

Finding Ivy

a life worthy of life

The British-born victims of the Nazi war on disabled people



Ivy Angerer, a British-born victim of Aktion T4, murdered at Hartheim, Austria. Source: personal archives of the Angerer family. Date and photographer unknown.

From 1940-1941 around 70,000 adults with mental or physical disabilities living in institutions across Germany and Austria were systematically killed under a Nazi-led programme called 'die Aktion' or 'Eu-Aktion', which after World War Two became known as 'Aktion T4'. The victims were deemed to have "lives unworthy of life" and were "useless eaters", a term used to describe their inability to work and thus meaningfully contribute to society. Whilst the killings were stylised as mercy deaths, they were in fact murderous actions directed at people considered to have little or no societal value, whose care was seen to constitute an unnecessary economic burden.

The killings were carried out in a very systematic and highly organised way by doctors, nurses and civilian ancillary staff. The perpetrators were voluntary participants, willingly carrying out the directions of the Nazi state. Their targets were the 'mentally deficient', the mentally ill and people with physical or sensory impairments.

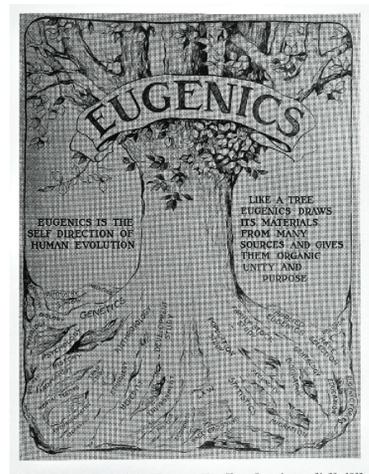
Nazi ideology adopted the 'science' of eugenics (meaning 'good birth'), which argued that people who were physically or mentally impaired 'polluted' the race; unless removed from society and prevented from 'breeding' they posed a threat to the future of civilization.

Eugenic thinking originated in Britain in the late nineteenth century and was quickly and enthusiastically adopted by influential followers in the United States and Europe. It was supported across the ideological spectrum, on both the left and right. Eugenic theory was used by the Nazi state as a justification for the extermination of humans deemed 'unfit'.

The fatal collision of the science of eugenics and the fascist ideology of Nazism was a disaster for disabled people in Germany and Austria. The murderous nature of the Nazi regime meant that there were no qualms about carrying out mass killings of those deemed unfit to live, in the quest for an Aryan utopia.

This Anglo-Austrian-German research project has uncovered a previously unacknowledged aspect of the history of Aktion T4: 13 of its victims were born in Great Britain. Most were the sons or daughters of German or Austrian immigrants working in Britain at the time of their births, and who had returned to their homelands before the Second World War. Others were from wealthy Anglo-German or Anglo-Austrian families who moved between countries.

Through painstaking research, we have uncovered the personal stories of these victims for the very first time. In sharing them through this exhibition we have endeavoured to facilitate an act of remembrance whilst restoring the dignity and respect that these people have been deprived of for too long. We also hope that the exhibition will serve as both a warning and an educational tool for the future.



THIRD INTERNATIONAL EUGENICS CONGRESS, NEW YORK CITY, AUGUST 21-23, 1932
Introductory Wall Panel "The Relation of Eugenics to Other Sciences," based on a paper by Dr. Harry H. Laughlin, Cold Spring Harbor, Long Island, New York.

Introductory wall panel 'The Relation of Eugenics to Other Sciences' used in the 3rd International Congress of Eugenics (1932) Source: Wellcome Collection.



The Proliferation of the Unfit, Volk und Rasse, August 1936.



A poster entitled 'Hier trägst Du mit' (Here you contribute) used as an illustration in the German publication 'Biologie für höhere Schulen' (Biology for Secondary Schools) by Jakob Graf (circa 1940)

The Killing Programme



Brandenburg

View of a cell building and the prison barn of the old Brandenburg an der Havel penitentiary, around 1900. Source/copyright: Archiv der Gedenkstätte Brandenburg an der Havel.



Sonnenstein

The Sonnenstein killing centre in the winter of 1940/41. In the background, in the centre, house C 16, the site of the Aktion T4 mass murders. Source/copyright: Archiv der Gedenkstätte Pirna-Sonnenstein.



Bernburg

The killing building of the asylum in Bernburg, 2006. Source: Wikimedia.



Hartheim

Schloss Hartheim showing the garage where the buses entered the castle. Source/copyright: Hartheim Memorial Centre. Date unknown.



Hadamar

Hadamar killing centre with rising smoke from crematorium 1941. Photo presumably by Wilhelm Reusch. Source/copyright: Gedenkstätte Hadamar, Sammlung FS 4.



Grafeneck

Shed in which the gas chamber in Grafeneck was located. Source/copyright: Gedenkstätte Grafeneck. Date unknown.



Selection for death was based on the assessment of an individual in terms of diagnosis, prognosis and ability to work. From its headquarters at Tiergartenstrasse 4 in Berlin (hence 'T4') the programme asked teams of doctors to examine brief assessment forms completed by the personnel of care homes, psychiatric hospitals and other forms of institution. Despite never meeting any of the people, the doctors selected those seen as unfit to live, marking the assessment paper with a '+' sign.

These people were then systematically collected in groups from their institutions by 'community transport' buses with darkened windows, which took them to one of the six sites in Germany or Austria converted into specialist killing centres. Five were former hospitals and one a former prison. They had been told they were moving to a new home.

On arrival they were asked to put aside their possessions. They were then undressed, examined and assisted by nurses to enter 'shower rooms'. These were actually gas chambers.

Once they were all inside and the room sealed, a white-coated doctor would turn on the gas taps from outside. The victims were observed through a spy hole or window by staff until all had died. Their bodies were then cremated, their ashes thrown away. Relatives were sent spurious death certificates, often citing the incorrect place of death, and stating that their family member had died of natural causes.

Although the programme was carried out with high levels of deception and secrecy, it soon became apparent to the public, and to families, what was happening. In the areas surrounding the killing centres people noticed the buses entering full of people and leaving empty. They observed the smoke pouring from the crematorium chimneys. Relatives saw through the faked death certificates and the fabricated stories about their family member's death.

Remarkably, there was a level of public resistance and criticism of the Nazi regime's actions, led in some areas by the Catholic church. In the face of this Hitler brought an end to the official programme in 1941, although killings by other means such as lethal injection, deliberate neglect, starvation and freezing continued right up to the end of the war, and even in its immediate aftermath.

By the end of the official programme in 1941, around 70,000 individuals had been killed. Tens of thousands more died in the following years.



Transportation of victims to the killing centres was via special 'community transport' buses. Source/copyright: Hartheim Memorial Centre. Date and photographer unknown.



The restored gas chamber section at Hartheim, today a site of memorial to honour those who were killed there. Source/copyright: Hartheim Memorial Centre.

Gladys Strauss

1910-1940

Born: 10 Oct 1910, London

Diagnosis: Schizophrenia

Died: 27 Sept 1940, Brandenburg

Age at death: 29



Gladys as a child. Source: personal archive of the Jacobsohn family. Date and photographer unknown.

