

Londýnský kroužek Ostraváků
Der Londoner-Ostrauerkreis
Our Ostrava Group

Number 20, Midsummer 2011

Contents

Project HEART Last attempt to restitute Holocaust survivors	1
Ostravak Reunion	2
Yehuda Bacon Exhibition	3
The Ostrava Archive in the Jewish Museum in Prague (JMP)	3
Background.....	3
Gordy (Goldberger) family Donation.....	4
Goldberg Letter Archive.....	4
First user of our Archive!	5
News of Ostravaks	6
Ron Hecht.....	6
Amanda Meller	6
Arnon Ernest Smetana	7
Werner Reichenbaum	8
Rosemary Schonfeld.....	8
Rix Family	9
Tamar Herlinger	9
Heinrich Goldberger	10
Ostrava	10
Leicester Scroll	11
Help needed.....	12

Project HEART Last attempt to restitute Holocaust survivors

The Israeli government has launched an international initiative to help Holocaust survivors, or their heirs, claim compensation for assets taken from them in Eastern Europe.

Project Heart, the **Holocaust-Era Asset Restitution Task Force**, has been set up in conjunction with the Jewish Agency, historically the main organisation involved in Diaspora-Israel relations.

Bobby Brown, the project director, said: "Most people haven't been compensated in any way for their property in East Europe. This should have been done 25 years ago." Potential claimants who have not received restitution are being asked to register their properties on a database now being compiled by Project Heart. Mr Brown said: "We are talking about private property, not communal property. That consists of real estate, paintings, furniture, stock and intellectual property such as

patents." He stressed that any compensation would go to "survivors or their legitimate heirs if we can locate them. No funds will go to anything else."

The Israeli government had to be involved, he explained, because at the Prague conference on Holocaust-era assets in 2009, more than 40 countries agreed that the issue of restitution should be settled on a "government-to-government" basis.

If you think you have a claim, please contact Project HEART. The website is: <http://www.heartwebsite.org>

Ostravak Reunion

On 15th May about 70 of us met in the Czech Embassy in Kensington, where we were welcomed by the Ambassador, His Excellency Mr Michael Žantovský.



The Ambassador, Michael Žantovský, welcoming us to the Embassy

We were delighted to meet some new Ostravaks, who had not been to any of our previous gatherings. Marion Schonfeld came with her brother, Raymond; Marian Fielding (Lichtenstern), Marie Eichler, and Ron Hecht all came for the first time although Tamar Herlinger was unable to join us, at the last minute and unfortunately, neither Libuše nor Mischa Salomonovic were able to join us.

Jan Fischer, formerly Prime Minister of the Czech Republic planned to attend with his wife but he was called away unexpectedly, so was unable to come. Nevertheless, we did get a short report in the Jewish Chronicle!



Madeleine Isenberg had found the score of a tango, written in Ostrava by her Uncle Dolek (Adolf) Seifter. One of her friends had played it on a piano and had recorded it and we were able to listen to it. It was almost certainly the first public performance of the piece for over 70 years!

After that, everyone had the opportunity to study the thesis that Dr Glen Sujo brought to show us – 3 volumes on the life and work of Yehuda Bacon.

Yehuda Bacon Exhibition

There will be an exhibition of Yehuda Bacon's work in The Czech Centre in Prague, Rytířská 31, 110 00 Prague 1, from 9th September to 1st October 2011.

The Ostrava Archive in the Jewish Museum in Prague (JMP)

Background

We have collected a great deal of information and six types of material relating to Ostrava.

1. Electronic material (emails, scans of documents and photos)
2. Video interviews with Ostravaks and/or their children
3. Original documents and photos
4. Paper copies of documents
5. Published books, in principle reasonably readily available in libraries
6. Published material not readily available (privately published books, old books and magazines, ephemera. We have, for example, already donated a copy of a 3volume PhD thesis on the work of Yehuda Bacon to the Library in the JMP, at a cost of £375)

The JMP has said that it would like to hold our Ostrava archive and make it available to future researchers. Ideally, most of the material would be recorded and available electronically so that it can be accessed remotely. Our collaborator in the JMP on this project is Dr Michal Frankl, Deputy Director of the Museum.

