



Newsletter

Issue 3

June 2014

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About the Project

Progress so far

We have now completed the conservation work at Shropshire Archives. All that remains to be done now is the specialist binding of four burial registers which will be undertaken by a specialist bookbinder.

The genealogy research volunteers have now compiled and checked data for the first 700 people buried in the Cemetery. This information will be added to the online burials database.

The cataloguing is progressing well with volunteers working on the memorial forms and correspondence.

We have received draft webpages from the web designer. A focus group has been set up to evaluate the website and burials database and suggest any improvements.

Two sections of the Cemetery photographic survey have been completed and the images have been prepared for the website.

The following article was submitted by Project genealogy research volunteer, Pam Willing.

A Young Victim of World War II

Working on the Oswestry town cemetery project, the surnames 'Jones', 'Evans', 'Hughes', 'Williams' etc. become old friends, so when I came across the surname 'Apotecker' my interest was piqued. The entry in the burial register provides the following information:

Entry number 12500; Name Bernd Apotecker; Description of Person buried Refugee (Minor); Age 12 years; Place where death occurred Morda Hospital, Oswestry; Date of Burial February 2nd 1940

My next stop was the Border Counties Advertiser where, in the issue dated 7th February 1940, I found the following entry:

'YOUNG REFUGEE'S DEATH. – There will be many people among the subscribers to the Mayor of Oswestry's Fund for Refugee Children who will regret to hear of the death of Bernd Apotecker, 11-year old Jewish-German refugee, which took place in the Morda Infirmary on Tuesday, Jan. 29th. Living with Mr. and Mrs. Smith of Sweeney, he had attended Morda School where he had



been made welcome and happy. He was proud, too, of being a Boy Scout, and wore his uniform on every permissible occasion.....'

The article went on to say that arrangements had been made for a Rabbi Steinberg to come from Liverpool to say prayers for the young boy, but at the last moment the Rabbi was unable to attend because of illness, so the Vicar of St. Oswalds, Preb. E. Moore Darling, held a 'simple funeral service' in the church. Those attending the service were:

'foster-parents, committee officials, school-master and Scoutmaster, and they, side by side with the only representatives of the Jewish faith, adult German refugees, and the three little lads who had been Bernd's companions in exile....'

Afterwards, Bernd's body was interred in the town cemetery. The location of the plot was always known, but nothing marked his resting place; however this is not the end of his story.

In July 2004 an article appeared in the 'Kindertransport Newsletter' referring to Bernd. It stated:

'There is the possibility he had a sister named Nicu Apotecker who was 16½ at the time and the address given was Berlin-Schoenberg, Heylstr. 5. There is no headstone. Recently a lady from the Jewish Genealogical Society, Lorna Kaye, found out about it, notified the local Rabbi. Discussions were held about reburying him in a Jewish cemetery, but it was decided instead to erect a headstone over his grave.'

The next edition of 'Kindertransport Newsletter' carried the following update with regard to Bernd:

'On Sunday 22nd August at 11.30am there was a dedication ceremony and l'chaim [1]. Robert Bergman (one of the Kinder in Manchester) recited the Kaddish [2].'

An editorial note then followed saying:



Bernd's memorial

'We have alerted the Chief Rabbi's office of the fact that a Jewish child is buried in a Christian cemetery and that a Jewish lady in Oswestry would like to put a headstone on his grave there. We were told to leave this matter for them to sort out, because of the Halachic[3] issues.

This was finally followed by a letter to the editor from a Frank G. Marshall, which read as follows:

'I will, as requested, give you a few details as I remember them regarding Bernd. I was very friendly with his brother Nicu (not sister) as we lived opposite each other in the Heyl Strasse in Berlin. I am not sure about the mother but their father came from Romania, and both boys were born in Germany. I knew that Bernd went to England but never knew his address so was unable to contact him after my arrival here on the 22 August 1939.

The father went at some time before the war to Paris but was not heard of again. I have a letter written by Nicu on the 20 February 1940, in which he tells me that his father is OK, but they have not heard from Bernd for a long time (please note the date). Finally I heard from my

mother who was still in Berlin that Nicu and his mother were lured into a trap by being asked to meet someone at a Berlin Station, but were never heard of again.'

I am at least happy to say that a stone was erected on Bernd's grave and I went to visit him only a few days ago. In keeping with the Jewish custom, I placed a small pebble on his grave. There are many explanations regarding this custom but the one I like is that symbolically, it suggests the continuing presence of love and memory which are as strong and enduring as a rock. I do feel very strongly that this little boy should not be forgotten.

Notes:

[1] L'chaim in Hebrew is a toast meaning "to life".

[2] The Kaddish is a prayer that praises God and expresses a yearning for the establishment of God's kingdom on earth. The emotional reactions inspired by the Kaddish come from the circumstances in which it is said: it is recited at funerals and by mourners and sons are required to say Kaddish for eleven months after the death of a parent.

[3] Referring to the body of Jewish law supplementing the scriptural law and forming especially the legal part of the Talmud

Sources: Oswestry Town Cemetery Burial Register

Border Counties Advertiser dated 7th February 1940

Kindertransport Newsletter AJR Special Interest Section July/August 2004 edition

Kindertransport Newsletter AJR Special Interest Section September/October 2004 edition

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A call for interesting snippets

One of the aims of the newsletter is to keep people up to date with what has been going on. However, it also lets volunteers from different areas of the Project know what interesting discoveries are being made in other areas. If like Pam you find any interesting gems of information that you want to share, please send them to: sara.downs@shropshire.gov.uk

About the Project

The Project funded by Oswestry Town Council and the Heritage Lottery Fund aims to:

- Conserve and catalogue the Cemetery records.
- Repair the first headstone.
- Conduct a text and photographic survey of the headstones in the Cemetery.
- Undertake a mapping survey.
- Research the history of the Cemetery and create new information boards and leaflets.

If you are interested in volunteering, please contact the Project Manager (details below).

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