Gladys Iris Rosie Strauss (née Marx) was born in 1910 into a Jewish family living in Maida Vale, London. Her parents were Robert, son of a prominent Berlin banker and Margarete (née Jacobsohn), daughter of a German businessman involved in the fledgling gold-mining industry in South Africa.

After Gladys's birth, the family returned to Germany, but her parents were soon to divorce. Gladys went to live with her father's older sister, Lucie and her husband Ernst Strelitz in the affluent Tiergarten area of Berlin. Ernst was the co-owner of a large women's clothing company with premises in London. He was also a key investor in the family-run 'Scala', a famous theatre in the city.

In 1932 Gladys married Fritz (Sally) Strauss, a Jewish merchant. They lived in Dortmund but married life was overshadowed by Hitler's rise to power in 1933 and his subsequent treatment of the Jewish community. Many of Gladys's immediate family escaped persecution by fleeing to England.

In spring 1936, then aged 25, Gladys was diagnosed with schizophrenia. The stress of her changing living conditions, including the loss of her maid, are thought to have been a catalyst. In the August she was admitted to Antonius Haus/Marienhau, a care facility run by the Franciscan Sisters of Waldbreitbach, Rhineland-Palatinate, however by September 1937 she had been moved to the Hertz'sche Privatklinik, a psychiatric facility in Bonn to be treated with insulin therapy. Additional treatment was soon deemed necessary and Cardiazol, a drug used to induce seizures, was jointly administered but to little effect.

In spring 1938, Fritz engaged an expert to evaluate Gladys's condition in preparation for emigration to England. Her uncle, Ernst Strelitz, by this time residing in London, was prepared to fund the cost of her care. However, despite best efforts, Fritz was unable to secure Gladys's release.

In May 1938 Gladys was transferred to the St.-Rochus-Hospital in Telgte run by the Franciscan Sisters of Münster, St Mauritz. Fritz fled to Belgium where he was eventually arrested and interned in the Mechelen Transit Camp. On 27 October 1942 he was on transport XVI destined for Auschwitz and was to die there later that year.



Fritz (Sally) Strauss, Gladys's husband. Source: National State Archives of Belgium. Date and photographer unknown.



Gladys. Source: personal archive of the Jacobsohn family. Date and photographer unknown.



An advert for the company owned by Gladys's uncle, Ernst Strelitz (1922). Source: Style Magazine.



Scala: the theatre run by the Marx family (circa 1930s).

On 21 September 1940 Gladys was transported to an intermediate institution at Wunstorf near Hannover. From there she was transferred to Brandenburg where she was killed. Correspondence from the fake "Cholm lunatic asylum", a Nazi ploy designed to deceive relatives and extort additional funds, said that she had died on 24 March 1941 from "Genickstarre", a complication of meningitis. Gladys had in fact been gassed on 27 September 1940.

In 1950 Gladys's father committed suicide in London; the reasons behind this are unknown but the loss of his daughter may well have contributed. Only recently, and through this project, have surviving relatives in the UK and US learned about the true fate of both Gladys and her father. We thank them for their kindness in allowing us to tell her story.

Arno Ansorge

1902-1940

Born: 14 Oct 1902, London

Diagnosis: Unknown

Died: 19 July 1940, Sonnenstein

Age at death: 37



Sonnenstein

Born in Marylebone, London in 1902, Arno was the son of Joseph Emile Ansorge, an upholsterer. The Ansorges were a Jewish family with Franco-German heritage. Arno's grandfather, Elias, had been born in Ostrowo, a village in the Province of Posen, now in Poland. His paternal grandmother Julie (née Hirsch), in Paris. The family were wine merchants with premises on Great Titchfield Street, which today is situated between Oxford Street and Euston Road.

In 1901, Joseph married Arno's mother, Juliana (Julia) Goldschmidt, a German chambermaid from Sontra, a small town in the state of Hesse. Arno was born a year later.

When Arno was 6 years old his mother attempted suicide. She was admitted to Colney Hatch Lunatic Asylum, a very large institution which was the main provider of psychiatric care for London's East End. Julia was reported as displaying signs of depression, delusional behaviour and paranoia; she had also been living apart from her husband. In 1909, apparently fully recovered, she was discharged back into his care.

Sometime after Julia's discharge, the family left England, probably for Berlin where Arno's father, Joseph, had family. This included a famous cousin, the German actress Tony Wally Ansorge, better known by her stage name, Thea Standten. However, by 1913 Joseph was back in London advertising his upholstery business in local newspapers. Contrarily, Julia appears to have taken the decision to stay in Berlin. In a tragic turn of events, she committed suicide in 1915 by poisoning herself in the apartment of her employer.

At the time of Julia's death Arno was 12 years old but it is unclear where or with whom he was living. What is known is that by the 1920s he was working as an apprentice in Kötitz, a village in Saxony; it was during this time that he became sufficiently mentally unwell to be admitted to an institution. The precise reasons for the admission are unknown, however records show him regularly moving in and out of institutional care during the 1920s and 1930s.



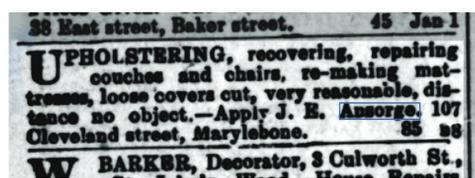
Postcard showing the town of Hochweitzschen and its institution (circa 1930).



Arno's mother, Julia Ansorge. Photograph taken August 1909 shortly before her discharge from Colney Hatch Lunatic Asylum. Source: London Metropolitan Archives.



Joseph Ansorge's cousin, Thea Standten (date unknown) Photographer: Alexander Binder.



Business advert placed in the Marylebone Mercury, a London newspaper, by Joseph Ansorge, Saturday 8 November 1913.

In August 1939 Arno was moved to the institution at Arnsdorf near Dresden and in December of that year to the institution in the town of Hochweitzschen. On 19 July 1940 he was transported to Sonnenstein where he was killed.