For the past several months, Dr Jiří Jung has been employed (initially directly by JMP and more recently by the Kingston Ostrava Group) on a part time basis to organise the electronic material and to enter it into the JMP data base. We hope that the existing electronic material will all be entered within the next 4 months and thereafter Jiří will work on the interviews and the paper copies of documents which we will have scanned. We guess that will take another 12 months of his time – although the archive continues to grow -- so that might not be accurate. We are not sure, at this stage, if he will review some of the “rare” books and enter the relevant

information into the data base, but if we estimate a further 18 months of his time in total, that should cover it all.

Of course, we want the material to be available in English although most of the input material is in either Czech or German. Dr Frankl estimates translation costs at US \$10,000.

We would want to include extracts of the video interviews (which I carried out myself, so they are not very professional) on-line as well, and we estimate the costs of selecting and editing to be US \$3000.

Frankl also estimates the costs of additional programming to make the material readily accessible and searchable on line, together with necessary travel costs, will be approx. US \$15,000.

The estimated total costs, from today, would be:

• Dr Jiří Jung for 18 months	\$ 7,200
• Translation	\$10,000
• Editing video interviews	\$ 3,000
• Programming, travel etc	\$15,000
<u>TOTAL</u>	<u>\$35,200.</u>

Kingston Ostrava Group funds currently stand at ca. US \$5,000. We hope the JMP will be able to make some financial contribution to this project during next year. But their funds are fully committed so that is unlikely to be large.

Gordy (Goldberger) family Donation

You may remember Peter Gordy recently regained the property formerly owned by his Grandparents (Ferdinand and Helena Goldberger) and he is now selling it. Peter, Carol and Michael Gordy are very kindly donating a portion of the proceeds of the sale to the JMP as a contribution to our Archive project, in memory of those members of the Goldberger family killed in the Holocaust. This donation will certainly cover a significant portion of the project costs. Peter writes:

I normally ask that donations on my behalf remain anonymous although in this case feel that it may be an impetus for others to do the same for this worthy cause. Feel free to mention the contribution.

We would, of course, be grateful for further donations (perhaps in memory of your family) to this very worthwhile project, to ensure it can be completed properly and in a timely way.

Goldberg Letter Archive

Michal Frankl of the Jewish Museum recently wrote to Bertie Goldberg about the remarkable collection of letters held by Bertie:



The collection of letters between the members of the Goldberg family, in the papers of Norbert Goldberg, is a unique historical resource and one of the few known so extensive sets of correspondence between family members who managed to escape to the West and those who stayed behind in the “Protectorate Bohemia and Moravia”. It illustrates the attempts to emigrate, as well as the failure of the large part of the family. The Jewish Museum in Prague (JMP) has obtained digital copies of the letters, along with photos and other material, from the Kingston synagogue Ostrava project, with the approval of Norbert Goldberg.

In the JMP, the collection has been catalogued in its digital catalogue with each letter having a short summary of content and other metadata (places, names, etc.). Currently, only Czech language summaries exist; translation into English is planned. Given its unique character and value for researchers and students, the JMP is interested to publish the letter collection online in order to make it available to a broader public and to allow its usage in education. Tentatively, we would like to publish it at the end of 2011 or beginning of 2012.

In order to prepare the publication, we would have to:

- have the approval of Mr. Goldberg to the publication online;
- clarify as much as possible the identity of all people in the letters: it would be very useful if Mr. Goldberg could help;
- translate the summaries into English;
- write short stories (three to five sentences) of the individual family members;
- select other material to be presented (especially family photos): some photos that can be seen in the interview aren't present in the collection we have received;
- possibly provide full transcription and translation of – approx. five – selected letters;
- we might be interested to interview Mr. Goldberg again: as only letters addressed to the UK have survived, we would be interested to know – among other things – what the Goldberg brothers were writing back to the “Protectorate” and to Oswiecim

Michal Frankl

Shoah History Department, Head
Deputy Director

I am delighted to say that Bertie has agreed to this project and has kindly agreed to underwrite the full costs of the project.

