the speaker of the Union of Blackshirts was listened to by a large audience. The Wellington Journal reported that the rally went on quite well until the speaker praised 'the rise of Germany together with Herr Hitler'. The audience did not seem to agree and pressed forward, dislodged the speaker’s platform so that he escaped only with the help of the police. By the end of May, the Blackshirts were back. This time with a march of Blackshirts through Wellington which resulted in an even bigger audience gathering. The Speech was disturbed by catcalls,

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11 Blackshirts Get ‘Warm’ Welcome at Wellington- Speaker removed from platform, The Wellington Journal and Shrewsbury news, 8.4.1939, p. 18.
whistles and hand bells and eggs were thrown. After a while the police escorted the
Blackshirts out of Wellington under a continuous 'bombardment' of eggs and vegetables
while 'blows were feely exchanged'\textsuperscript{12}. Only three weeks later the local council decided that
processions and rallies of the BUF were no longer allowed but concluded that meetings
could not be prohibited\textsuperscript{13}.

The local reports about fascist rallies in Shrewsbury’s surrounding countryside show a
decreasing support for the BUF in the late thirties. The close links to the fascists in Germany
was especially rejected by the public. Over time the support for the Blackshirts rallies in
Wellington declined. Taking this into account, the question arises, was it the case that the
policy of the Home Secretary towards immigration of persecuted Jews from Germany was
too prudent? The BUF was clearly able to organise rallies and to profit from growing
resentments. The letters to the editor show a never ceasing propaganda against refugees
based on economic worries. Only one letter expresses pure antisemitic bias and is soon to
be counterargued by another reader. Contextualising the local situation with the national
one shows that the Home Secretary’s approach may have been too prudent but was far
from unreasonable. Louise London's conclusion that Whitehall worried about increasing
antisemitism cannot be confirmed on local level. The danger to strengthen fascism on local
level was mainly based on the perception refugees would be better supported than locals.

\textsuperscript{12} Crowd Pelts Blackshirts with Eggs, Tomatoes, Oranges, The Wellington Journal and Shrewsbury news,
27.5.1939, p. 20.
\textsuperscript{13} Wellington Council Seeks Ban On Fascist Processions, The Wellington Journal and Shrewsbury news,
27.5.1939, p.21.
The Mayor’s committee for Jewish (German)\textsuperscript{14} children in Shrewsbury was similar to more than a hundred British committees established. The Mayor's appeal as a letter to the editor was published on 28th January 1939. He wrote that on 23rd January 1939 he met with clergy and ministers of all denominations to set up a local committee, under the Control committee in London for placing the children in suitable homes in the borough and neighbouring districts. He asked all persons who were prepared to give a home to refugee children to come forward\textsuperscript{15}.

The first minuted meeting happened sometime in February, after the appeal and before the second meeting at the beginning of March. The structure of the committee, although there was a continuous influx and outgoing of members, is the first clue for the motivation of the helpers\textsuperscript{16}.

The most regular participants were: Prebendary Salt - Chairman, Rev. C.B. Roach, Rev. B.J. Lee, Canon Byrne, Prof. White, Hilda Murrell - Hon. Secretary, H.C. Webb, H. Plimmer, Miss Aris, Miss Jule, Mr. Mitchell, Mr. Barrie, Mrs. Holdsworth.

The committee consisted of thirteen members and as soon as Prebendary Salt had taken the chair, the Mayor was mostly excused. Noteworthy would be Mrs. Holdsworth, as a Mrs. Holdsworth\textsuperscript{17}, a Quaker\textsuperscript{18}, is mentioned in the Shropshire archives as instrumental for the

\textsuperscript{14} The contemporary sources are sometimes using German in the name of the committee, although children from the occupied areas of the Deutsches Reich were save. I.E. Sir Nicholas Winton rescued predominantly Czechoslovakian children.

\textsuperscript{15} Harry Steward (Mayor of Shrewsbury), \textit{Refugee Children from Germany}, The Wellington Journal and Shrewsbury News, January 28, 1939, p.10

\textsuperscript{16} Mayor of Shrewsbury committee for Jewish refugee children, Shropshire archives, DAS/118/2.

\textsuperscript{17} Martin Lubowski, Tilley - Some comments ref. Trench Hall & Bunce Court School, Bunce Court School & Landschulheim Herrlingen Archive (London, May 2005), Shropshire Archives 7628/2.

\textsuperscript{18} Mrs. Holdsworth, a quaker is a handwritten addition in the document in Shropshire archives, the same document in the National archives does not have the addition. ( Otterden: Bunce Court School (formerly New Herrlingen School, 1937-1944, National Archives ED35/4724).
relocation of Bunce Court School to Trench Hall\(^{19}\). Hence the committee could have had five members from a religious background.

Five of the Thirteen were clergy (ca. 40%) were of religious background, 30% were women.

Sybil Oldfield states that that the enterprise of saving 10,000 children would not have been possible *without the influence and backing of men*\(^{20}\). The Secretary of State stated in the debate regarding Kristallnacht that he met with the Jewish organisations and Christian denominations\(^{21}\). It seems that Christian churches and women were essential to the rescue of Jewish German children.

This raises the question of how the Christian churches, which had already been recognised in the nineteenth century to be doomed, could play such an important part?

Or was the Christian faith expressed in other ways than the weekly Sunday visit to the service? Historians like Callum Brown and Sarah Williams recognised that the Christian faith was also lived through a network of association, attachment, and identification\(^{22}\). The major event of secularisation happened in their view after the nineteen-fifties. Meanwhile David Hempton analyses, that by the end of the 19th century, nonconformists were shifting from religious movement to state enforced social policies\(^{23}\). In addition, the state superseded the churches in setting and promoting principles regarding gambling, alcohol and sexuality. Considering that the state did not give any financial support for the rescue of the Kinder and therefore a considerable financial and organisational support was given by

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\(^{19}\) The instrumental role Quakers had in the support of persecuted persons from all faiths and backgrounds is described in detail in chapter 4.

\(^{20}\) Sybil Oldfield, ‘It is usually a she’, p. 57.


the churches and their parishioners, the Kindertransport situation revived that of the
nineteenth century and earlier, when social support was given almost exclusively by the
churches.

The environment for women in the time between the wars was different. Changes did
happen and feminists were disputing how society should change for the benefit of women.
The right to vote was gained by 1918 and higher education was then possible. The central
organisation for the feminists, the National Union of Societies for Equal Citizenship
(NUSEC) targeted real equality between women and men. Although Eleanor Rathbone,
who was very significant in the Kindertransport setup, demanded the compatibility
between being equal and the role of motherhood. These new feminists dominated the social
discussion in the thirties. New feminists declared motherhood as paramount. The vision
of the new feminist, as it put motherhood first, was also acceptable for the churches. This
meant that the traditional doctrines of Christian churches could still be valid and that
women did not have to choose between motherhood and a professional career. Although
most women were limited to professions like teaching, nursing or typewriting. The
Kindertransport gave women a field to show professional excellence combined with the
care, direct or indirect, for children. Motherhood, feminism and religion could easily
become symbiotic.

Elaine Blond, daughter of one of the founders of Marks & Spencer, joined Bloomsbury
House, the headquarters which coordinated all Kindertransport organisations, and after
becoming the fundraiser and treasurer for the RCM she wrote: ‘There was no such thing as

27 Axel Wittenberg, Organisation and Financing of Kindertransport, EMA, p.20.
job demarcation. I was available for any job that was going, from meeting the latest arrivals at the quayside to checking out prospective foster parents"\(^{28}\). Veronica Gillespie, an employee in Bloomsbury House, wrote that she had an Oxford degree but did not want to teach and learned shorthand. She volunteered at the headquarters with typing letters. Soon she became (in modern speech) a case manager, organising the onward travel for Kinder to the USA. She remembered that the Home Office appointed Charles Stead\(^{29}\) as executive director (in today’s speech ‘chief operations officer’), but the job was done by his organising secretary Dorothy Hardisty\(^{30}\). Of the twelve regional RCM's committees eight were run operationally by female secretaries, although the chairmen were men. The Birmingham secretary for the Midlands, including Shropshire, was Ruth Simmons\(^{31}\).

The national effort for Kindertransport was predominantly mainly supported by Jews, Christians and Quakers and an extensive part of the work was done by women. How did this compare to the local level in Shrewsbury? Which challenges did the Shrewsbury committee have to face?

Just as the Secretary of State sought to involve the different churches in the rescue effort, so did the Mayor in Shrewsbury. One third of the committee was clergy. At the second meeting Hilda Murrell was already nominated as Honorary Secretary. Hilda studied English and languages in Cambridge and joined the family run nursery in 1927. She was known in Shropshire 'as an active, highly intelligent, independent and defiant individual' with a strong will\(^{32}\). The minutes disclose that the local committee started to find out the

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29 Sybil Oldfield, 'It is usually a she', p. 57.
30 Veronica Gillespie, p.131.
31 Ruth Simmons will be mentioned in detail in Chapter 4.
reality of the financial restrictions following Lord Baldwin’s appeal for help for the children.\footnote{Mena Sultan, Kindertransport: Britain’s response to the growing refugee crisis in 1938, The Guardian, 8.2.2019.}

The conditions of granting entrance were limited to below the age of 16 and at the age of eighteen the refugee was obliged to leave the United Kingdom. The obligation to leave was connected to a guarantee of £50, which had to be paid in addition to the cost of living\footnote{THE REFUGEES, HOUSE OF COMMONS DEBATE, The Jewish Chronicle, April 14, 1939, p. 15.}, which was estimated at 40 to 50 pounds for a year\footnote{Elaine Blond, p. 66.}. At the beginning of 1939 it was still not clear who was paying the school money for the children after the school leaving age of fourteen. As this was reported in the local newspaper, the injustice of paying for alien children and not for Salopians was itemised in letters to the editor and subsequently the plan of governmental support for school fees withdrawn\footnote{Education of child refugees, Wellington Journal and Shrewsbury news, 8.4.1939, p.11.}.

