

Londýnský kroužek Ostraváků Der Londoner-Ostrauerkreis Our Ostrava Group

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YIZKOR – The *Stolperstein* –(Stumbling Block) Project

You may have heard of the *Stolperstein* Project which has been running in Austria and Germany for some time and is now starting in the Czech Republic and other countries. It was established and is run by Gunter Demnig (see the website: www.stolpersteine.com).

Brass plaques are set into the pavement outside houses or schools etc as a memorial to people who were murdered or forced to flee by the Nazis. Each “stone” is 96mm by 96mm and has inscribed on it:

- Here lived (or studied, or taught etc)
- Name, family and maiden name
- Date of Birth
- Date of Deportation and place to which deported
- Ultimate fate with date of death (if known)
- Children or family members who fled to safety (e.g. on *Kindertransport*) or even who committed suicide under the stress and terrors of the time can also be commemorated with a stone.



Heinz Vogel and his cousin Eve Slatner plan to lay a *Stolperstein* in memory of their Grandmother. We will have to obtain permission from the Ostrava authorities to lay such stones and I will write to them about it, with (I hope) the support of the Ostrava *Kehilla*. It would be helpful for me to be able to tell the civic authorities approximately how many such stones we hope to lay.

Please, therefore, let Monica Popper know as soon as possible if you would be interested in arranging to have such stones laid and, if so, how many you would want.

The cost of each stone will be approx. £100 (US\$150). Any money left over once all expenses have been paid will be added to our Archive Fund.

Our Archive

Our archive continues to grow! We have acquired a number of books:

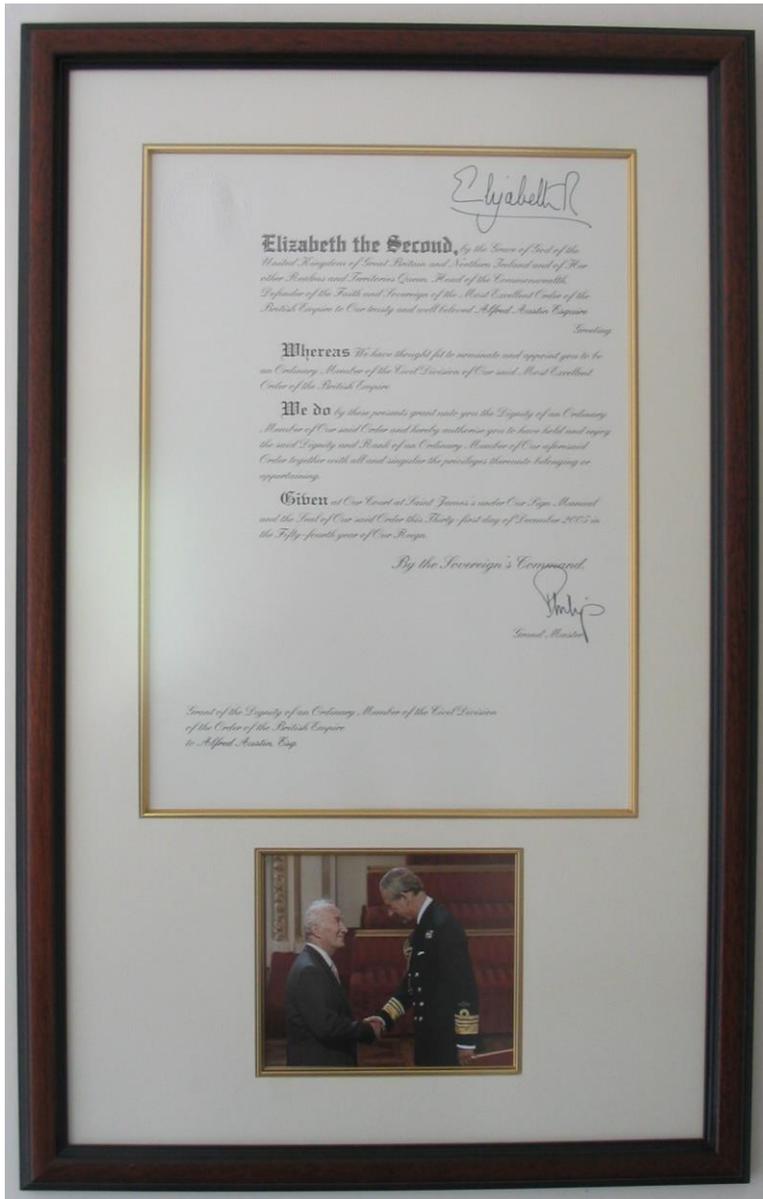
- A Hebrew edition of Peter (Eisenberg) Erben's autobiography *Auf eigenen Spuren* with many photographs.
- *Mich hat man vergessen*, the autobiography of Peter's wife, Eva Erben (also published in Ivrit)
- *I was left behind* by Eva Erben – the English version of her autobiography, which has not been published.
- *Ostravsko ve fotografii* by Antonín Gribovský – Photographs of Ostrava in the 1980s
- *Baník Ostrava* by Viktor Kolář. Very evocative photographs of Ostrava and Ostravaks in the 1970's and 80s.
- *A Story of the Jewish Museum in Prague* by Hana Volakova. Published in 1968, well illustrated story of the Jewish Museum, mainly during the war

Bertie Goldberg has allowed us to scan his incredible and moving archive of letters from his family in Czechoslovakia to him and his brother Oskar, both of whom had escaped to England. The letters cover the period 1939-42 inclusive, about 400 sides of A4 altogether.