First user of our Archive!

We have our first user! In May, we received an email from Jiří Hrdina:

My name is Jiří Hrdina, I live in Ostrava and I'm currently working on a doctoral thesis on photography in Ostrava 1886 - 2000. Part of this work is a chapter entitled "found photographs".

They should be a private photo archives depicting the daily life of Ostrava. The result of my work should be a book and an exhibition of photographs from that period (historical photographs, photographs of famous authors, etc). I would like in their work included pictures of the everyday life of pre-war Jewish community in Ostrava (some photos I found on USHMM, but I'll be glad for any additional photos). Thank You very much.

He found us through Michael Gordy and he is now accessing our archive through the JMP. (The USHMM is the US Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington).

News of Ostravaks

Ron Hecht



Selma Krieger

Ron's parents were Bedřich Hecht and Charlotta Feuereisen. Her parents, Viktor and Selma (Krieger), were "repatriated" to Poland immediately before the war as they had never become Czech citizens.

Ron describes his grandmother as "sweet and loving, as you can see from her face"

Ron has some letters and postcards from his family during the war, written in not very legible gothic German script. With the help of Kurt Berger, we are reading and translating them, which is a very emotional experience.

Amanda Meller

Amanda has been in touch with John Gould (another member of our Ostrava network) about her family. She writes:

You kindly printed in your 2011 newsletter all the information that I had at that time. I would like to take another opportunity to say "Thank you" to you and everyone involved.

Whilst searching I came across Genteam. Within this data-base I found the records of my Great Grandparents, Grandfather and his siblings. The Tempelgasse marriage record 1885 of my Great Grandparents (Samuel Meller and Richel Regina Schacht) listed their names as Samuel Isak Botwin-Meller and Rischl or Regina Schacht. Would you be able to assist me and let me know why two surnames for Samuel? Was Botwin perhaps his mother's maiden name and why the children shared one or both of these names? I found records of my Great Grandparents buried at ZENTRALFRIEDHOF I. TOR 1912 and 1915.

Their children were:

Adolf Meller 1879

Simon 1882

Clara betti Botwin 1884

Rosa Meller 1886

Salomon Meller 1888 (I have found records listed of a Salomon Meller and Samuel Botwin born 1888 as a victim of the Holocaust, could this be the same person?)

Philip Botwin-Meller 1893 (My Grandfather)

Wilhelmine Anna Botwin-Meller 1897

Maria Botwin-Meller 1900

There was also another Botwin-Meller marriage between Osias Botwin-Meller and Amalie Glass. It's possible that this could be a brother to Samuel. Their Children were:-

Adolf Botwin -Meller 1896

Sara Botwin-Meller 1896

Norbert Botwin-Meller 1899

Unknown Botwin-Meller 1900

Paula Botwin-Meller 1903

Else Botwin-Meller 1908

Herta Meller born in Ostrava was the reason I contacted you. The above family were definitely born in Wien. Given their birth dates I can only assume that one of these could be Herta's parent and as such could be known as Botwin or even Botwin-Meller.

Kind Regards
Amanda Meller

Arnon Ernest Smetana

Leo Wiener met Arnon in Mallorca! Our fame is spreading! Arnon writes:

Dear Dr.Lawson,

My name is Arnon Ernest Smetana. I was born in September 1929 at the hospital in Vitkovice.

My family lived in Novy Bohumin where my father Leo and his business partner Max Pomeranz had a motor car engine repair shop called "Mobilia". My grandfather Joseph Smetana owned a coal selling business. My mother (nee. Jellinek), lived in Bzenec (Moravia) before marriage. The Jewish community in Bohumin was rather small (less than 400) but we had a beautiful synagogue and a "Jewish House" which was a center of Jewish and Zionist activities. We had only a "cantor" Mr. Skreikus. The rabbi Dr. Blahn came over from Ostrava to conduct service for the High Holidays.