Without any governmental support, fundraising and finding families who would take in children, got the highest priority. The results of foster home visits were presented and in July detailed lists showing the child, their educational needs, hosts and who paid the deposit and maintenance were circulated. Mrs. Murrell and Mrs. Holdsworth were tasked with visiting potential host families and were empowered to take decisions respectively\footnote{Mayor of Shrewsbury committee for Jewish refugee children, Shropshire archives, DAS/118/2.}.


The deposit for all of them was £700 and the maintenance would have been ca. £630 per year. The government supported the living cost with 16 shillings per week from 1942 onwards, which roughly matched the assumption of £45 costs per year. The deposit and the maintenance would have alone added up to £2275 in total without school fees. The
committee raised £1745 in total\textsuperscript{39}. It is obvious that fourteen children could have only been saved with hosts paying at least the deposit and that higher education was very much dependent on the budgets of the hosts and the committee. Over the years, Hilda organised fundraising concerts with famous artists like Jelly d'Aranyi and Dame Myra Hess\textsuperscript{40}. In 1944 Hilda already started to promote the naturalisation of the children, arguing that most of them will have lost their families\textsuperscript{41}. The committee dissolved itself in 1948 with a credit of £140, which was given to the family of the last Kind in their care for further education. Nearly every meeting minutes mentioned the energy and tenaciousness of the Hon. secretary Hilda Murrel.

The Shrewsbury committee is proof that the churches in Shrewsbury were instrumental in starting the enterprise of helping the refugee children and that Hilda Murrell and her female colleagues were fundamental to its work.

The experience of the children regarding their psychosocial wellbeing will be researched in the next chapter, looking at two children hosted in a school and two looked after by host families.

\textsuperscript{40} Mayor of Shrewsbury committee for Jewish refugee children, \textit{Shropshire archives}, DAS/118/2
\textsuperscript{41} Mike Levy, p. 175.
3. The experiences of Jewish refugee children in Shrewsbury Shropshire 1939 -1948

This chapter is using the information which is available for the children based in Shropshire and will explore how the children were able to adapt to their new life. How did they cope in a new environment and with their emotional burden? How important was religion in the motivation of their helpers and in the welfare of the children themselves. At the same time, it will be considered if the role of women was paramount for the wellbeing of the ‘Kinder’.

First there will be a short historiography about the development of trauma and its long-term effects. The changing recognition of trauma over the last few decades has also helped us to understand the long-term effects of the experiences of refugee children. These changes have influenced the literature of historians regarding the Kindertransport. To reflect the newest research about long term effects, the given timeframe of this research will be extended into the adult life of two children to describe the consequences of the interrupted childhood spent in Shropshire.

Primary sources are newspaper articles from Shropshire and Hamburg, interviews conducted by the author with the family of Martin Solmitz, whose surviving family was contacted after research in the holocaust archives in New York. The nonpublished memoirs from Hana Bandler, kindly provided by her family, and an interview of Hana done by the Imperial War Museum 25 years ago gave a unique insight. Finding Hana’s non-published memoirs were down to the help of Mike Levy. Mike is the chair of Harwich Kindertransport Memorial appeal and has published Kindertransport books. He kindly
established contact with Mike Frankl, Hana Bandler's cousin. Mike Frankl gave a deeper insight into Hana's time as refugee in Shropshire.

**Short historiography of Trauma research**

The first professional research of how war affects children was done by Anna Freud and Dorothy Burlingham

1 and was published in 1943. Up until then it was believed that children can easily adapt to new environments. Freud/Burlingham stated that it was recognised that in the same way that lack of essential foods and vitamins in early childhood would cause bodily malfunctions, the same was true for environmental elements for the mental development of the child. These elements are the need for personal attachment, emotional stability and the permanency of educational influence. The same research shows that the war did not affect children, as long as there was no direct threat to their lives, but that the break-up of families bore an immediate significance for their well-being. A. Freud and G. Done conducted additional research after the war with a group of children rescued from the concentration camp in Theresienstadt and concluded that child survivors had been suffering and altered by their experiences but that this was not a permanent state. With the right specialist care and emotional and material support, these children could become ‘normal’. For psychologist and psychiatrist, the contemporary understanding was that none of these children would suffer long-term from mental problems due to the war.

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2 Ibid., p.11.
3 Jacob Newman, *Kinder Transporte, A Study of Stresses and Traumas of Refugee Children* (Yad Vashem, privately published, copy is in possession of the author, 1992), p. 82.
experiences. The next evolution in understanding of the long-term effects of Kindertransport experiences happened in the sixties. Psychiatrists started to recognise long-term effects in adults who were persecuted as children by Nazis. Symptoms were diagnosed as severe anxiety, chronic depression and somatic symptoms. However, cause and effect were still unclear until the Vietnam war veterans started showing similar symptoms. The bridge to holocaust victims was walked finally in the eighties by L. Eitinger and R. Krell. This gave the basis to define the concept of trauma and post-traumatic stress disorder and consequently, to recognise this mental illness as diagnosable and treatable. Based on the ‘Kinder’ interviewed by Newman, four main categories of disturbances related to traumas became visible: first survivors’ guilt (‘was I worth of it?’, ‘How come, I survived’), second the fear of reoccurrence, thirdly physical illness and finally behavioural problems. For the increased understanding of trauma and its short and long-term effects it is important that for Jewish children, wherever they survived, the persecution through the Nazis was a sequence of traumas over the years. This did not necessarily end with the war. After 1945 most of the children had to process that their whole families had been murdered. If a reunion with part of their families was possible, it meant this time a separation from their exile families. Already in 1992 Jacob Newman, a rabbi and scholar, researched with the help of a questionnaire and based on the latest developments in Psychology the trauma effects of the Kinder. This work was sponsored by Yad Vashem, although it was only privately published with a small edition. The life of four

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6 Ibid., pp.166, 167.
7 Leo Eitinger, Robert Krell, *The Psychological and Medical effects of Concentration Camps and related Persecutions on Survivors of the Holocaust* (Vancouver: UBCP, 1985).
8 The Oxford dictionary mentions trauma as emotional suffering first in 1977 (comp. R. Clifford, p. 158)
9 Newman, pp.86-87.
10 Iris Guske, *Trauma and Attachment in the Kindertransport context* (Newcastle under Lyme: Cambridge scholar publishing, 2009), p.18
children will be explored and reflected based on different traumas. Newman's research showed that these traumas were more common.

**The Children**

*Martin Solmitz, The Lost One - Hamburg*

Martin Solmitz was born in 1930 in Hamburg. His parents were bourgeois, the father a banker. Martin had an older and a younger sister. The education of the children was a high priority for the parents and as the children needed to leave the Aryan school in November 1938, the parents took the decision to send the children with the Kindertransport to relatives in England.

Although the parents tried to emigrate as well, due to the disability of the father, which was because of his service as a German soldier in the Great War, they were not able to find a host country. In December 1938 the three siblings boarded a Kindertransport train in Hamburg and their mother Herta wrote in the diary of the children: ‘It was touching to see all three children with their blue coats, blue caps and blue backpacks in the crowd of all the departing children. All three were holding each other’s hands – facing an unknown future abroad.¹¹ ¹² ‘On the train the children’s passports were confiscated by the Gestapo. This left them stateless.

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¹²T. Matthes-Walk was a journalist and visited the Solmitz family in the USA. She had access to the family archive and interviewed Martin’s sister Ursula and her son Stan.
All three children became students at Bunce Court School. One of Martin’s teachers, Ms. Doris May Clifton, described him as a cheerful and high-spirited boy. He was happy in his schoolwork, liked experiments and was of an 'inquiring disposition'\textsuperscript{13}. Martin’s family remembers the situation differently. The sisters said later that he was ostracised by the other children and suffered from bed wetting way beyond the age this normally happened. The usual procedure for schools for dealing with psychological problems of children at that time, considering that often the problems were not diagnosed as emotional, was to send the children home. Due to the situation that the parents were in New York by then, this was

\textsuperscript{13} ‘German boy found hanging from tree’ \textit{Shropshire Chronicle}, 2 October 1943, p. 8.
not immediately possible\textsuperscript{14}. Martin was found on Sunday the 26\textsuperscript{th} of September 1943 hanging from a tree with a wooden box near his body. Classmates of his testified, that he was talking about suicide and discussed with them stabbing himself or hanging. He even showed them a self-made noose, which did not raise any alarm about his state of mind. His body was found still warm and respiratory activities were performed; he was even taken to the iron lung in the Royal Salop Infirmary but with no success at resuscitation. The coroner decided on accidental death\textsuperscript{15}. Martin's family remembered that he did not cope with the emotional burden of separation and committed suicide\textsuperscript{16}.

His parents managed to flee via Portugal to the United States in 1941 and had their children follow them in 1944 from England to New York on a ship, where they experienced the last threat from Germany through a hunting submarine. Tragically this journey happened without Martin. The father Robert Solmitz cites in his annual letter for 1943 the telegram about Martin's death: 'Your dear boy Martin died suddenly Sunday by accident playing happy in school gardens suffered no pain all medical help applied but in vain'\textsuperscript{17}. The coroner’s verdict in 1943 very much reflects the knowledge about mental illnesses in children of that time. In the 45/46 report of the Birmingham council a young man is mentioned, who had been sentenced to one month in prison for attempted suicide. This suggests that the coroner may have decided that Martin's case was an accident as he did not want to criminalise the boy\textsuperscript{18}. It is also remarkable that in the newspaper report it was not mentioned at all that Martin was a Jewish refugee and that he endured persecution.

