

So I'm Helen Singer, one of the exhibition organisers. Thank you so much for visiting today.

I am married to Jon Meier who we just heard from. In fact we both studied French and German and met in our year abroad in Germany, so that follows on nicely from Jon's father's openness to building bridges with his old school.

My parents also came from Germany, as child refugees, as you can see from the exhibits here.

So first just to tell you a little bit about my dad Peter Singer's story. His parents were both dentists in Nurnberg and there is a lovely photo of them here as a young couple.



My great grandmother, who you can see here with her two sons, was called Minna Feibelsohn. When our son Daniel was born Mum and Dad gave us this silver kiddush cup with the Feibelsohn name on it.



After our parents died, we found this suitcase with lots of papers to do with my grandparents' life in Germany and how they got to England.



There is a photo here of my grandfather Alex working as a dentist in the First World War.



When the Nazis came to power in 1933 they sent a letter to my grandmother Anne, forbidding her to work as she was Jewish and had not been active in the First World War!

The photograph in the exhibition is taken in Germany by my Dad with a camera given to him for his barmitzvah.

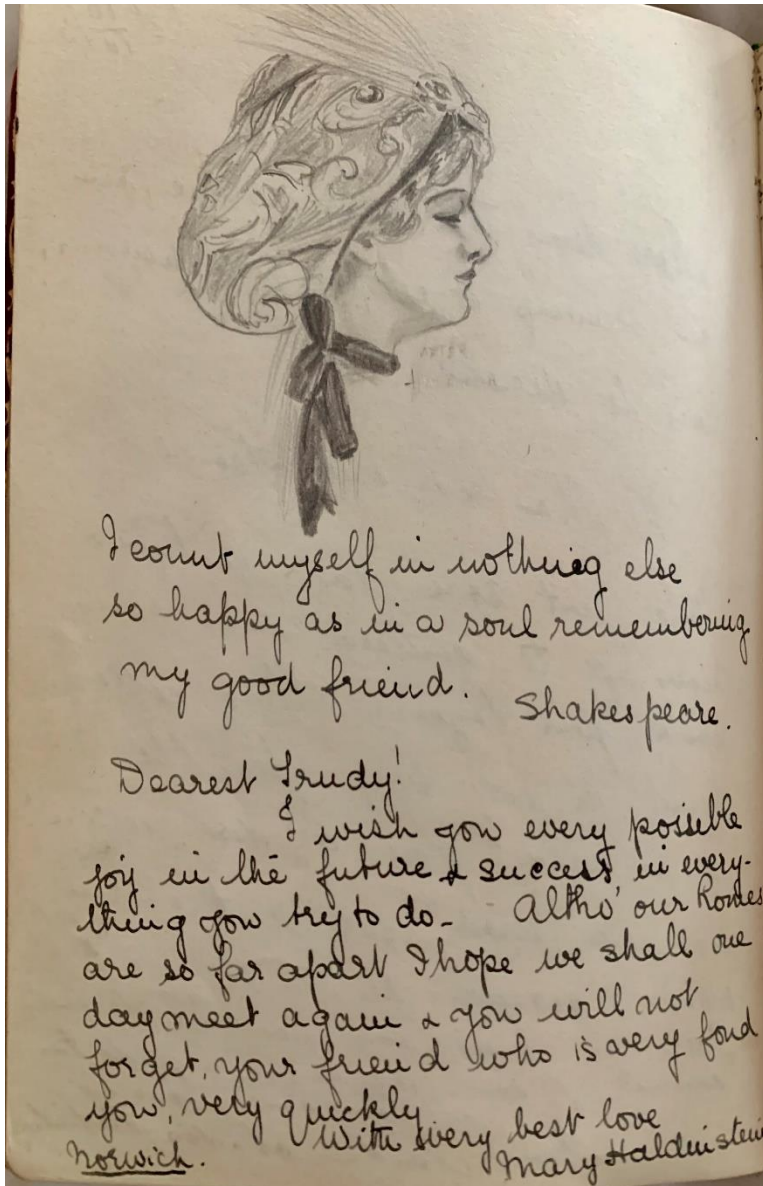
You can see his parents and his older sister Suse who married and emigrated to Brazil. Dad was sent to school in England in 1937,

starting at the Steiner School here in Kings Langley and later at Farnham Grammar School.