Felix Daubenspeck

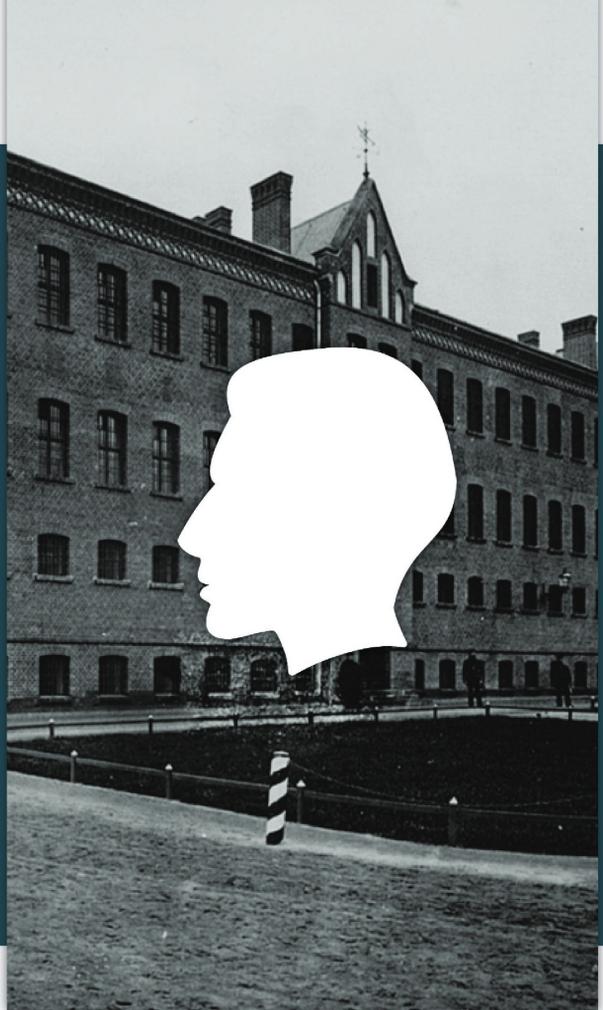
1911-1940

Born: 12 July 1911, London

Diagnosis: Epilepsy

Died: 9 Oct 1940, Brandenburg

Age at death: 29



Brandenburg

Felix Hermann Adolph Schmidt (also known by his mother's maiden name **Daubenspeck**) was born in **Islington, North London in 1911**. He was the son of the **Belgian-born Julia** and her lover, **Herman Gustave Adolph Schmidt**, a **German hairdresser**. Felix had two half-sisters **Augusta** (b. 1895), **Elvira** (b. 1900) and a half-brother **Edward** (b. 1893) from his mother's marriage in 1892 to **Otto August Hoffmann**, also a hairdresser from **Guben in Brandenburg**.

Felix was from a colourful family. His grandfather **Mathias Gustav Daubenspeck** was a notorious German anarchist who ran a tavern on Sun Street in the Finsbury area of London, a meeting point for fellow revolutionaries. Mathias, more commonly known by his middle name, **Gustav**, was infamous for his alleged involvement in a plot to assassinate the German Emperor, **Kaiser Wilhelm II** in 1897. A chemist by trade, he was also reportedly one of the first people to use radium to cure cancer.

The lack of surviving records means that nothing much is known about Felix's life. According to the descendants of his half-siblings, his existence was never discussed by the family. What is known is that at some point before the 1930s he left England with his mother. He was subsequently admitted to the "Heil- und Pflgeanstalt für Epileptische 'Wuhlgarten'" in Biesdorf (Berlin). Originally established in 1893, the institution had capacity for 1000 patients and the regime of care was based on the principles of work therapy. By 1933 it housed 1450 patients, around 1000 of whom, like Felix, had epilepsy.

In 1930 Felix's mother **Julia** was admitted at the request of the Municipal Health Officer to the institution at Herzberge with symptoms of paralysis associated with syphilis. Treated with fever therapy she was discharged in 1931 only to be re-admitted in 1932. She died the same year.

In 1940 Felix was selected for death. On 14 August of that year he made the journey to an intermediate institution in Neuruppin, a town north west of Berlin. From there he was transferred to Brandenburg where he was killed on 9 October 1940.



Julia Daubenspeck, Felix's mother. Source: personal archives of the Leafhead family. Date and photographer unknown.



Felix's half sisters, Augusta (left) and Elvira (right) Source: personal archives of the Daley family. Date and photographer unknown.

Registration District ISLINGTON.										
BIRTHS in the Sub-District of HIGHBURY in the County of LONDON.										
No.	When and Where born.	Name of boy.	Sex.	Name and Surname of Father.	Name and Maiden Surname of Mother.	Rank or Profession of Father.	Signature, Description and Residence of Informant.	When Registered.	Signature of Registrar.	Where born or registered in Birth.
1911	July 1911	Felix Hermann Adolph	Boy	Hermann Gustave Adolph Schmidt	Julia Marie Amalia Schmidt	Hair Dresser	F. Daubenspeck, 27 St. Thomas Road, Islington	August 1911	J. Perry	Islington

Felix's birth certificate (1911).



Postcard of the institution at Wuhlgarten (date unknown).

The descendants of Felix's half-siblings are now living in the UK and Spain. Through the 'Finding Ivy' project they have had an opportunity to meet and discuss their shared history. They, and other members of the wider Daubenspeck family, have been unwavering in their support for this project, recognising the importance of ensuring that Felix's legacy lives on in the minds of future generations. We sincerely thank them for their help.

Zdenko Hoyos

1903 – 1941

Born: 16 Aug 1903, Shrivenham

Diagnosis: Schizophrenia

Died: 31 Mar 1941, Hartheim

Age at death: 37



Zdenko aged 9 (far right) with his mother Countess Ilona Hoyos (née Kinsky) and four of his six siblings, on the cover of the society magazine Wiener Salonblatt, April 1912.

Count Zdenko Alexander Anton Hoyos (Cocco) was born into a well-known Anglo-Austrian family. His father, Count Edgar Hoyos, was the grandson of Robert Whitehead, engineer and inventor of the self-propelled torpedo, whose factory was at Fiume on the Adriatic Sea (then part of Austria, now Rijeka, Croatia). Robert owned a large estate at Worth in West Sussex; the family also leased a home, Beckett Hall, in Shrivenham, Oxfordshire where Zdenko was born in 1903.

In 1901, Count Edgar Hoyos married Countess Ilona Hoyos (née Kinsky) who was of Austro-Hungarian descent. They had seven children, one of whom later joined the Heimwehr, the voluntary Austrian anti-Nazi force, and three of whom settled in the UK. The young family lived between England, Fiume and Schloss Sooß, Melk, Austria.

Zdenko graduated from the Schotten Gymnasium in Vienna in 1921 with plans to study political science, but from around 1928, his mental health deteriorated. He was transferred from a clinic in Zurich to the institution at Mauer-Öhling, Mauer bei Amstetten, Austria in 1936, then on to Hartheim, where he was killed on 31 March 1941, just one of the 1300 patients moved from Mauer-Öhling to Hartheim to be gassed between June 1940 and August 1941.

Zdenko's sister Alicemargit Morris (née Hoyos), who married into a Welsh family in 1931, wrote about her happy childhood and her brother in her memoirs:

“We were seven with beloved parents who did their best to make our youth a joy”

She remembered spending winters in Fiume and summers at Schloss Sooß, and the entourage traveling in a whole railway carriage: parents, children, nannies, governesses, tutors, staff and luggage, to Vienna and then Loosdorf, where they were collected by horse-drawn carriages.



Portrait of Zdenko's mother Ilona Hoyos (née Kinsky) painted by John Quincy Adams in 1914.



After Zdenko was killed, his parents Edgar and Ilona Hoyos buried his ashes in the family grave at Schwertberg, Austria.

a bucket of cold water at us, 'fitterly' Cold too on Dec. 6' in an Austrian winter with snow on the ground. Annually we acted at family play My second brother Zdenko, Cocco for short was by far the most gifted actor and playwright. He turned Baron Orczy's 'Elusive Pimpernel' into a splendid play & acted Lord Blakeney admirably. Tragically Cocco was affected by the Saravatin we suffered from 1918 and developed a fatal illness. He suffered much & was finally killed as punishable by Hitler's law. Mama & Papa were not informed. They just received his ashes

A fragment from the memoirs of Alicemargit Morris (née Hoyos) referring to Zdenko. Source: personal archives of the Jennings family.