\textsuperscript{14} Stan Osborne, son of Ursula Osborne nee Solmitz – older sister of Martin Solmitz, interview conducted by the author on the 11.08.22, script in appendix c. and Carlos Alvarez, son of Ruth Alvarez nee Solmitz, interview conducted by the author 25.08.22, script in appendix b.
\textsuperscript{15} Shropshire Chronicle, October 2, 1943, p. 8.
\textsuperscript{16} Henry Krägenau, Traute Matthes-Walk.
\textsuperscript{17} Robert Solmitz, Annual letter, 1 May 1944, with permission of Carlos Alvarez
\textsuperscript{18} Birmingham Council for refugees, Annual report 1945 - 1946 (Birmingham Archives 74/578608), p. 2.
with his family, nor was it mentioned that Bunce Court school/Trench Hall School was a Jewish school for emigrants from Germany.

All facts indicating and pointing to suicide were duly ignored. The question occurs what are the conditions to give the Kindertransport children a new start to life in the host country? One part has been recognised by Newman with identification as an important factor. Identification signals the belonging to a social group and for children it is the family. He recognised that in refugee children the ‘first line of resource for helping is the family and that parents provide love, comfort, happiness and orientation’. Bowlby recognised, that children deploy their talents best, knowing there is one trusted person who will come to their aid if problems occur\(^{19}\). For all Kindertransport children it can be assumed that the attached person (a parent, sibling or friend) was left behind and new attachments had to be found. The consequence of not being able to rebuild new attachments in the host country was analysed by Guske. The stress to acculturate could increase the feelings of loneliness and therefore amplifies feelings like insecurity and low self-esteem and it hinders the adaptation to a new environment and finding new friends or possible attachments. All this can lead to depression and if not tackled, into suicide\(^{20}\). It is speculation now if Martin committed suicide or died because he was just experimenting, but it can be assumed that nowadays the focus for the investigation into his death would be rather on suicide than on accident. The family clearly draw the suicidal conclusion\(^{21}\). When the family was reunited in the States the mother asked the daughters ‘what really happened to Martin?’ Both sisters felt that they had let him down and felt guilty for a long time\(^{22}\).

\(^{19}\) Newman, Kindertransporte, pp. 81-84.  
\(^{20}\) Guske, p.109.  
\(^{21}\) Henry Krägenau, Traute Matthes-Walk,  
\(^{22}\) Stan Osborne
Newman’s research showed that from the 102 questioned children, who filled in the questionnaire in Israel and Britain, ten suffered from loneliness. Nearly half of them endured a variety of depression in all kinds of intensity.

By 1943, half of the children started to feel at home in their new ‘Heimat’, which indicates that this group of children found a suitable attachment and a social group in which to integrate\textsuperscript{23}. The danger of suicide in the refugee population became clearer after the war when a report showed that, male refugees had a five times higher suicide rate than those born in Britain.

It should also be mentioned that integration may have been easier for girls because they share and experience emotions more easily, whilst boys tended to bottle up their emotions and keep them to themselves\textsuperscript{24}.

\textit{Dame Vera Stephanie Shirley, nee Buchthal – the Philanthropist - Dortmund/Vienna}

Dame Stephanie Shirley was not in the care of the Shrewsbury committee nor a student at Trench Hall School. As a Kindertransport child, she was placed with a care family in Staffordshire but later regularly visited her mother in Shropshire once her mother had escaped to England. Dame Shirley finally went to school in Oswestry. Her life is well documented so that her and her sister’s early life in England gives an insight into integration and the decisive factors of why some children did find a home in England.

She was born in the year of Hitler’s power seize in 1933 to a well-established family as Vera Stephanie Buchthal. Her father, an ambitious lawyer, became a high court judge whilst he was relatively young. Her sister Renate was born in 1930. The family lived in

\textsuperscript{23} Newman, p.45
\textsuperscript{24} Guske, p.188.
Dortmund but had to move to seven European countries in the following years, finally settling near Vienna. After the *Anschluss*, the occupation and integration of Austria into the *Reich*, life was not safe and the parents decided to send their children to England via the Kindertransport eight weeks before the outbreak of the war\textsuperscript{25}.

Dame Stephanie (left) and her sister, pictured with their German father and Austrian mother, who put them on a Kindertransport train to escape Nazi-occupied Austria\textsuperscript{26}, by permission of Dame Stephanie Shirley.

Both children were taken in by a childless couple in Staffordshire. Dame Shirley started to accept these surroundings as a new family and to fit in. In contrast Renate found it harder to settle and opposed the new carers in little things like how to get the butter out of the pot. Their mother managed to escape the Nazis in 1940 and came to England. She found employment as a servant in Oswestry and Renate could get a scholarship at the girl’s high school in Oswestry. Consequently, Renate moved to her mother (due to the financial

situation, she could only support one child) and Stephanie stayed with the care parents, now affectionately called Uncle and Aunt\textsuperscript{27}.

Regarding the separation and attachment theory, this shows that the younger the children were, the easier it was for them to find a new attachment in a suitable environment. The older the children were (here Renate) the more difficult it was for the child to build a new attachment. In this case it was luck that her mother could escape so that the already existing attachment of Renate to her mother could be revived. Meanwhile Dame Shirley describes a short phase of disappointment not to have been chosen to live with her mother but expressed satisfaction in staying with uncle and auntie to be pampered as an only child. How beneficial this was became clear when the siblings fell ill, Stephanie with measles in 1939 and Renate with poliomyelitis in 1944. Keeping in mind that both sicknesses could have meant a death sentence, Stephanie was nursed by her care mother. Renate had meanwhile moved to her real mother in Oswestry, who had earmarked a penny a week from her meagre income for a health insurance for Renate. This meant Renate got the latest treatment involving penicillin and the iron lung.

These arrangements had also a significant influence on the identity of the sisters. While Stephanie developed an English identity, even changed her surname after the war and became a British citizen with her mother in 1951, Renate refused this step, settling later in Australia, where she became a national after only six months. Both sisters experienced a similar life surrounded by the same loving people until the end of the war but became identity-wise very different\textsuperscript{28}. The question occurs if this was down to the age, and could younger children assimilate much easier into a new society than older ones? Unfortunately,

\textsuperscript{27} Ibid., pp. 14-32.
\textsuperscript{28} The children sent to safety from the Nazis (London: BBC, ,4.9.2019) [accessed 18.7.2022].
in Newman’s research no connection was made between the answer to the question ‘When did you feel at home in England?’ and the emigration age of the responder.

Another aspect seems to be important. The sisters came from a very well-educated household to foster parents, where uncle left school early to earn money and finally set up his own business. It was not uncommon for the Kinder to worry about their education and based on this, about their future\textsuperscript{29}. The intellectual potential of the girls was recognised by their schools and the English society was able to provide bursaries for them to attend public schools and universities. Dame Stephanie Shirley had an impressive career but was burdened with another typical mental impairment of the Kinder, the survivor’s guilt. This was motivation for her to forge an extraordinary career with pioneering work in the software sector and to promote feminism. In her own words: ‘I constantly was aware that my life has been spared and that I must do something worthwhile with it’.\textsuperscript{30} She continued to suffer from depression, in her own words ‘a sadness of living’ which only went away when she reached the age of 60\textsuperscript{31}.

\textbf{Hana Bandler - The Philomath - Prague}

Hana’s voyage from Prague to Shropshire and around Shropshire until 1946 shows two more aspects of the Kindertransport. Firstly, the irrepressible urge for education and secondly the use of Kindertransport children for domestic and farm services. Hana’s parents prepared her as well as possible for the evacuation to England by letting her take the decision to leave and talking to her intensively about the English offer\textsuperscript{32}. After applying

\textsuperscript{29} Newman, p.89.
\textsuperscript{31}Desert Island sic – Dame Stephanie Shirley, (London:BBC, 23.5.2010), \url{https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/b00sf7hx}, [accessed 8.7.2022].
\textsuperscript{32} Hana Bandler, interviewed by Conrad Wood (IWM), 8.6.1996, \url{https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/80016727}
for the Kindertransport Hana started to learn English. Due to the preparation and the determination to be reunited with her parents within two years, she was able to adjust to her new life in England, which was not at all welcoming at first.

Hana with her parents, Jindrich and Ruzena Bandler in the mid 1930s, by permission of Mike Frankl, Hana’s Cousin

Hana arrived in London in July 1939 as an already 16-year-old teenager which was just at the upper age limit set by the English authorities. She was welcomed by Sir Nicolas Winton and put on a train to Shrewsbury, arriving at Gobowen near Oswestry with the family who guaranteed the 50 pounds. Although wishing to continue her education unfortunately she had to work as a servant instead. The family was kind, but there was no communication and the family tried to isolate her from other people. Once, she was sent to the Welsh border to look after kennels. Soon after her placement as a maid, her mother

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wrote from Prague to Nicolas Winton to remind him of the promise, that Hana would be able to continue her education\textsuperscript{34}. Subsequently Hana left this family and after a short stay in a hostel with the help of the Shrewsbury Committee, she then landed with a Methodist preacher and his family where she had to work again as a maid. Once more, she asked for an education in Chemistry and Biology. She was told that in England the school for girls her age needed to be paid for and there was no budget for her. A complication in this arrangement was, that her foster father denied any wrongdoing by the Germans and declared the persecution of Jews as fake news. After he got registered as a conscious objector on religious grounds and left the house, Hana had to leave as well. The change came with an invitation to tea at Hilda Murrell’s. Here she learned that she was the only ‘Kind’ who was not going to school. Consequently, she asked Hilda if she could at least learn dressmaking. Hilda organised an apprenticeship for her and she had to move again. She came into the household of another clergyman where the family was very kind to her. However due to the war he joined the Merchant Navy and Hilda Murrell arranged for Hana to stay with relatives of her own\textsuperscript{35}.

