

Activity 1: Kindertransport & Child Refugees in Wales: Part 1 - Driving Forces

Mary Hochberg



Mary Hochberg in 1938.

Image from Mary Hochberg's interview from the archive of the USC Shoah Foundation – The Institute for Visual History and Education, 1997. For more information: <http://sfi.usc.edu/>.

Mary Hochberg was born Mary Auskerin on 19 January 1925 in Berlin, Germany, to parents Ossip and Raina Auskerin. Her father was a businessman. Mary describes her childhood as being normal, but she was becoming increasingly aware of antisemitism and the anti-Jewish laws that forbade her to do the normal things that she once did. Not long after this, Mary was sent to the Great Britain on the Kindertransport. After arriving in London, she was sent to Gwrych Castle, in Abergele, north Wales, where she joined other Jewish children and where she met her future husband, Julius Hochberg. They moved to London in 1943 and married in March of that year. Mary went to college and worked for a dental laboratory and an accounting firm. After she graduated from college, she became a teacher at a Jewish school in London. In 1946, she learned of the fate of her parents. Her father had been deported to Auschwitz – Birkenau, where he is presumed to have been murdered, but her mother survived the war, although she died shortly afterwards. Mary had a son, who became a barrister.

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Gwrych Castle



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Between 1939 and 1941, Gwrych Castle in Abergele, Denbighshire, was the home to 200 Jewish refugee children who had fled from Nazi-occupied Europe. The castle was used as an agricultural training centre, set up by Zionist organisations, in preparation for youths to emigrate to the British Mandate of Palestine (now Israel). Youth Aliyah and Bachad were two of the organisations that sponsored some of the children who stayed here. Following Nazi persecution in Germany, approximately 20 of these training centres were created throughout Great Britain and Gwrych Castle would become the largest.

Use of the castle was offered for free by the owner, Lord Dundonald, since it was in a very poor condition. The amenities at the castle were restricted due to most of the rooms being unfit to live in. Religious studies and agricultural work kept the children busy but sports, outdoor activities and social gatherings were also encouraged.