She wrote:

“Annually, we acted a family play. My second brother Zdenko, Cocco for short, was by far the most gifted actor and playwright. He turned Baron Orczy's Elusive Pimpernel into a splendid play and acted Lord Blakeney admirably,”

and

“He suffered much and was finally killed as incurable by Hitler's law. Mama and Papa were not informed. They just received his ashes with an official statement of his demise.”

Edgar and Ilona Hoyos buried Zdenko's ashes in the family grave at Schwertberg, Austria.

Nancy Jennings is the great-niece of Zdenko Hoyos. She constructed this panel, with the help of other family members, to keep Zdenko's memory alive.

Ivy Angerer

1911-1940

Born: 21 July 1911, Scotland

Diagnosis: Imbecility

Died: 12 Aug 1940, Hartheim

Age at death: 29



Ivy as an older child. Source: personal archives of the Angerer family. Date and photographer unknown.

Ivy Berta Meta Angerer was born in 1911 at Hermitage Cottage in Broughty Ferry, Scotland, the daughter of Austrian and German immigrants. Her father Josef had been born in Jedlesee, a district of Vienna. Her mother Marie (née Neumann) was from Halbau, a small town in Lower Silesia, now part of Poland. Josef Angerer was a confectioner specialising in wedding cakes; before marriage Marie had worked as a domestic servant for William Longair, a former Lord Provost of Dundee. They married in 1910.

In 1914 the British government introduced the Aliens Restriction Act that curtailed the freedom of many foreign nationals. Men of German and Austro-Hungarian origin were arrested and interned as potential spies. Josef was arrested in Broughty Ferry in August 1914. He was interned for the duration of the war in Stobs Camp near Hawick in the Scottish Borders and at Knockaloe on the Isle of Man. As the government did not generally permit the internment of women or children, Ivy returned to Halbau with her mother. Marie was to die some two years later in 1916.

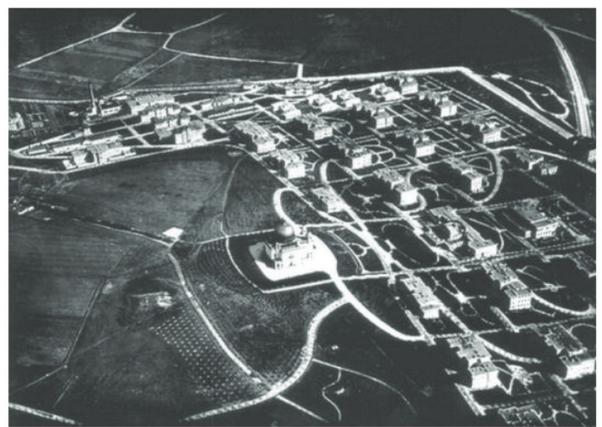
After repatriation, Josef was reunited with Ivy. They went to live in Vienna where he remarried and continued to work as a confectioner, finally owning his own business in the city. In 1925, a brother for Ivy was born, followed some years later by a sister. Ivy attended school in Vienna where according to her reports she was good at singing but struggled with reading and writing. What she did after her school years is unclear, however records indicate that by 1931, aged 20, she was living in Vienna's Am Steinhof – the largest psychiatric hospital in Europe comprising some 34 pavilions housing up to 3000 people. Ivy's medical notes reveal that as a 'high grade' patient she worked in the laundry. They also show that she was often unhappy and wanted to go home.



Ivy as a baby (circa 1912). Source: personal archives of the Angerer family. Photographer unknown.



Josef and Marie on their wedding day (1910). Source: personal archives of the Angerer family.



Aerial view of Am Steinhof (circa 1930s).

Ivy lived at Am Steinhof for around 9 years. On 12 August 1940, she was transferred to Schloss Hartheim where she was killed. After her death, her father received a letter stating that Ivy had died from liver atrophy at another of the Aktion T4 killing centres (Sonnenstein).

A newspaper cutting found amongst his possessions, detailing the trial of doctors and nurses at Sonnenstein, suggests that Ivy's father may have died never knowing the truth. Whatever the case, Ivy has never been forgotten - her name is engraved onto the headstone that marks the family grave. Descendants of the Angerer family have provided us with invaluable help. Without them, and without Ivy, the 'Finding Ivy' project may never have come to fruition.

Marguerite Baruch

1883-1940

Born: 9 Dec 1883, London

Diagnosis: Schizophrenia

Died: 19 July 1940, Brandenburg

Age at death: 56

Marguerite Beatrice Frederica (Daisy) Baruch (née Tuchmann) was born in 1883 into a Jewish family. Her father was **Karl (Charles) Tuchmann** and her mother, **Bertha Wolff**. Charles was an influential businessman and owner of the **Grand Hotel** in Khartoum, Sudan. A professed Anglophile, he was an active campaigner for improving Anglo-German relations in the run-up to the First World War. Daisy had an older brother, **Martin** (b. 1882) and a younger sister, **Bettina** (b. 1887). At the turn of the century the family were living in 'The Grange', Eton Avenue in Hampstead, North London.

In 1905, at the age of 22, Daisy became engaged to the German-born **Bruno Baruch**, son of **Hugo Baruch**, head of the family-run and internationally renowned theatrical supplies company, **Hugo Baruch & Co**. The wedding took place in February 1906 at St John's Wood synagogue. Newspapers from the time reported that the bride was dressed in a robe of ivory crêpe de chine. As a dowry, she is said to have brought 100,000 German Marks and a large Louis XVI grand piano. However, the marriage was not to last, and they divorced in 1915.

In April 1907, Daisy gave birth to a son, **Hugo Cyril Kulp Baruch**, more widely known by his alter ego **Jack Bilbo**, the Anglo-German surrealist. In his autobiography published in 1948, Jack gives an account of the difficult and sometimes abusive relationship he had with his mother, at one point stating that he believed her to be not normal. He refers to his maternal grandmother, **Bertha Wolff**, in the same way; **Bertha** is said to have committed suicide in 1913.

What the young Jack was not to know was that Daisy had schizophrenia, and as a result would spend some 23 years of her life being cared for in different institutions.



Daisy with her son Hugo (Jack Bilbo) Source: personal archives of the Baruch family. Date and photographer unknown.

There are no surviving records to tell us the exact date Daisy was first admitted into institutional care or the nature of the treatment she may have received. Like many victims of Aktion T4, her records were destroyed.



Daisy and Bruno Baruch's wedding (1906). Source: personal archives of the Baruch family. Photographer unknown.



Newspaper announcement of the engagement of Daisy and Bruno (1905). Source: Kölnische Zeitung, Wednesday 13th December 1905.



Cover of Jack Bilbo's autobiography (1948). Source: The Modern Art Gallery Ltd.



Postcard of the Herzberge institution (circa 1914). Source: Historisches Archiv am KEH und Bibliothek.

What is known is that on 24 February 1938 Daisy was transferred from the institution at Herzberge, Berlin, where she had been receiving care, to Wuhlgarten in another part of the city. Two years later on 9 July 1940, she was moved to an intermediate institution, Berlin-Buch, from where she was transported to Brandenburg and killed on 19 July 1940.