Now Hana made friends for the first time. The granddaughter of the house owner was the same age as Hana and a lifelong friendship started, which became the nucleus of a circle of friends. Hana finally fought loneliness and isolation on those grounds. Her mother was very worried about her emotional state and wrote from the occupied Czechoslovakia: 'I would like my child to be happy and not to be taken advantage of.'\textsuperscript{36}

At the same time all aliens had to register and Hilda asked Hana if she had done this. Hana took the opportunity and asked afresh for a better education and Hilda managed to get her

\textsuperscript{34} Mike Frankl, \textit{Hana Bandler – A less ordinary life}, (privately published: Cambridge, 2cd ed. 2015), pp. 36-37.
\textsuperscript{35} ibid, p. 96.
\textsuperscript{36} ibid., p.78.
into the Priory School for Girls. At first the Mayor's Committee bore the cost of this high school in Shrewsbury\textsuperscript{37}. Hilda negotiated a reimbursement of the costs from the Czech Trust fund, which had been founded in UK as a reaction to the German occupation of the Czech state\textsuperscript{38}. Due to the registration with the Czech Trust fund the Frankl family, already emigrated and settled in London, could make contact and Hana got reunited with part of her family\textsuperscript{39}. After a year Hana moved again to join a Czech state school near Whitchurch in Shropshire. Although due to her interrupted school education she failed in French and Latin, she did not give up and continued her education to finally become a laboratory assistant and later a senior haematologist at Preston Hall Hospital in 1973. She refused the offer to go back to the Czech Republic after the war ended and got naturalised in Britain.

Hana’s voyage from one accommodation to another sheds a bit of light onto the foster system. Although only Hana’s voice is available and keeping in mind that a whole picture could only be painted with a statement from the foster parents\textsuperscript{40}, it becomes apparent that the obligation to earn her keep contradicted the urge for education. She was able to manage her path from purely working in the host family’s business via a working arrangement with an apprenticeship to the targeted school education. Hana refused in later life to recognise the families, she was placed in, as foster parents\textsuperscript{41}. On the other hand, the expectation to earn ones keep was not uncommon to the British themselves. Uncle, the foster father of Dame Shirley left school at the age of 14 to earn money. And finally, an older 'Kind' earning their keep would free funds for other younger children. From the 102 children

\textsuperscript{37} Hana Bandler, interviewed by C. Wood.
\textsuperscript{38} Mike Levy, p. 175.
\textsuperscript{39} Mike Frankl, p. 100.
\textsuperscript{40} Jennifer Craig-Norton, Kindertransport (Bloomington: Indiana University press, 2019), p.96.
\textsuperscript{41} Mail from Mike Frankl 26.10.22, 'I am not keen on the way you have described her as being fostered - it was not a term that Hana ever used'
asked by Newman more than 90% were staying with more than two foster families during the war\textsuperscript{42}.

**Anne(marie) Fox, nee Lehmann, The Forgiving One – Berlin**

Anne was born 1926 into a large Jewish family in Berlin. Her father, heavily injured with having lost an arm as a German soldier in WWI then decorated with the Iron Cross, occupied a job in an international bank. Soon after the power grip of the Nazis in 1933 he lost his job and the family began to struggle financially. Remarkable and not typical for the history of Jewish children is that Anne’s Aryan friend Dorit, although she was a member of the BDM (Bund Deutscher Maedchen, the equivalent to Hitlerjugend for girls), kept in contact. She sneaked up the backyard stairs to visit Anne and explained to her that she should pretend not to know her when she was wearing uniform\textsuperscript{43}. Anne’s older brother Guenther obtained a student visa for England in 1938 and went off to London. After the parents wrote to him about ‘Kristallnacht’ his answer was: ‘Send Annemarie out immediately’. Guenther arranged a Jewish family who would take Anne in for one pound a week, paid by one of his English friends. Anne left Berlin by train at the age of twelve on 28 December 1938. This was the last time she saw her parents. Her father was murdered in Theresienstadt; her mother had perished in Auschwitz\textsuperscript{44}.

Anne was hosted by a family in London. Her German friend Dorit still visited Anne’s mother in Berlin and left chocolate for her to send to Anne by post\textsuperscript{45}. After the war broke

\textsuperscript{42} Newman, p. 44.
\textsuperscript{44} *Kindertransport to Shropshire*, (BBC: London, 2014), https://www.bbc.co.uk/shropshire/content/articles/2008/12/02/kindertransport_shropshire_feature.shtml
out, she was evacuated with a group of English children to a village near Bedham. There she lived on a farm with the Mansfield family, who welcomed her like their own child. Anne lived there until the age of 15 in 1941. Her brother and her parents were concerned about her education and with the support of the Jewish committee she was able to continue her education at Trench Hall School in Shropshire\(^{46}\).

In addition to the loving environment, she found with the Mansfield family, having her brother nearby and receiving regular letters from her parents, she was able to deal successfully with the separation and to concentrate on education. Nevertheless, she mentioned later, that her main goal became to start a family. She realised this with marrying an American soldier\(^{47}\).

First, she went to Wem in Shropshire to join Trench Hall School, which was then and still is called Bunce Court School by all insiders. In Bunce Court she found a best friend called Renee, who had been able to flee Germany together with her brother and her parents. The parents lived in London and the brother Guenther was at Bunce Court as well. In the middle of 1943 Anne passed her exams including the Cambridge qualification. As Cambridge was not possible budget-wise, she decided not to take an offer organised by school head Anna Essinger, to become a primary teacher in Birmingham and instead went to Wales. She lived there with her new sister-in-law aiming for a career in the fashion sector\(^{48}\).

Although her memoirs do not mention any attachment or separation issues, she wrote long after the war that when she finally received the confirmation that both her parents were murdered: ‘I could not cry. I had cried so many times in the past five years while I lived

\(^{47}\) Kindertransport to Shropshire.
\(^{48}\) Anne L. Fox, pp.106-108.
with strangers. Although they had treated me kindly, they were not as loving as my parents. I could not cuddle up and kiss them and share all my hurts and sadness. I kept all my feelings inside me.  

Despite her suffering, the murder of her close and wider family who stayed in Germany, Anne writes, that she and her German friend were often thinking about each other. Dorit visited England after the war and tried to find her friend only to learn that she had finally emigrated to the USA. She got in touch and the friendship continued with visits.

Anne’s mother taught her a poem, of which one line translates into: ‘God gave you (an) understanding, (the) soul, (the) heart, don’t ever lose it in all your sorrow’. Based on these lines she forgave and continued her friendship with Dorit.

**More Shropshire Kinder**

During this research several other children could be identified, some only by their first name. Nevertheless, they should not be forgotten. The handed down histories were sometimes only a name in a newspaper article, a short article on the internet or the indication of challenges the child was facing found in the Mayor's Committee Meeting minutes. There was Hans, who died at the age of ten at the beginning of 1940. The *Birmingham Daily Post* told the story of a boy, who already had an accident in Germany in 1938 and who died due to the long-term effects. Because no Rabbi was available for the funeral the Anglican vicar phoned a rabbi and got instructions of how to perform the ceremony. Sigi Faith (10 years), should be mentioned, who arrived at a foster family in

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50 Ibid, p.25.  
51 Anne L. Fox, pxiii.  
53 Kindertransport to Shropshire (London:BBC,13.112014), <https://www.bbc.co.uk/shropshire/content/articles/2008/12/02/kindertransport_shropshire_feature.shtml>, [accessed 18.5.2022].
Oswestry, joined the boy’s high school there and became the cricket team captain and head boy. After the war he founded Faith Shoes and became a successful entrepreneur. Kurt Kern, one of the Mayor’s committee Kinder, joined the RAF at the end of 194354. Eva Sobernheim was continuously supported with her education throughout the war years, with which she struggled very much. The committee supported her until she could be transferred into the safekeeping of her father in England in 1948. She was the last child in the care of the Mayor’s Committee, which was subsequently wound up55.

**Summary**

What influenced the emotional health of the Kinder, after they were rescued from physical harm? Newman distinguished between stresses and traumas. Furthermore, he divided the reasons for both for the time in the Reich and then in England. The major stresses for the Kinder were mainly caused by joining the Kindertransport and staying in England. These were like 'not being able to speak English, being taken to a strange place, terribly worried about the parents, sudden decision leaving for England, having nobody to talk to' only to mention some. Most traumas were caused by the persecution experience in Nazi Germany and only 20% were based on the English experience56. This indicates that the deep traumas, the Kinder suffered during their lives were mainly caused by the German racism and may have been amplified by stresses in Great Britain. The experience of the four children from Shropshire shows that the older the children were, the more they were able to cope with the massive change in their lives, although the integration into a new society

54 Mayor of Shrewsbury committee for Jewish refugee children, Recording of minutes, Shropshire archives, DAS118/2-CCA, D46.5/4035.
55 ibid.
56 Newman, pp. 74-75.
was more difficult. The more stable the foster family environment was, the better the path to integration. Each child reported that after they were loved and found good friends, happiness came back into their lives. Looking at Hanna Bandler it becomes clear, that two of her foster parents were motivated by religious reason as the foster fathers were either lay preachers or Anglican clergymen. With these four children the Jewish religion did not play any role in their life during the war which is much emphasized by the burial of Hans because no Rabbi was available. On the other hand, for all of them female figures were especially important. For Hana this was Helen Murrell and her new best friend, for Dame Shirley Auntie, for Anne the female staff of Bunce Court School and her new best friend. This is not surprising as many British men were mostly absent from the home doing military service. Another angle to look at the environment of the children is the form of accommodation. What was best for them, foster care or becoming a member of a school or hostel? The reception into a school for refugees run mostly by refugees will be researched in the next chapter to answer this.
4. Bunce Court School in Otterden Kent (1933-1940) and at Trench Hall in Wem (1940-1945) and its history

With the move to Shropshire, Bunce Court School became part of the Midlands Regional Organisation for the Refugee Children’s Movement. This also included cooperation with the Shrewsbury Mayor’s Committee. In addition to the 16 Kinder cared for by the Mayor's Committee, 126 students were taken in by the school in 1939. Was the reception of refugee children in the school, different compared with the foster care? How was the school received in the neighbourhood after its move to Shropshire in 1940? And finally, how important was religion and female care for the school?