When Kristallnacht came in November 1938 my grandfather was sent to Dachau, his dental surgery was ransacked and my grandmother Anne left traumatised in the street. Thanks to the kindness of the West London Synagogue, Lord Nathan of Churt and the wonderful Farnham headmaster Dr F A Morgan, it was arranged for my grandparents Anne and Alex to join my father Peter in England in May 1939. We have a letter from Dr Morgan which I find really touching, it says 'It will always be a source of gratification – yes, and of pride to us that we were able to offer to the best of our ability, help and hospitality to two such undeserved victims of Hitler as you.'

My grandfather tried to practise dentistry here in England but was not accepted. My grandmother Anne died in 1951 but I was fortunate to know my grandfather Alex who was a lovely gentle man.

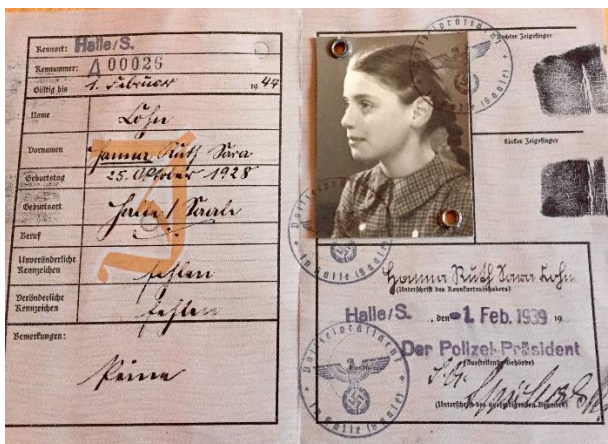
My mother's story is represented by the photograph of her on the Kindertransport at Liverpool Street station. She is the girl on the right with plaits and we do not know who the other girls are. Her story goes back to my grandmother Trudy Cohn who was born in Germany in 1897. Before going to University, Trudy went to a Jewish school in Lausanne, Switzerland from 1913-1914.. You can see that her friends have signed her autograph book. One of her friends was an English Jewish girl, Mary Haldinstein, and here you can see that she writes to my grandmother 'Dearest Trudy!...Altho' our homes are so far apart I hope we shall one day meet again and you will not forget your friend who is very fond of you, very quickly. With very best love Mary Haldinstein, Norwich.' You can see this rather lovely sketch Mary did too.



My grandmother married my grandfather Willy Cohn. My aunt Eva was born in 1921 and my mother Hanna and her twin brother Hans in 1928. When things got bad in Germany my grandmother got in touch with Mary who by then had married Alfred Caro. Mary arranged for a nursing visa for my aunt, work as a housekeeper for my grandmother and Kindertransport places for my mother and uncle. They arrived in London in July 1939 and my grandmother, reluctant to leave her own father, only came in August 1939. My grandfather Willy Cohn, who you can see as a young man in this photo, was trapped in France where he was deported to Auschwitz from Drancy.



You can see on my mother Hanna's ID card here that it was stamped with a J for Jew and her middle name is shown as Sara which all Jewish girls and women were forced to take. You can see that Mum signed this, aged ten, in rather hard to read Gothic German script.



Both my parents were so lucky to find sanctuary here. When grown up, they met at a club for refugees and married in 1955, and my twin sister Debbie and I were born in 1958.

We are grateful to the Wiener Holocaust Library, who are represented here today, for receiving all the family papers to add to their catalogue.

I do feel it is important to share these stories of tremendous kindness and hospitality, especially in such dark days in places like

Ukraine. The aim of the exhibition is to illustrate arriving and belonging through universal themes that could apply to any groups.

I do hope you enjoy the exhibition and we would be delighted if you would leave any comments in the visitors' book. Our mantra is that everyone has a story. In the final panel you will see that we have developed a toolkit for other community groups to map their own stories so do get in touch if you would be interested in this. The more we know about each other's culture and history, the more we may understand each other. We are delighted too that a future exhibition here will be on the St Albans Windrush generation, another community that has made St Albans its home.

Helen Singer April 2022