The Jewish Museum in Prague has a series of documents and recordings made by Ostravaks – In Czech! The JMP have produced very short summaries of each of these records, but without naming the person involved, also in Czech! Jan Bettelheim has spent much time and trouble to translate these summaries into English for us.

We have recorded interviews with Dr Felix Beck whose father was (medical) Dr Heinrich Beck. Felix attended the Jewish school in Ostrava for a short time before the family fled to England. Felix's mother, was Ema Markusová, whose family produced fine liqueurs etc. in Bilovec. Felix gave us a copy of his Aunt Irma's story of how she escaped from Ostrava and how she finally reached America. Irma was married to Maximilian (Milan) Roth who ran the Karolína Roth restaurant, bar and wine business with his brothers. Through Felix we hope to be able to contact Alice Sluckin, who has, we think, valuable information and insights into the journey of the Torah Scrolls to Prague in 1942.

Felix also introduced us to Fred Austin (geb. Alfred Stiller) and we recorded a fascinating interview with him, while enjoying a superb lunch that his wife Margaret prepared. Fred was brought to England in 1939 by an English school teacher in place of his cousin who could not get permission from the Nazis to leave Austria. Fred became a teacher and headmaster and became very involved in local charity work after his retirement. In December 2005, Felix was made an M.B.E.



Felix and Margaret have 2 sons and 2 daughters. Their elder son joined the Diplomatic Service and was also awarded an MBE before he left the service to join the Board of Film Censors. Fred and Margaret's younger son, Ian, is the labour member of Parliament for Dudley.

Felix and Margaret have written their life stories and are about to have them published. We hope to receive a copy for our archive.

Felix had an elder sister, Ilse, who was a close friend of Peter Erben (geb. Eisenberg). Peter had totally lost touch with the Stiller family and was delighted to make contact with Fred once again, through us, after a gap of seventy years!

We also met Michael Gordy (Goldberger) who was in London for a meeting on behalf of the Federal Reserve in the USA and we heard more detail of how his father escaped from Ostrava.

News of Ostravaks

In the last Newsletter we reported how Kurt Berger and George Roden (Rosenstein) had recognised each other at the March meeting, from a school photograph! When Herbert Spencer read a report of this in our synagogue magazine, he recognised the name of Kurt Berger as an old work colleague from almost 60 years ago. They are now back in touch!

Jan Faktor recently contacted us from Berlin. He is related to the Spitzer and Schornstein families (his mother was Franz Schornstein geb. Spitzer). He has promised to send me a copy of his autobiography when he returns from holiday, in August. He had received information about us from Danny Spitzer, in Israel. He, in turn, knew about us through Irit Ganor (geb Lichtenstern) who is a close friend of Naomi Finkelstein (geb. Brodavka). Our fame is really spreading!

Pepek Salomonovic has told us of another Ostravak, Peter Freund from Vitkovice, who now lives in Stockholm. We hope to make contact with him in the very near future.

We have also just heard of Moritz Spitzer, born 24 September 1871 in Ostrava. His wife, Ida, was born on 15th August 1877 and they had 4 children: Max (19/12/1898); Else (11/4/1900); Fritz (11/3/1901); and Ernst (8/5/1903). They lived in Vienna. He has descendants living in Brazil and Argentina! Does anyone know anything of him or his family?

Trip to Ostrava

If we are successful in organising laying of *Stolpersteine* in Ostrava, which will not be before some time 2010, it would seem to be a good idea to arrange a trip to Ostrava at the same time, so that we can all participate in the *Stolperstein* project. Please let Monica know if you are possibly interested in joining a trip to Ostrava, either with or without laying a *Stolperstein*.

Artists and Ambassadors; Brewers and Bankers; Coal-merchants and a Chanukiah- The ABC of Ostrava.

On 18th August at 1:45p.m. for 2:00 p.m. David will be giving a talk to AJR (The Association of Jewish Refugees) with this title. The venue is in right next door to Edgware station if you are coming by train. If not, it's Stream Lane, off Edgware High Street. Phone Hazel Beiny on 07973 201621 the day before and she will explain exactly where it is. Hazel works for AJR and she would be delighted to hear from you.

On 2nd September (at 11:00hrs) AJR in Ilford will have a talk on Ostrava - "*Steel and Schnapps, Sausages and Soldiers, Scrolls and Survival - the Story of Ostrava*". The South Hampstead branch of AJR will have the same talk on 27th October, also at 11:00 hrs. You will be very welcome at any or all of them!

Archive Appeal

You know that it is our intention to write and publish a book on Ostrava and that the first steps will be to organise and complete our archive as far as possible and transfer it to the Jewish Museum in Prague for preservation and to make available to future researchers. To help with the archive, we hope to recruit an archivist in Ostrava who would work with us part-time for a year initially. The lady in question, Hana Sustková, is completing her PhD research in the summer and will be available to start work with us in the autumn. **We still need £7-8,000 before we can start that work!** So we are

appealing again to your generosity to make it possible to preserve the memory of your families and the Ostrava Jewish community in this way.

Please send all donations either to Monica or to David.

If you have any documents, photographs, books or other material relating to Ostrava and you would be willing to donate it so that it becomes a permanent part of the Ostrava Archive, ultimately to be kept in the Jewish Museum in Prague, please let us know. If necessary, we will arrange to collect anything you have.

Any more Ostravaks?

Please pass the word about our group to any other Ostravaks that you know and let us know about them, as well. And please let us have any more news of yourself and your family.

Don't forget your contributions to the Ostrava Archive!

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