The role of religion in this context is rather expressed in the daily routines the school was providing, the financing and support from religious communities than in formal ceremonies and services. The chapter will focus predominantly on the Quakers and especially on the role and liberties of women in the quaker community, the support of the Jewish community and additionally focus on Christian support. It will be shown that faith was a prime motivator of those who offered moral and financial support to the school.

The theology of the Quakers and the impact this has on their charity work will be explained in a subchapter later, followed by an analysis of if traces of the Quaker approach to education could be found in the daily life in Bunce Court School.

Primary sources will be written memories of Anna Essinger, the founder and headmistress, the teacher Anna Bergas, who had a relationship with the school and Anna Essinger lasting nearly 15 years and furthermore on memoirs and written testimonies or oral interviews of previous students. This case study will test the theory of the decline of Christianity in
Britain, first established in 1851 with the religious census and then disputed by Callum Brown.

Reports from the headmistress and early reports about the school have been found in Shropshire archives. The memoirs of the teacher Hanna Bergas are archived at the Leo Baeck Institute in New York. Oral statements and newspaper articles about former students have been found in newspapers. The descendants of students have been interviewed.

Although originally a multi-faith school in Germany, by 1933 the children were all Jewish, many from secular Jewish families. Trench Hall School has had three different names in the exile. New-Herrlingen School, Bunce Court School and Trench Hall School. The official name stayed as Bunce Court School and as such this paper will refer to it as Bunce Court School.

Letterhead of the moved Bunce Court School which shows the name used during the relocation to Shropshire

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2 Otterden: Bunce Court School (formerly New Herrlingen School, 1937-1944, National Archives ED35/4724).
The founder and headmistress were Anna Essinger, mostly called Tante Anna, German for Aunt Anna, but often the acronym TA was used. Anna Essinger (1879 – 1960) ran the school until the end of the school year 1948\textsuperscript{2}. The school was set up in the southwest of Germany in Herrlingen as Herrlingen School in 1925\textsuperscript{3} then it emigrated to Kent in 1933 and was called Bunce Court School. In 1940 the school had to move again to Wem in Shropshire and was called by the locals Trench Hall School, although refereed by staff and students as Bunce court school\textsuperscript{4}.

The pedagogic principles were based on progressive educational methods, described as the Montessori method, which A. Essinger studied in the US and taught afterwards at Madison University\textsuperscript{5}. Daily life and the curriculum will be described in more detail later. The school was set up in Germany at the beginning of 1933 as an all-faith school with two thirds Christian and one third Jewish pupils. This changed dramatically after the Nazis came to power\textsuperscript{6}. Due to the increasing racism against Jews in Germany only Jewish children and teachers were left at the school in 1933.

\textit{Anna Essinger - the first years -}

To understand the connection and support Anna Essinger experienced by the Quakers it is helpful to shed some light on the years before Anna opened Herrlingen School. She was born on 15 September 1879 in Ulm into a Jewish family. Her father Leopold Essinger was

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{2} Anna Essinger, Bunce Court School, letter 28.03.1948, Shropshire Archives M17284d.
  \item \textsuperscript{4} Anne L. Fox, pp. 85 and 90.
  \item \textsuperscript{5} Martin Lubowski, Tilley - Some comments ref. Trench Hall & Bunce Court School, Bunce Court School & Landschulheim Herrlingen Archive (London, May 2005), Shropshire Archives 7628/2.
  \item \textsuperscript{6} Sara Giebeler: Das Landschulheim Herrlingen – gegründet von Anna Essinger, in: Sara Giebeler u. a.: Profile jüdischer Pädagoginnen und Pädagogen, p. 68.
\end{itemize}
an insurance agent, her mother Fanny was born into the Oppenheimer family. Anna studied at the University of Wisconsin and encountered the Society of Friends. Some secondary sources report that Anna got associated with the Quakers. She went to Germany in 1919 to implement a child support system in post-war poverty-stricken Germany with the Quakers. During this activity 2271 kitchens and 8364 feeding centres were set up and provided food for over one million children per day. This helped later in negotiations with the Nazis, who received food during this time and were therefore more willing to allow Quakers to save Jews and Jewish children. Another Quaker went to Germany with the same mission, Bertha Braceley. It is unknown if the German from America and the Quaker from England met during their work for the Quakers. Later correspondence shows, that A. Essinger fulfilled the stereotype of the English imagination of a German headmistress. 'Short, stout, with very thick spectacles, a brisk and efficient manner, homely and very kind to the children, but a strict disciplinarian to teaching staff and pupils.'

**The move and its sponsors**

After the seizure of power by the Nazis in Germany at the beginning of 1933 the situation regarding Jews became more and more threatening. Anna Essinger decided to move the school outside of Germany. New laws restricted the number of Jewish pupils and the

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10 Sybil Oldfield, 'It Is Usually She', p.59.
11 Bygone Kent, Vol. 8, Series history Bunce Court School/Trench Hall School, (Shropshire Archives, Shrewsbury), p.549, MI7628/7 — CCA.
number who could take exams per school\textsuperscript{12}. The straw that broke the camel’s back was the order to all schools by the authorities to hoist the swastika flag at the Führer’s birthday in April 1933.

Anna Essinger looked in different European countries for the opportunity to settle. She finally decided to move to England, as she found there the support from established Jewish citizens and the Quakers in the school support committees\textsuperscript{13}. Her being close to the two faiths was helpful in securing financial support, finding a suitable building locally and in getting the approval of the authorities politically. Two sources describe the help Anna Essinger and the school received. Firstly Elisabeth Benjamin (1908-1996), a Jew and one of the first women to become an architect, took a special interest in the saving of continental fellow Jews. In 1996 she described the founding of Bunce Court School in some detail. Participants were Samuel Godfrey, also an architect and founder of Tecton group, Victor Gollancz and Anna Essinger. E. Benjamin describes Anna Essinger as ‘an extraordinary woman, who was very cross-eyed which she used to an enormous advantage because you could never pin her down. She said:’ I've got a school of 30/40 children, either Jewish or half Jewish who were having a terrible time, seeing their parents taken away and so on, and I've got to bring them to England.’’ E. Benjamin continues with how they were convinced to help, that they found the Bunce Court building, and converted the buildings based on the requirements of A. Essinger. V. Gollancz guaranteed the

\textsuperscript{12} Reichsgesetzblatt, *Gesetz gegen die Überfüllung deutscher Schulen und Hochschulen*, Teil 1, 1933, Nr. 43, p.225.

\textsuperscript{13} Hanna Bergas, Fifteen Years: Lived Among, with and for Refugee Children, 1933-1948. (1979). Print, p.15. Leo Baeck Institute/ME 41/MM7/00200527
Gollancz was born in London to a family of German/Polish Jewish origin and became a publisher. He was strongly influenced by Christianity and left-wing ideas. While E. Benjamin did not offer any deeper information about the motivation to help, apart from persecution of the children and the sentence, 'We had no way out. We just said: 'Alright, we'll do it'. V. Gollancz gave a view into his religious-based motives. He wrote: ‘Some seed of goodness, mercifully implanted in me as in every human being was pushing towards the light through a huge dead tonnage of carnality and unsaintliness.’ He told his grandson that ‘Christ, who knew everything, is the safest guide for us here.’ Both sentences indicate that his support of the founding of the school related to a Christian understanding in helping and letting Christ guide him to do good deeds. Although his father was an orthodox Jew, Christian ideas became very influential for him, even though he was never baptised. Religiosity has not been expressed by formalism like a christening or maybe churchgoing, but by the urge to bring to light the seed of goodness. It can be assumed that the different ways of celebrating faith Jeffrey Cox described in his local study of Lambeth, were not only restricted to the working class, but reached into the wider society.

Although another eyewitness gave us a written report, unfortunately no names of the supporting Quakers are mentioned. A contemporary witness, Iris Origo, mentioned Bunce
Court in her Memoirs 'Images and Shadows'. Through Lilian Bowes Lyon, who helped
Anna Freud 7 years later in treating bomb-shocked children in a clinic in London, she got
in touch with a group of Quakers, who supported a 'little school in Kent', called Bunce
Court. I. Origo writes about a theatre performance in the Chapterhouse of Canterbury
Cathedral\textsuperscript{20}. She describes the school as a refuge for Jewish adults and children with
Austrian and Czechoslovakian background, which indicates a timeframe from the set up in
1933 to the integration of Kindertransport children in 1938/39\textsuperscript{21}.