William Martin

1906-1940

Born: 11 Nov 1906, London

Diagnosis: Schizophrenia

Died: 29 Aug 1940, Sonnenstein

Age at death: 33

William Paul Martin (Bill) was born in Acton, West London. His parents, Max and Luise (née Lehmann) were among the 60,000 or so German immigrants living in Great Britain at the turn of the 20th Century. Max came from near Dresden, Luise from St Georgen in the Black Forest. Bill had an older brother, Max Julius (b. 1904) and four sisters – Helene (b.1905), Louisa (b. 1908), Margaret (b. 1909) and Ella (b. 1910). A sixth sibling, Rosel, died shortly after birth in 1921.

Between the ages of 5 and 13, Bill attended an English elementary school but also received a German education. He later recalled:

“We actually went to school every day; Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday in the English school, Saturday in the German school, Sunday in the church. We went three times a week to the church.”

Clinical interview, Arnsdorf institution, 29 May 1936.

His father Max was a lathe operator specialising in the production of Magnetos, a form of electrical generator. When war broke out in 1914, Max escaped internment as his skills were deemed essential for the armaments industry.

After the war ended, the family went to live in Dresden. In 1921 Bill became a draftsman working for the Ernemann Works, a manufacturer of cameras and movie projectors, but was dismissed in 1925. There followed a period of unemployment and short-term work contracts, as the German economy sank deeper into recession.

In 1923, Bill broke his leg doing gymnastics, causing permanent stiffening. On admission to hospital for treatment he experienced an acute psychotic attack, a key precursor to his eventual diagnosis of hebephrenia, a type of schizophrenia. Over the next few years, he was cared for in different institutions including Lauenstein-Zwätzen, Jena and Schloss Gerswalde in Uckermark, a district of Brandenburg.



Bill in 1925, Source: personal archives of the Martin family. Photographer unknown.

Both places used the humane system of Curative Education, first pioneered by Rudolf Steiner.

Bill was not a supporter of the Nazi regime. Requiring a stick to walk, he was once challenged about not giving the Nazi salute with the right arm. Instead of moving the stick to the left hand he promptly bought himself another stick.



Bill as a baby (Middle; circa 1907). Source: personal archives of the Martin family. Photographer unknown.



An advert for the Ernemann Works, World Exhibition in Paris 1900: official catalogue of the exhibition of the German Empire.



Photo of the Martin family, Dresden, 1925 (Bill, 2nd from left). Source: personal archives of the Martin family. Photographer unknown.



Postcard of the institution at Arnsdorf (circa 1920s).

In 1936, aged 30, Bill was admitted to the institution at Arnsdorf near Dresden where they tried to treat his condition with Cardiazol. His family visited, but because of Nazi law, were unable to take him outside of the institution as he had not been sterilised. On 29 August 1940, he was transferred to Sonnenstein where he was killed.

In February 1945 both of Bill's parents were to die in the Dresden bombings, an immeasurable loss for their remaining children. Despite the trauma of the past, the descendants of the Martin family have been active supporters of the 'Finding Ivy' project, with a view to ensuring that people like Bill are never forgotten. We have sincerely appreciated their involvement.

Mabel Jaeger

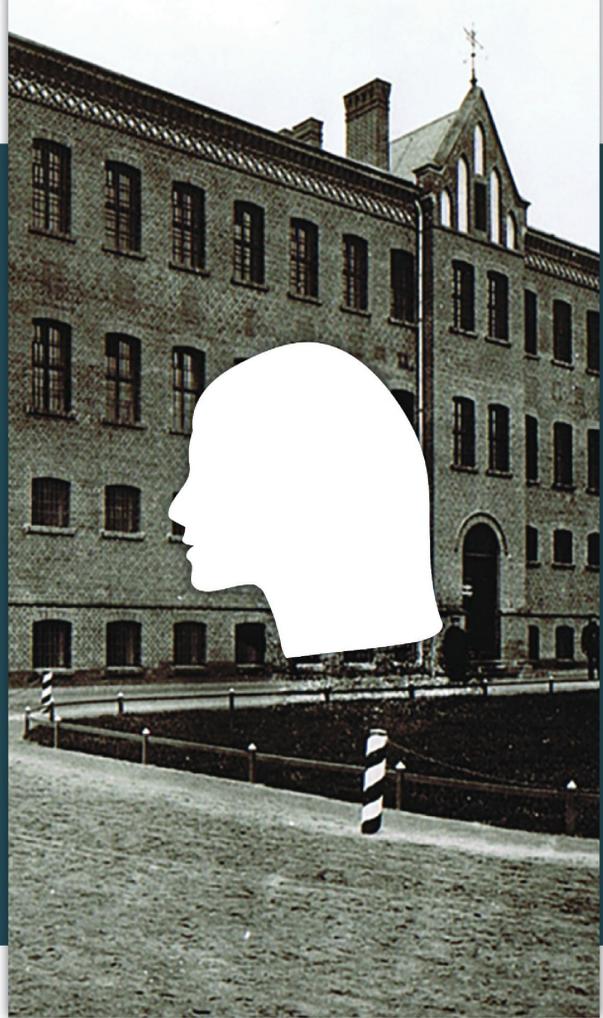
1891-1940

Born: 5 Feb 1891, Nottingham

Diagnosis: Schizophrenia

Died: 5 July 1940, Brandenburg

Age at death: 49

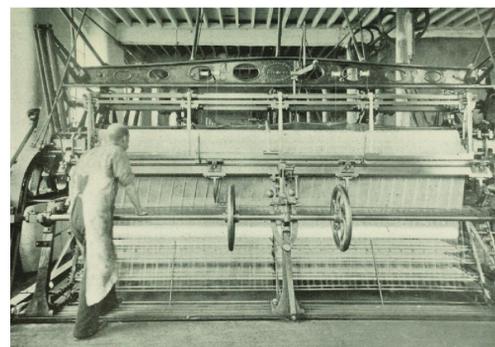


Brandenburg

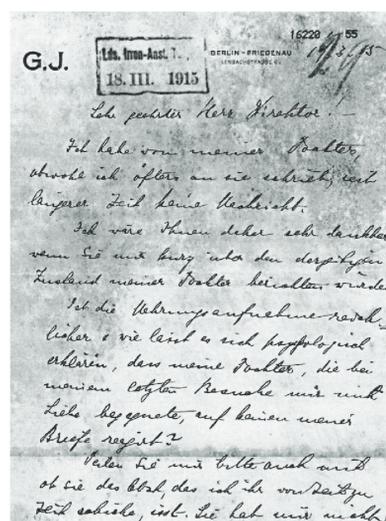
Elsa Louisa Mabel Jaeger (Mabel) was born in 1891 in Nottingham, the heart of the British lace-making industry. Her father, Carl Gustav Adolph Jaeger (Gustav) born in 1863, was a German lace 'correspondent' from Frankfurt am Main. In 1887 he married Emma (Emily) Paling, a lace pattern girl from the Sneinton area of Nottingham. Mabel's sister, Annie Margarethe (Daisy), arrived in 1898. The family lived in The Meadows, a recently developed area of housing by the River Trent.