In 1938 Bohumin was taken by Poland (Zaolzie) and before I reached the age of 10, WW2 broke out. My father, mother, I and the Pomeranzes with their daughter were in Warsaw, so we missed the expulsion of the Bohumin community (to Nisko). My father and I survived Krakow-Plaszow and Mauthausen. My mother, the Pomeranzes and everybody else of my Bohumin family never returned. I emigrated to Israel in 1948 and my father followed after remarrying in 1951.

I met Mr. Wiener during Pessach holidays 2010 in Mallorca. My wife and I joined our family from Muswell Hill, London, who spent their holidays there. It was Mr. Wiener who suggested to write you to establish contact with the "Ostravaks".

Best regards , Yours
Arnon Ernest Smetana

Do you remember the Smetana family? If so, please let Monica or David know.

Werner Reichenbaum

Werner has written his family history, starting with his father's parents, Jakob Reichenbaum and Adolfine Schanzer. Their eldest son, Werner's father, Artur, married his landlord's daughter, Herta Krebs, and died in 1944 in Dachau. Their son, Werner's, last postings in his distinguished career were as Federal German Ambassador to Mexico and Chile. Werner sent us his story, which is fascinating and reading it is greatly improving our German. The story is now part of our Ostrava Archive.

Rosemary Schonfeld

Rosemary discovered a connection with Werner! She writes:

A big and heartfelt thank you to you both and all of you who work so hard on the Ostravaks' archive and reunions. It means a tremendous amount to me in myriad ways. My brother Raymond was also delighted to be there and see the picture of our father's family's flat where the Stolperstein has been laid. We are hoping to visit Ostrava ourselves this year.

Another wonderful result from this year's reunion was meeting and establishing contact with the Reichenbaums. It turns out we have a significant connection: my father knew Werner's uncle Robert very well in Czechoslovakia, and according to my Aunt Relly, was in the same camp as my other uncle Egon, Sosnovice, but escaped with his wife. He had asked Egon to escape as well but Egon had fallen in love with a woman in the camp who would not leave her parents. Robert Reichenbaum's widow is still alive and the one who relayed this information to me via my Aunt Relly. Relly (who sadly died last year aged 95) said she was a cousin of Robert's. So, I will be pursuing this connection now and perhaps be able to find out even more about my father's family.

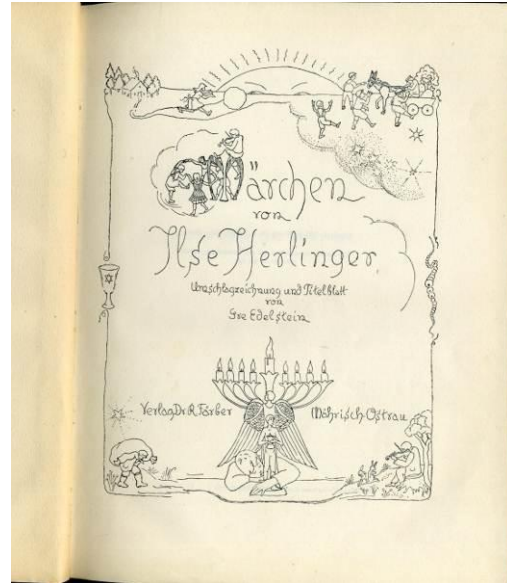
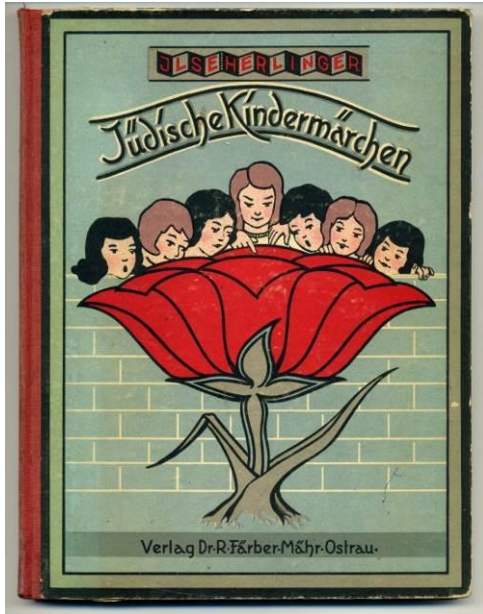
Many thanks again for all that you have done and facilitated.