\textit{A little historiography about the Quakers and their educational approach}

Quakers took root in the more liberal society which followed Anglican orthodoxy after the
puritans won the civil war in 1646. The Quaker faith developed as a predominantly
personal theology to God, which is nurtured in silent meetings. The faith does not accept
hierarchies and pastoral care through ordained clergy staff, as everyone is a minister.
Quakers believe that every human has got God's light in him and that the divine spirit can
touch and enlighten everybody. Because everyone is equal in the perception of God, the
Quakers help and support multi-faith humans. Based on these beliefs, violence between
humans was and is, strongly denied\textsuperscript{22}. Injustices in society are tackled, which led the

\textsuperscript{21} ibid., p. 227
Quakers to be the first faith group to fight against slavery\(^{23}\). In the forties and fifties of the nineteenth century, Quakers founded and operated the secret network of the ‘underground railroad’ to help slaves to escape into freedom\(^{24}\). After the Great War, Quakers started to come to Germany in order to emphasize the values of peace and brotherhood. Soon American and British friends and associates of the Quakers came to Germany to initiate the Quäker Speisung (Quaker feeding) for German poverty-stricken children\(^{25}\).

The educational approach of the Quakers included a morning meeting with silence. Quaker schools emphasized service to the community, which meant performing simple jobs. This should train those students in humility and resilience in community life. These were mere household duties like cleaning, assisting with cooking and fetching food\(^{26}\). Corporal punishment was banned in Quaker schools by the mid 19th century\(^{27}\).

Due to everybody being equal, women in Quaker history were always freer than their fellow females of other faiths. This already started with the wife of the founder of the Quakers, George Fox. Margaret Fell married him in 1669 and her estate became the early headquarters of the new denomination. She laid the basis of this organisation, where women were not meant to be submissive\(^{28}\). 200 years later Quaker women were still entrusted with executive functions in the Quaker community\(^{29}\), while at the same time the main Christian denominations enforced the separation of the good Christian woman from

\(^{23}\) Borthwick Institute for Archives, Quakers and slavery (University of York), https://www.york.ac.uk/borthwick/holdings/research-guides/race/quakers-and-slavery/[accessed 01.11.22].


\(^{25}\) Uta-Elizabeth Trott, p.617.


\(^{27}\) ibid., p.204.

\(^{28}\) Hans A. Schmitt, p. 2.

\(^{29}\) W.A. Campbell Stewartp.182.
the world outside of family and motherhood\textsuperscript{30}. This was the foundation on which female leadership personalities like Berta Bracey's could develop. She helped to set up a German Emergency Committee and became its head. She brought Anna in touch with a backer from the Quaker community, who supported Anna's school financially\textsuperscript{31}. Although the Jewish supporters of this early migration are well known, it seems that the supporting Quakers preferred to be in the background and not to be mentioned. Only terms like Friends or Committee of Friends point to the origin of the support\textsuperscript{32}.

\textit{Move to Shropshire, Trench Hall School}

In the years after moving to Kent, the School grew continuously until the outbreak of the war. The school was established in 1933 with 73 children. In 1939 it reached its highest number of 146 students due to the Kindertransport but by the end of 1943 there were only 79 pupils left\textsuperscript{33}. After the influx of the rescued children in 1939, all males over 16 were interned as enemy aliens. New pupils from the continent couldn’t join anymore. Therefore, by the end of 1940 the number of students dropped down to 103. The school was then asked to leave the area for defence reasons. 125 students and staff were moved from Kent to Wem in Shropshire in June 1940, while the primary school with two teachers and fifteen children went to another school for the summer and joined them in Wem later\textsuperscript{34}. The move had to be organized in great haste, as the authorities demanded it with a three days’ notice. Tante Anna could again count on her Jewish and Quaker network. Baroness Reading,

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\textsuperscript{30} Callum G., Brown, p. 62.
\textsuperscript{31} Deborah Cadbury, p. 33
\textsuperscript{32} Bygone Kent, Vol. 8, Series history Bunce Court School/Trench Hall School, (Shropshire Archives, Shrewsbury), p.550, MI7628/7 — CCA
\textsuperscript{33} Anna Essinger, Bunce Curt School 1933-1943, Shropshire Archives M17284/1, p. 14.
\textsuperscript{34} Bygone Kent, Vol. 10, Series history Bunce Court School/Trench Hall School, (Shropshire Archives, Shrewsbury), p.655, MI7628/7 — CCA
already mentioned as a supporter by E. Benjamin, was influential in extending this period to a week. Although to search for a new building, to rent it and to convert it was a very short timeframe\textsuperscript{35}.

Anna Essinger was introduced by one of her friends in Kent to Miss Holdsworth\textsuperscript{36} in Shropshire, a Quaker. All the suitable buildings she found had just been requisitioned. Finally, she settled for Trench Hall, which is close to Wem and 11 miles away from Shrewsbury. The self-sufficient lifestyle was endangered as the available ground was too small for livestock and the fowl, pigs and bees had to be left behind in Kent\textsuperscript{37}. How was the school with the Kinder received by the locals in Shropshire nine months after the war broke out? Hana Bergas writes, that when they were looking for a new milk supply the nearest farmer said to her: ‘It makes me blud boil, to see these Germans here’. It took some explanation as to which Germans moved into his neighbourhood and after a while, they were on good terms\textsuperscript{38}.

Due to the move to the midlands and the loss of local support in Kent, the school was now in the care of the Midland's Regional Headquarters of the Refugee Children's Movement. The regional headquarters’ secretary was Ruth Simmons (Appendix A). She was already aware of a progressive committee in Shrewsbury, which encouraged the school to continue with the school tradition of plays and concerts. Zoe Joseph’s research shows that this was the same committee that organised the concert performed by Dame Myra Hess. On the 8.5.1943 the play ‘Lady Precious Stream’ was performed on stage in Shrewsbury. The male main actor was Michael Trede, the female one was Ursula Solmitz, the sister of

\textsuperscript{35} Deborah Cadbury, p.220.  
\textsuperscript{36} Compare to the Mayor’s committee members, Chapter 2. 
\textsuperscript{37} Anna Essinger, Bunce Curt School 1933-1943, Shropshire Archives M17284/1, p. 7.  
\textsuperscript{38} Hana Bergas, p.56.
Martin Solmitz\(^3\). This could only be the Mayor of Shropshire's Jewish German refugee children committee. Sadly, in the committee notes, Trench Hall School was not mentioned\(^4\). When the pupils finished school many of them moved to Birmingham into the care of the Midlands secretary Ruth Simmons, who found work and a place for them to live.\(^5\)

**Daily life in Bunce Court/Trench Hall School and the reflection of religious principles therein.**

The daily life in Bunce Court/Trench Hall School is well described in several sources: Zoe Josephs in her book Refugees, Hana Bergas (1979) in her memoirs, Martin Lubowski (2005) in his letter and Michael Trede (2003), in his memoirs\(^6\). Michael was a student and was later known as an internationally renowned vascular surgeon.

A typical school day would have been like this:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7.00 - 7.30</td>
<td>Outdoor PE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.45</td>
<td>Breakfast (including clearing the tables and dishwashing)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.45 - 12.45</td>
<td>Academic lessons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.00</td>
<td>Lunch (including clearing the tables and dishwashing)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.30 - 14.30</td>
<td>Compulsory Rest Period</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.30 - 16.00</td>
<td>Practical Work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.00</td>
<td>Afternoon tea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.20 - 18.15</td>
<td>Study time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18.30</td>
<td>Supper (including clearing the tables and dishwashing)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20.30</td>
<td>Lights out</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^4\) Zoe Josephs, p.72.
\(^5\) ibid., p.73,
\(^6\) Michael Trede.
This very busy timetable integrated the children into their different learning, working and social groups, which enabled the children to meet other students, teachers and staff during these activities and to create bonds with other refugees. Several challenges like the fear that they were missing out on their education did not exist in the school environment, others, like the concerns for family members who had not managed to escape, could be more easily shared. Therefore, the conditions for the wellbeing of the students were much better than for the ones placed in foster care. The school curriculum emphasised learning English as most of the children were immigrants. History was taught emphasising Britain and the Commonwealth, although M. Trede reports in his memoirs that he was able to focus on Frederick the Great, Bismarck and Napoleon. Biology was taught through practical experience in nature and concentrated on the ecological systems of a hedge or a pond, as there were no specialised premises available in the school. M. Trede writes later, that with simple methods, the foundation for a good understanding of science was laid.\textsuperscript{43}

After the war broke out and the school moved to Wem, German was no longer taught as an exam language and was replaced by French\textsuperscript{44}. In the aftermath of Kristallnacht and due to Kindertransport more and more Jewish children from well assimilated families joined the school. Because of this instruction in Jewish history and religious education was added to the curriculum\textsuperscript{45}. Additional non obligatorily Hebrew lessons were offered, after it became clear, that children may have to emigrate further afield to Palestine and would not go back to Germany\textsuperscript{46}.

What is remarkable is that at the beginning and end of each mealtime, the people on one table, mostly eight to ten children and one or two adults, were standing and holding hands.

\textsuperscript{43} M. Trede, pp. 92-96
\textsuperscript{44} Hanna Bergas, p. 62.
\textsuperscript{45} Hanna Bergas, p. 62.
\textsuperscript{46} M. Trede, p. 94
in a moment of silence. Hanna Bergas remarked that 'Anna Essinger had taken that custom over from her Quaker friends'. The seating order and the allocation of adults to the tables were only changed from trimester to trimester. Also, it was custom that the conversation on the table was done in different languages, so that the students had to apply the learned parts of a foreign language at mealtimes.

Another tradition copied from the Quaker’s educational principles was the service to the community, which was done in the practical lessons. These were activities like cleaning class- and common rooms, cleaning and peeling of vegetables, mending, sewing, ironing and garden work. The jobs were equally allocated to female and male students if their physical constitution matched the activity.