Mabel had personal aspirations to become a teacher and had passed the requisite exams; however, her mother was to become ill and Mabel assumed the role of her main carer, a job she is said to have undertaken with the "utmost care and devotion". Emily died in 1913, around the time the family moved from Nottingham to Hamburg. Her death was to devastate Mabel. There was also the added problem that the teaching qualification she had acquired in England was not valid in Germany. The cumulative stress and upset caused her mental health to suffer. From being a hard-working, ambitious and naturally calm person, she became very disturbed and suicidal. She started to display paranoid thoughts and became convinced that her family were trying to harm her.

On 12 July 1914 Mabel was admitted to Berolinium, an institution in Berlin-Lankowitz, before being transferred later that month to Teupitz in Brandenburg. Now living in Berlin, her father and sister would regularly write and organise baskets of fruit, chocolate and wine. Gustav was often dissatisfied with the lack of news from the hospital about Mabel's progress and struggled with the changes he was observing in his once-loving daughter.



A lace-making machine (date unknown). Source: Wikicommons.



Letter from Gustav Jaeger to the institution at Teupitz asking why he has not received any letters from his daughter. He wishes to know why she did not show him any signs of affection at their last meeting and whether she is eating the fruit he sends to her from time to time
Source: M. Jaeger, medical notes, 17 March 1915.



Nottingham in the early twentieth century (date unknown). Source: Wikicommons.



Postcard of the institution at Teupitz. Source: Archive of "Euthanasia"-Memorial Museum of Lüneburg (date unknown).

In 1924 Gustav died, the same year Mabel was moved to an institution at Görden. After his death, the guardianship for Mabel passed to Ernst, a businessman and husband of Mabel's cousin Margarethe (b. 1892). Sadly, Margarethe was also to develop schizophrenia and by 1932 was a patient in Görden along with Mabel.

In 1938 Mabel was transferred to Lübben, her final institution. She was to remain there until 5 July 1940 when she was transported to Brandenburg and killed. Her cousin Margarethe had been gassed a couple of weeks earlier on 24 June.

Erwin Münzenmaier

1904-1940

Born: 16 Sept 1904, London

Diagnosis: Schizophrenia

Died: 28 Aug 1940, Grafeneck

Age at death: 35



Erwin Münzenmaier. Source: personal archives of the Münzenmaier family. Date and photographer unknown.

Erwin Philip Münzenmaier was born in 1904 at 4 Regent Square, Bloomsbury, a home for “fallen women of previous good character” run by the charity, Homes for Hope. Erwin was the illegitimate son of Marie Martha Münzenmaier, a domestic servant working in London. Marie had been born in Hegensberg, Germany in 1882. Little is known about Erwin’s absent father, a man called Philip Müller.

After his birth, Marie took Erwin back to Germany. In 1911, after leaving him in the care of her younger sister, Mathilde, she left for America to work for a doctor and his wife in Russell, Kansas. In 1913 she married Arthur Smith in Peoria, Illinois, and in 1915 their daughter Margaret Marion Smith was born. It is unclear whether Marie ever returned home to Germany. In 1932 whilst working as a candy saleswoman in Omaha, Nebraska, she died from heart failure.

Erwin was to grow up with his aunt, uncle and cousins in Bad Cannstadt, today a suburb of Stuttgart. He was reportedly a good scholar, and on leaving school, worked as a mechanic. On 23 April 1929 he married Johanna Beron from the village of Inneringen, who had been working locally as a maid. They had three children, Edeltraud (b. 1929), Ludwig (b. 1931) and Maria (b. 1933). However, life was to become very difficult for the young family.

Details of what actually happened are difficult to ascertain; Erwin’s medical notes are only very brief, and Johanna, his wife, understandably found it too upsetting to revisit the memories in later life. What is known is that during the early 1930s, Erwin became sufficiently unwell to warrant admission to institutional care; he was subsequently diagnosed with schizophrenia. The first of his admissions was to the district hospital in Stuttgart in 1932, the same year his mother died.

In 1933 he was taken to the institution at Göppingen and then later on that year to Weißenau near Ravensburg.

In one particularly distressing anecdote, Erwin is said to have attempted to throw himself out of a window to prevent two ‘caretakers’, most likely hospital attendants, from taking him away.

On 28 August 1940 Erwin was transported from Weißenau to the killing centre at Grafeneck and murdered the same day. After his death his wife was incorrectly informed that Erwin had died on 17 September 1940 in Sonnenstein, another of the killing centres.



Erwin and Johanna on their wedding day (1929). Source: personal archives of the Münzenmaier family. Photographer unknown.



Erwin and Johanna’s children - Edeltraud (back), Ludwig (right), Maria (left). Source: personal archives of the Münzenmaier family. Date and photographer unknown.



Margaret Smith, Erwin’s half-sister. Source: personal archives of the Münzenmaier family. Date and photographer unknown.

Until recently, the fate of Margaret, Erwin’s half-sister was unknown. During the course of the 'Finding Ivy' project it was established that she had grown up in Los Angeles. She married, had children, and worked as welder in the rocket manufacturing industry. Whilst Margaret died in 1999, we were able to make contact with her grandchildren and great grandchildren who still live in Los Angeles. They weren’t aware of Erwin’s history or the existence of their relatives in Germany. Because of the project, both sides of the family are now determined to meet.

We thank the Münzenmaier family for their commitment to ensuring that Erwin’s story is told.

Nellie Dietz

1863-1941

Born: 24 Mar 1862, Chester

Diagnosis: Depression

Died: 26 Feb 1941, Hadamar

Age at death: 78



Georg and Nellie. Source: personal archives of the Kerckel family. Date and photographer unknown.

Annie Elizabeth Helen (Nellie) Dietz (née Pickering) was born in 1862 at Great Boughton, an area of the medieval city of Chester in the northwest of England. She was the first child of Robert and Ann (née Andrews) and had a sister, Mary Edith, four years her junior. Evidence suggests that Nellie's early life may have been somewhat complicated and unsettling.

Robert was an alcohol salesman, a job that took him abroad. In 1874, whilst still married to Nellie's mother, he married Mary McNamara in Mount Gambier, South Australia and they had two children. In the same year Nellie's mother Ann married Charles Hudson in Walton-on-the-Hill in Lancashire, England. Significantly her status on the marriage certificate is that of 'widow' suggesting that the true fate of her first husband, Robert, was likely to have been unknown. Robert was to eventually commit suicide in a library in Mount Gambier in 1906.

Nellie spent her early years living with her maternal grandparents. By the 1880s she had met Georg Dietz (b. Frankfurt am Main, 1862) a German merchant trading in cloth and spices; they married in 1885 in London and their first child, Frida was born in Brentford in 1886.

By the 1890s the family had moved to the Heidelberg region of Germany, and over the next few years Nellie was occupied with a growing family. Sadly, many of the children were to die, mostly at birth or in early childhood; those surviving included Frida, Wilhelm (b. 1890) and Irene, otherwise known as 'Mickey' (b. 1895)

On March 30, 1928, Nellie was admitted to the institution at Eichberg near the town of Eltville in Hesse. Whilst there are no surviving records, it is believed that she had depression, a condition that may have been accompanied by alcohol dependence as family anecdotes refer to her fondness for cognac. By the end of 1928, Nellie was a widow, Georg having died in the December. She continued to live in Wiesbaden, visiting and being visited by her family.