Warm Regards,

ROSEMARY SCHONFELD

In Ostrava, Ernst and his father had run a bar/restaurant. When Ernst and Senta finally arrived in England, they took jobs as butler and maid to, among other people, Lord Rothermere and James Mason.

Ernst was the brother of Ilse, better known to us as a writer by her married name of Weberová. She did, however, publish some stories, in Ostrava, under her maiden name:



Heinrich Goldberger



Peter Gordy sent me this photograph of his father, Heinrich (second from the right, front row) age about 14. Can you recognise anyone else?

Ostrava

Radan Salomonovic has sent us details of photographs taken at the recent ceremony to mark the anniversary of the destruction of the main synagogue on 12th June 1939. He writes:

here are some photos of the memorial ceremony related to the Ostrava Synagogue burn down.

Cheers,
radan

<http://dolnihota.rajce.idnes.cz/2011- cerven - Vzpominkova slavnost na vypa leni hlavni synagogy v Ostrave>

<p>The destruction of the Main Synagogue was reported in the local newspapers</p>	<p>Ostravská synagoga vyhořela Také dům náboženské obce židovské zničen</p> <p>M o r. O s t r a v a 14. V I. V úterý večer kolem desáté hodiny vypukl náhle požár v největší ostravské synagoze ve Hviezdoslavově ulici. Oheň se s velikou rychlostí rozšířil a zakrátko stála celá velká budova templu v jednom plameni. K požáru přijeli ostravští hasiči, kteří ihned začali chrániti okolí budovy, které byly v sousedství vysoko šlehajících plamenů. Zvláště novostavba pětisoschodového domu firmy Aso byla silně chráněna hasičstvem. Současně jako v synagoze vypukl požár také v domě náboženské obce židovské, který se rovněž s velkou rychlostí rozšířil na celou tříposchodovou budovu a zničil ji. Ze synagogy zůstaly ke druhé hodině raní, kdy se podařilo oheň lokalizovati, jen holé stěny. Stropy se propadly a vnitřní zařízení shořelo úplně. Zprávu o požáru hlásila dnes po polední v rozhlase také úřední tisková kancelář.</p> <p>.N.</p>
---	--

Victoria Bursa has sent us a reference to a short video about the beauties of

Ostrava: <http://www.ceskatelevize.cz/ivysilani/1008546862-sumna-mesta/495201101900001-sumna-ostrava/> and, for the statistically-minded, a reference to data about Ostrava:

http://www.ostrava.cz/jahia/webdav/site/ostrava/shared/podnikatel/Faktografick%C3%A9%20listy/FL_AJ_luxus_B.pdf

Leicester Scroll

Leicester Synagogue also has an Ostrava Scroll, number 225. Martie Jelinek, reports that they have discovered that the *sefer* dates from 1835 and so dates from the time that the Ostrava Jewish community used to meet for prayer in a room in the Zavada Inn.

Help needed

Newsletters are, we think, much appreciated by our readers and the Ostravak Reunions are enjoyed by everyone. They do, however, involve a not inconsiderable amount of work and we are, therefore, looking for volunteers:

1. To help in putting together the Newsletter
2. Organising the next reunion, serving tea etc.

If you are able and willing to help, please contact us.

Monica Popper
Ranelagh Cottage
7 Ailsa Road
TWICKENHAM
Middlesex, TW1 1QJ
UK
Tel 00 44 20 8891 3508
Email: monsonn@talktalk.net

David Lawson
29 Malcolm Drive
SURBITON
Surrey
KT6 6QS
UK
Tel: 00 44 20 8390 8142
Email: lawsonassoc@btinternet.com