Even though the school started as an all-faith school, rites and practices from the Quakers were part of the daily life. The Montessori approach to strengthen the motivation to learn, instead of forcing children to learn by rote, and the Quaker approach to service the community, were successfully combined in the Bunce Court/Trench Hall school.

Reflecting on the already reported stories of Martin Solmitz and Anne Fox in the previous chapter, how did this combination between the reform movement and old Quaker tradition affect the pupils? Michael Trede gives testimony and writes about his table neighbours: ‘Opposite of me sat a future professor for theatre science of the Yale University (Michael Roemer), on my left one of the future leading modern painters of Great Britain (Frank Auerbach) and on my right side the future drama author, director, and theatre critic of the Sunday Times (Frank Marcus)’. It is worth keeping in mind that he himself would become

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47 Hanna Bergas, p.8
48 ibid. p. 9.
a leading surgeon in his specialised area\textsuperscript{49}. Michael Roemer did shed some light in different interviews on the contribution the school had on his achievements. Michael had to spend his time with a governess as his parents were divorced when he was an infant. He described the carer later in his life as a sadistic woman, who always beat him and that he was a very insecure child. Leaving the governess behind he described his state of mind as 'I was very obedient, because I'd been scared a lot'.\textsuperscript{50} Martin Lubowski quoted him further: 'Before I came to the school, I was barely alive, withdrawn, frightened, with no sense of others or of myself. Even during the first two years I existed in a shell'.\textsuperscript{51} His escape to England at the age of 11 to Bunce Court saved him. In his own words and mentioning his friend Frank Auerbach he told: 'Frank and I felt that this was a really big formative experience. The encouragement to go your own way. The teachers were good parents to us. I loved it and didn’t want to leave'.\textsuperscript{52}

**Summary**

Bunce Court School with its headmistress and founder Anna Essinger could already escape Germany in 1933 with the support of members of the Jewish and the Quaker communities. Both communities were motivated by their faith to help children and their teachers who faced persecution based on a pseudo-scientific racial theory. One of the Jewish Supporters was even driven by Christian motivation, as his later writings show.

Callum Brown summarises in his research, that the religiosity was not properly analysed because the research focuses too strongly on structures and not on personal piety. That

\textsuperscript{49} M.Trede, p.96 (Transcribed by the author)
\textsuperscript{50} Emma Brockes, *Director Michael Roemer on his seminal 60s drama Nothing but a Man* (The Guardian: London, 1.10.2013), https://www.theguardian.com/film/2013/oct/01/director-michael-roemer-nothing-but, [accessed 01.11.22].
\textsuperscript{51} Martin Lubowski, Tilley - Some comments ref. Trench Hall & Bunce Court School, Bunce Court School & Landschulheim Herrlingen Archive (London, May 2005), Shropshire Archives 7628/2.
\textsuperscript{52} Emma Brockes.
religiosity was and is part of the individual personality and identity. This helps to understand, how the school was touched by religiosity with its procedures, especially the handholding silence, like the Quakers used to do it.

Without promoting any faith, the daily life in the school integrated religious practices from the Quaker community such as being silent together and the service for the community. Religious lessons were integrated in the curriculum, when it became clear that plenty of children escaping Germany with the Kindertransport came from well assimilated families without knowledge about their faith.

The school provided a stable environment for the children and the high number of students who later performed extremely well in their profession is testimony to this. Despite being German, the locals in Shropshire welcomed them after realising the school consisted of people who were persecuted by Nazi Germany.

It becomes clear, that even though one student committed suicide the school gave the students a continual, stable life among fellow refugees with similar fates. A. Essinger writes in 1943, based on her experience supporting the reception of Kinder into the transitions camp for Kindertransport children in Dovercourt, that some of these children had the experience of being placed in eight to ten homes in the years between 1939 and 1943.

The integration into the Midlands Committee and therefore a closer relationship with the local Mayor's Committee helped the school to root in the area.

Finally, nothing this chapter reports would have happened without self-confident, educated, assertive and highly motivated women. This began with Tante Anna, the architect E. Benjamin, Ms. Holdsworth, the Quakers, Ms. Simmons and Hilda Murrel, who

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53 C. Brown, p. 195.
54 A. Essinger, Bunce Court School, p. 6.
were the secretaries of the children committees, to mention only the obvious ones. This female support was visible from the beginning of the Nazi tyranny and continued until long after the war. It showed ahead of the development in society, that women were as capable as men in all challenges.
5. Conclusion

The historiography of Kindertransport underwent dramatic changes in the last 40 years. The heroic and partly romantic views were replaced by a deeper analysis of the political constraints on local and national level, of the wide variety of motivation the helpers had and of the deep impact the rescue left in the Kinder themselves. This local study adds some rarely discussed aspects to the Kindertransport activity.

It has already been recognized that the government, having allowed children to enter Great Britain, did not support the organisation or the finances of this enterprise in any way. Although it was very much supported and initiated by office-holding and previous politicians, the rescue was utterly dependent on non-governmental institutions and private initiatives.
The local analysis shows that in the help for Jewish refugee children the past of the Christian churches met the future of women. The Christian churches lost one of their major functionalities in coordinating and gaining the help for the poor and needy due to the overtaking of social support by the state. The previously lost supporting role was easily revived by the Quakers, Anglicans, Roman-Catholics and all the other denominations in the taking on of fundraising and coordinating for Kindertransport.

A very different development happened with women working in the Kindertransport context. Traditionally even well-educated women were confined to teaching, nursing or typewriting, but the rescue organisations saw a considerable number of female staff rising to top positions and doing much of the work on every level. One could argue that in wartime men were in short supply, but this does not fit the timeline. While the Kindertransport stopped bringing new children into the country with the outbreak of the war on 3rd September 1939, the conscription for all males between the age of 18 and 41 started the same day. Women had already taken their part in the organisation by then¹.

Louise London argues that the concern of the home office was an increasing antisemitism in the population if Great Britain had let more refugees in. The letters to the editor at local level are more concerned with the economic situation and an unfair distribution of resources, than antisemitic bias. The danger of having strengthened the fascists in UK was more evident at local level in Shropshire, although in the run up to the war and after the pogroms in the Deutsches Reich, the Blackshirts lost most of their backing from the locals.

The argument that children can easily adapt into a new environment was contradicted with the development of trauma research. The latest literature about Kindertransport already takes this development into account. The study about trauma in the Kinder, done by Rabbi

Jacob Newman in 1992, received no interest at that time and was therefore published privately in a small edition. He recognised different kinds of trauma and with his survey he showed the frequency of their occurrence in the children. Undoubtedly the lives of these children were saved from Nazi persecution, but often enough these lives were burdened and sometimes even destroyed due to traumas. This local research unearthed the story of Martin Solmitz. He probably committed suicide, which is unlikely to have happened if the family had not been forced to separate to save the lives of the siblings. Hana Bandler’s memoirs have only been published privately and demonstrate the difficulties older children had to achieve a higher education. At the same time this case points out how stretched the committees were between financial restrictions, saving lives and giving the children the opportunity to realise their intellectual potential. Although Hana's oral testimony was already recorded in the 90's, cases like hers have only been discussed in recent years.

The Shropshire local angle provides the opportunity to compare the concept of foster care or host families with living in communities like Bunce Court School. The memoirs of Hanna Bergas and several testimonies from former pupils show, that living in groups of humans with similar histories could lighten the burden of traumas. The daily schedule filled with activities made it easier for the children to adjust and as they were not too integrated into the local community in Shropshire, they emigrated more easily to other parts of the world after the war. The foresightedness of the headmistress resulted in an emigration from Germany shortly after the power grip of the Nazis. With the help of supporters from the Jewish and Quaker community a fast escape into exile was possible and saved the lives of students and teachers. Although the move of the Jewish School with German roots from Kent to Shropshire was welcomed with reservations, after some time this changed into a good neighbourhood relationship.
6. Appendix

*a. Excerpt of meeting minutes of the Mayor's Committee for Jewish Refugee children*

1. Meeting establishing committee before March 39

2. Meeting 10 March 39
   Coordination starts with agricultural and educational committee
   Applicants for hosting the children were already there
   Mayor appeal as response to Lord Baldwin mentioned, recent
   letter to all religious bodies had to drawn

3. Meeting 31st March
   Information about 50GBP deposit per child received from London
   Further information requested
   Ms Schumann, maybe Eva Schumann, part of the Central ‘Kindertransport
   organisation’ visits Shrewsbury to support a 2cd fundraising

4. Meeting 10 May 39
   50 Pounds deposit were communicated by London, committee wrote to London MP
   for Shrewsbury regarding.
   Much Wenlock farm was visited for a boy to live.
   Highschool raised money
   Miss Thurman or Schuman from Central office London attended.

5. Meeting 2 June 39
   70 GBP raised by high school
   Treasurer appointed, cheques only signed by chairman and treasurer
   a home for a boy was inspected and satisfactory
   Family of three children announced possible home in Sweeney/Oswestry
   Miss Bevonley asked to join the committee
   Conference in London invite

6. Meeting 14 July 39
   Detailed lists of children were circulated with Child, hosts, education, terms, who
   pays (maintenance and deposit)

WAR BREAKS OUT

7. Meeting 22 Feb 40
   Visitation reports of children were read out (the committee checked up on children
   and hosts)
   Raising money, concert with violinist in St. Marys was planned

8. Meeting 6 July 40
For the reimmigration of two children Ms Murrell send the names of two children
to Birmingham HQ. Representatives to Birmingham Personnel HQ?
Miss Jule is going to Birmingham HQ regarding Emma Cole.
The committee thought that all internees should be trained in some work useful to the country.