Unfortunately, there were to be two more admissions to Eichberg, the third and final one being on 3 January 1938. On 26 February 1941 she was transferred to Hadamar and killed. The official, falsified cause of death was pneumonia.



Portrait of Nellie. Source: personal archives of the Kerckel family. Date and photographer unknown.

SUICIDE AT MOUNT GAMBIER.

Librarian Hangs Himself.

Adelaide, Friday.
Last night Mr. Robert Pickering, aged 70, and who for 27 years has been librarian of the Mount Gambier Institute, committed suicide with a rope in a small room near the library. He left a letter stating that he was tired of life. It is believed that worry is responsible for the rash act.

Account of Robert Pickering's suicide
The Barrier Miner, 7 September 1906.



Mickey (left), her husband, Philipp (right), their daughter Elisabeth (middle) and their granddaughters. Source: personal archive of the Kerckel family. Date and photographer unknown.

Yet there is a twist in this story that makes it all the more tragic. Shortly before Nellie's death, her daughter Mickey received a card from a nurse at Eichberg. It instructed Mickey to urgently remove her mother from the hospital. In the absence of a clear reason as to why, Mickey did not fulfil the request. For the rest of her life she blamed herself for not having saved her mother.

Despite the fact that Nellie's true fate was never a secret in the family, the 'Finding Ivy' project has given her descendants an opportunity to find out more about their family history. We thank them for their kindness in sharing Nellie's story.

Martha Büchel

1875-1941

Born: 9 Oct 1875, London

Diagnosis: Schizophrenia

Died: 12 May 1941, Hadamar

Age at death: 65



Hadamar

Martha Clara Büchel (née Caselton) was born in Camberwell, South London. Her mother Hannah died from heart disease and acute bronchitis in 1877 when Martha was just two years old. Her father Robert, a postman, was left to bring up their large family. He remarried Harriet Reeve shortly after Hannah's death and his family quickly expanded.

By 1901 the Caselton family were living in the borough of Lambeth. The census for that year states that Martha had started work as a shirt machinist. In 1904 she married Georg Frederick Büchel, a cabinet maker born in 1874 in Mainz, Germany. Georg was the younger brother of Karl August Büchel, also known as Charles Büchel (1872-1950), the renowned London-based artist.

In 1911 Georg and Martha were living in the Camden area of London with their four young children: Gladys (b. 1905), George (b. 1906), May (b. 1907) and Dorothy (b. 1909). In the run-up to the First World War, the family moved to Ipswich, Suffolk, where Martha's older brother Robert was living with his wife, Eva and their two young children.

During their time in Ipswich, Martha was to give birth to two more children: Jack William (b. 1913) and Violet (b. 1914). Shortly after Violet's birth, Georg was interned as an enemy alien on the Isle of Man. After his repatriation in 1919, the family went to live in Hamm, Westphalia followed by Münster, where they were to be naturalised as German citizens on 6 August 1920. George found work as a cabinet maker at the Schlumbom Company, and the family moved to Stöckte, a small hamlet of Winsen an der Luhe in the district of Harburg, Lower Saxony. Their eldest daughter Gladys became a maid for a veterinarian, whilst her younger sister May worked for a well-known owner of a canning and jam manufacturer.

The move to Germany proved challenging for Martha as she struggled with the language. She developed anxiety and paranoia, running away from home several times. In April 1932 her daughters Gladys and May had her admitted to the institution in Lüneburg. A few months later she was due to be transferred to another institution further away, however her husband Georg refused to authorise the move as he and his daughters wanted to be able to visit.



Martha's daughters – Gladys, May, Dorothy and Violet (1990). Source: personal archive of Günter Ahlers. Photographer unknown.



The Büchel family's Naturalisation certificate (1920). Source: personal archive of Günter Ahlers.



Charles Büchel

Charles Büchel, brother-in-law of Martha (1937) Source: The Bystander, July 14, 1937.

In the first years of her stay in Lüneburg the family wrote letters to Martha, however, they couldn't visit her. Meanwhile Martha's condition continued to deteriorate and from 1937 onwards she was no longer able to participate in occupational therapy. Along with her diagnosis of schizophrenia, this was a significant factor in the decision to have her killed. Another reason was that the institution was required to make available 475 beds for patients who had to be transferred from another psychiatric institution in Hamburg due to the war. On 9 April Martha was deported to the intermediate institution Herborn. From there she was taken to Hadamar and killed on 12 May 1941.

After the end of the war, Georg Büchel worked as a translator for the British occupation forces. When the murders in Hadamar were made public through the work of US investigators, Martha's relatives began to have doubts about the circumstances surrounding her death. It took until 2023 to help Martha's family clarify her fate. We are grateful to the descendants of Martha, including her great grandson Günter Ahlers and his family, for the support they have given in enabling us to tell her story.

Cecile Bock

1878-1941

Born: 19 Nov 1878, London

Diagnosis: Schizophrenia

Died: 17 Mar 1941, Sonnenstein

Age at death: 62



Sonnenstein

Originally from Leytonstone in East London, Cecile Kate Bock (née Papier) was one of five children born to Kate (née Hamilton) from Limerick, Ireland and John Baptiste Charles Antoine Papier, a ventilation and sanitary engineer from Diekirch, Luxemburg. Cecile's paternal aunt was Cecile De Munkácsy, a famous socialite and wife of the renowned Hungarian painter, Mihály Munkácsy.

Cecile attended Ecclesbourne Road school in Islington; as a 'Board School', it was one of the first state-run providers of elementary education. In 1892 she participated in a charity evening to raise money for a new school piano; her role was that of the princess in a small operetta called 'The Fairy Chain'. The event was covered in the local newspaper and reveals the types of prejudices held about Board School children like Cecile.

"The ordinary person, thinking of an entertainment by Board school children, would imagine it to be a most hum-drum affair; and in these days of free education would not expect to see a crowd of well-dressed and well-behaved youngsters..."

Islington Gazette, 15 March 1892.

When Cecile was about 19 years old, her father died at the German Hospital in Hackney. Shortly after his death she left for Germany. What precipitated this move is unknown, however on 10 October 1900 she married Hans Wilhelm Bock (b. 1872, Dresden), a merchant working for Hoffmann and Magerhans, a company trading in lace and embroidery. The marriage took place in Cologne, however the couple chose to settle in the village of Fasendorf near Plauen, Saxony, a key centre for the German lace-making industry. In 1901 Cecile gave birth to a boy, Cecil. Three more children were to follow, Carl in 1902, Erika in 1903 and Edgar in 1906. Unfortunately, Erika was to die only a few months after her birth.

In 1905 Cecile started to show signs of mental imbalance. She was first treated for this in the famous Sanatorium "Weißer Hirsch" (White Deer) in Dresden, founded by Dr Heinrich Lahmann, a pioneer of naturopathy, however the prescribed regime

was unsuccessful. By 1917 her condition was considered severe enough to warrant institutional care and she was eventually diagnosed with schizophrenia.