9. Meeting 24 January 1941
Accounts approved
all children discussed and HQ asked for list and report

10. Meeting 10 October 1941
Letter to county council
Reports on all children
Moreton Hall School offer discussed, not clear if concert or education
But sthg. happened on the 8. November in Allington Hall
Everything being arranged by Ms Murrell

11. Meeting 9 January 1942
Accounts for 1941 were accepted.
Performance in Allington Hall went well
Thx to Missus Amont, Hon Thomasson rotary club
50 GBP deposited

12. Meeting 10 February?? or January 1942 or 1943?
Ms Murrells energy and engagement is visible
Accounts adopted

13. Meeting 8 April 1943
Eva Sobenheim (maybe Sobernheim) is having school problems. Reports are not satisfactory. Ms. Jule and Mr. White are involved.
Ms. Murrell plans concert with Dame Myra Hess in Allington (hall?) or the technical college Halls
Letters to Foreign secretary and M.P. to allow more children into the country.

14. Meeting 6 August 1943
Myra Hess concert in at Allington Hall on 2 October. at 3 PM. Ticket sale via the high street.
Special report on Eva Sobernheim and Otto Kerbes.

15. Meeting 26 January 1944
Ms. Pulford joins the Committee.
Kurt Kern joined the RAF.
Letter to Mr. Ms. Hallit regarding E. Sobernheim.
Next concert early autumn.
An offer for a portrait had been made.

16. Meeting 29 August 1944

Picture resulted in sum of 15 GBP. Gone to the committee.
Eva Sobernheim failed her exam, got a job offer.
Five years report was read out and printed for circulation.
Next concert 30 September 1944

17. Meeting 7 February 1945

Eva Sobernheim got a job with the Petroleum Board in London at 70/0 per week and is now self-supporting.
Concert held on 30 September 44 earned 49/49/11d.
Five-year report was distributed to Committee, local papers, town council.

Lisl Sobernheim lived with Ms. Belton.

Marion Nellhaus lived with Ms. Egerton Hine

Poem was read out, written by Ms. Jones of Ormond house, printed in the Shrewsbury chronicle after concert. prob. 30 September.

18. Meeting 28.? .1945

no minutes survived

19. Meeting 3 April 1946

Accounts 1945 were adopted.
Lisl Sobernheim only child left in care of committee and cost 25/0 per week in the Haven Church Stretton. Ms. Darrah of Church Stretton supports with 75 or 100 GBP.
Lisl should start education at Radbrook.

for 1947 no minutes survived

2x. Meeting 21 July 1948

Accounts 1946 and 1947 + 1-month 1948 were accepted.

The balance of 140 GBP was given to Dr. Sobernheim for education of Elizabeth Sobernheim (now Stanton) for training in domestic science.
Committee was wound up.
b. Interview with Carlos Alvarez, son of Ruth Solmitz and nephew of Martin Solmitz

Phone interview conducted Carlos 25.08.22 at 13.30 MEZ
Grandfather was educated as a lawyer and worked at the Warburg Bank.

When the school was in Kent, the children saw family. Their Aunt Hannah Meyer was a teacher at the school (known as Hago by the children - from Hannah Goldschmidt) and their grandparents lived nearby. Hannah was married to Hans who worked as a Shop & Physical Education teacher at the school.

Michael Roemer from Berlin was the same age as Aunt Ursula and very close to her. He became a film director and professor at Yale University. He called Martin his ‘Schwager’ since he was so close to Martin’s sister.

Martin disappeared from the classes. As he wasn’t working well in the classroom, he was given over to Hans to work in the workshop. He seemed to be having a good time but may have reported differently to parents. Martin had learning disabilities (Luftikus) and was not focussed on tasks (maybe nowadays this would be a form of ADD/ADHD). Ursula wrote his letters for him at times. These were typewritten, in English, with spelling mistakes as she said, ‘when I’m at school, I will write in English and when at the grandparents, I will write in German’.

The family moved with the school to Shropshire. This was shown by the fact that the letters included the place where they were written. Eduard and Elizabeth Goldschmidt with their daughter Hannah, lived in a cottage on school property. It is not clear when they moved there.

The school opened 5 years before the children went. In her book, The School that Escaped the Nazis, Deborah Cadbury wrote about some of the children who went to the school but also about the environment.

In the newspaper it said that Martin had been in the school for 15 months. This is incorrect.

My great grandparents sent telegrams to my grandparents saying that Martin had felt no pain.

There are diary accounts which said that Martin was not an easy child to begin with (even when he was still in Germany).

My mother said absolutely nothing about Martin or coming to the US, but said some things about her time at the school (below).

She had to eat fast to get a second helping. She had a scar from her time at the school from climbing the wrong tree. She was also very good friends with Michael Romer’s younger sister.

The family had a relative in Germany, Louise Solmitz, who was a Nazi supporter going to rallies and singing songs. She said, ‘who thought they really meant it?’
Grandfather Robert Solmitz was stationed in Noyon, France in the Great War. He was very quiet and very bent over.

Hans moved to Australia. When he heard that several of his students were going to be deported, he volunteered to go with them.

c. Interview with Stan Osborne, son of Ursula Solmitz and nephew of Martin Solmitz

Phone interview 11.08.2022 11.00 MEZ
Stan Osborne, son of Ursula, sister of Martin Solmitz
My mother was Ursula, a maths teacher who also taught high school Chemistry.
In the newspaper article about the death of Martin Solmitz, the coroner decided towards accidental death. It was not true that it was an accident as Martin suffered from separation problems - lack of access to his parents. In 1938 he travelled on the Kindertransport with his 2 sisters. The Gestapo came through the train and confiscated their passports so that they were then stateless. The children did not know when they would see their parents again.

The parents left Germany in 1941, sent a telegram from Portugal and travelled to New York on a boat, final destination was west L. A.

Martin had problems that the school could not deal with. His psychological problems manifested themselves by him being ostracised by the other students. He was left out of the community. Boarding schools would normally send kids back home if they could not socially adjust but this was not possible in that situation. Martin was wetting the bed at an age way beyond the age boys should be. There were no adults guiding the children.

Martin hung himself from the tree when the children were out playing somewhere else. The sisters saw him when they came back. They did not know the details but that the suicide was covered up. The school felt that they had failed the child and said it was accidental, to hide ineptness.

My mother asked, ‘what really happened to Martin?’ Both sisters felt that they had let him down and felt guilt for a long time since they were also at the school.

Trench Hall School employed cousins of my grandmother, Herta Goldschmidt, so the children were not totally separated from family. As the school was originally called Bunce Court, those pupils who started at the school under that name, continued to call it that after it moved to Shropshire. I visited both places in 1969.

Many former students and teachers moved to California. I visited Palo Alto and found successful former students and people who worked at Bunce Court on Wikipedia. I went to the Bunce Court Reunion in Berkeley California with my mother.

How the pupils got out of Germany - one fourteen-year-old boy walked from Austria, through Germany to Holland. Fishermen took him to England and he ended up at Bunce Court. Eventually he became a professor of Mathematics.
At 6 years old, the 6-year-old son of the Goldschmidt who was teaching there, would hide in the bushes and listen to the adults talking. He became a doctor in Kent, England.

Martin had been asking some of the kids, ‘what is the best way to kill yourself?’ This would point to premeditated suicide. Cooperation of the coroner. British culture of propriety.

My grandfather was from Hamburg and worked at the Warburg Secretariat. There is a scrapbook about the family which has been duplicated and updated - Antonio Alcolar (cousin) - publisher?

What were my grandparents doing and why didn’t they leave Germany until 1941? Suggestions are they were doing something secret/important

Robert worked for the Warburg bank - Aryanship in a way they could reclaim after the war They had no visa to get anywhere. He was disabled in WW1 as a German soldier.

The family had been in banking for 20 generations and had money. They had portraits painted since the 16th Century and were Art Historians. The Goldschmidt family did not go to school but learned painting at home.

US postage stamps - Antonio.

An example of Jewish people hiding in plain sight. A Jewish woman who worked in a clinic, married a doctor who was not Jewish. They had 4 boys. The Gestapo looked the other way. The 4 boys went to non-Jewish people in the countryside.

Ursula died 6 months ago - scrapbooks Ruth died 18 months ago - did not like talking about these subjects.

When Ursula was 16, she took a ship across to LA (risk from U-boat) and went straight to UCLA, 2 years early. She must have learned well at Bunce Court.

Stan went to a Heidelberg boarding school for 1 year, lots of Swabians. Spent 3 months in Hamburg working in the Warburg Bank.

At the age of 11 my mother was put in charge of her 2 younger siblings. She learned about life and poverty at Bunce Court. There was stricter rationing in the UK, for example, cars were not used as there was no fuel. In the school the girls were organised to make and repair clothing. She made a lot of her own clothes and later hired people to make them for her.

She was in the Peace Corps and taught Chemistry in Papua New Guinea until her 70th birthday.

My parents met when they were on the same Chemistry course and were assigned the same locker. Heidelberg Uni research how to teach Chemistry properly. She was also a 3rd Grade teacher. Pupils wanted to be in her class from across the district.
Aunt Ruth studied lots of different things. She owned an Art gallery with Latin-American art and married into Hispanic culture. She learned Spanish and became a librarian in the Community Library. Ruth’s sons are Adrian (who visited every week in her last years), Carlos and Antonio.

We asked my mother how she felt when she saw her parents again. She didn’t want to talk about this for a very long time. She then told of the anxiety of not knowing if you would see your parents again or even if you would see them again.

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