Newspaper advert for the 'Weißer Hirsch' (White Deer; circa 1917).



Cecile and Mihály De Munkácsy. Date and photographer unknown.



Postcard showing the Untergöltzsch institution in the town of Rodewisch (circa 1900). Photographer: unknown.

In 1917 Cecile was admitted to a private institution in Blankenburg, a town in the district of Harz. She was discharged after many months, however her mental state continued to deteriorate. On 30 July 1920 she was admitted to the Untergöltzsch institution in the town of Rodewisch where she remained for some 16 years, working in the laundry. Communicating in a mixture of German, English and French she believed that she was a Countess and could heal people using hypnosis.

Between 1936 and 1941 Cecile was moved between different institutions in Saxony. She spent just over 4 years in Bezirksheim, Ölsnitz before being relocated in January 1941 to Zschdraß near Colditz. From there she was eventually transported to Sonnenstein and killed on 17 March 1941.

In a twist of fate Cecile's middle son, Carl was also subsequently diagnosed with schizophrenia. He was killed at Sonnenstein five weeks before his mother on 4 February 1941.

Elsie Panitza

1897-1940

Born: 28th Nov 1897, Brighton

Diagnosis: Schizophrenia

Died: 23 Nov 1940, Sonnenstein

Age at death: 42



Sonnenstein

Anna Elsie Panitza (née Schmidt), known as Elsie, was born in Brighton in 1897. She came from an unusual mix of working class and upper-class parentage. Her father, Leopold (Alphonse) Schmidt had been born in Leipzig, Germany in 1861, son of the owner of the Leipzig bank, Hammer and Schmidt.

Alphonse's older brother, Alexander Schmidt- Michelsen, was a famous German painter, whilst his younger sister, Annette Thekla Kees, was the mother of the renowned Egyptologist, Dr Hermann Kees. By contrast, Elsie's English mother, Louisa Marie (Marion) Dunk, born in Hartlepool in 1872, was a domestic servant and daughter of a fishmonger manager.

Alphonse was a commercial farmer who left Germany in 1884 to come to England. In 1891 he was living in the Bloomsbury area of London. However, by 1896 he had moved to Brighton and married Elsie's mother Marion in 1897. Their second daughter, Nancy, Elsie's sister, was born in 1904. Around 1908, Marion became mentally unwell. She was admitted to Brighton County Borough Asylum suffering from hallucinations and was to die there some 50 years later.

By 1911 Alphonse, Elsie and Nancy were living with a family friend, Dr Ernest Trouncer and his wife in Surbiton, Surrey. Between late 1914 and early 1915, tragedy struck again when Elsie started to also show signs of severe mental illness. At the time she was said to be suffering with "insanity of adolescence" which later changed to a diagnosis of schizophrenia. Between 1915 and 1920 there were to be repeated admissions into different institutions in the Surrey area including the Netherne and Brookwood asylums.

The First World War led to a short spell of internment as an alien for Alphonse and in 1919 he was repatriated to Germany. Elsie followed sometime after 1920, but her sister Nancy was to remain in England with the Trouncers whose surname she eventually adopted. After some years living on Anglesey, Wales, Nancy died in 1985 in Newton Abbott, Devon.

After their move to Germany, Elsie and Alphonse lived in the Rittergut (manor house) in Zöbiger, Markkleeberg, an imposing residence owned by the Kees family. There is little information about Elsie's life there, however, she is very briefly mentioned in the memoirs of her cousin, Dr Hermann Kees, in reference to a tennis match he played on the Gautzscher Platz where he recalls "strong support from our cousin Elise [Elsie] Schmidt".



Dr Georgi Stanev Panitza, believed to be Elsie's husband. Source: Museum of History of Medicine, Varna. Date unknown.



The Rittergut (Manor House) in Zöbiger, Markkleeberg (circa 1938), where Elsie lived. Photographer unknown.

Sometime during the 1920s or early 1930s Elsie married a Dr Panitza from Bulgaria. Whilst there is no record of the marriage, there is evidence that this was Dr Georgi Stanev Panitza born in the Bulgarian city of Varna in 1899. Married life is likely to have been overshadowed by Elsie's ongoing mental health problems and frequent admission to institutions in the Leipzig area. Between 1931 and 1939 there were six admissions to Leipzig-Dösen and in 1934 there is a report of her being sterilised in accordance with Nazi law.

Elsie's final admission to Leipzig-Dösen was on 3 July 1939. Prior to that she had been living on Dorfstrasse in Markkleeberg. On 3 October 1940 she was taken to the institution at Arnsdorf from where she was transferred to Sonnenstein and killed on 23 November 1940.

Aftermath



Brandenburg Memorial Centre

Aktion T4 was seen by the Nazi leadership as a highly effective system of mass killing. It would be replicated on a much larger scale in the Holocaust. In some cases, gas chambers at T4 killing centres were dismantled and shipped to Poland, to be rebuilt and used for the mass killing of Jews and others. T4 learning was also built into the methods of the Holocaust, such as deception to maintain a calm environment. Killing centres were moved to occupied countries outside the Reich to avoid public opposition. Some staff involved in Aktion T4 became leading figures in the implementation of the Holocaust.

After 1945, as the horrors of Nazi action against disabled people were uncovered, a small number of perpetrators were brought to justice and either hung or imprisoned. However, others were acquitted on the grounds they had followed orders; most were not prosecuted at all. Many continued to work in the post-Nazi state as nurses or doctors, some in leading positions.

While eugenic science became discredited in the United States and Europe because of the horrors it had spawned under Nazism, eugenic thinking did not go away, particularly in the medical profession, and has sometimes emerged in new guises. Somehow the idea that disabled people are not fully human has proved remarkably resilient in some circles.

Parallels still exist between eugenic science and contemporary societies' treatment of their most vulnerable members. There are some widely established and accepted medical practices that arguably have eugenic undertones, and these include pre-natal testing, the abortion of disabled foetuses and the denial of life-saving treatment based on type and level of disability. Ongoing developments in the field of genetics and genomics are also often based on the premise that disability of any kind is to be avoided and prevented at any cost.

We should all reflect on the historical shadows that inform these modern practices.

Lastly, what of those who died? The Nazis considered people with disabilities as worthless people, living useless lives. This exhibition has attempted to show the full and rich lives that each individual lived, amongst their families and communities, whatever the difficulties they faced. Many relatives, descendants of those who died, have enthusiastically helped us to treasure and tell the stories of their family members. The victims were not forgotten outcasts. They were people who are still loved, cherished and remembered.

It was their killers who lived worthless lives.



Irmgard Huber, the former chief nurse at the Hadamar Institute, confers with counsel during a session of the Hadamar euthanasia facility trial in Wiesbaden, Germany (1945). Source: United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of National Archives and Records Administration, College Park.



Martha Caselton's grandson Günter Ahler in 1952. Source: Personal archives of Günter Ahlers. Photographer unknown.



Martha's Grandson, Günter Ahlers and his wife (2023). Source: archive of 'Euthanasia' - Memorial Museum of Lüneburg. Photographer: Dr. Carola Rudnick.



What does the future hold?
Photographer: Fiona Yaron Field, Wellcome Collection