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Southend & Westcliff

Hebrew Congregation

CHANUKAH 5779

## Mezzuzah protects Groschlerhaus,

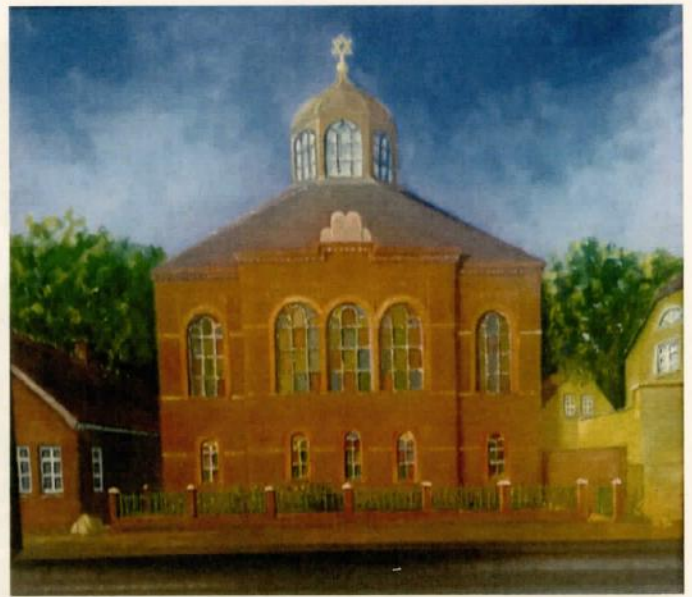
This was one of the headlines we saw in the local newspapers in Jever Germany, back in April of this year. The headline refers to the visit that I undertook together with my family and my sister Lori and her family. We all travelled together to the small town in Northern Germany once again, for a very special occasion.

Jever is the home town of our father Frank Gale "obm", (Fritz Groschler ) who fled from there back in December 1938, shortly after the Kristallnacht, and came to England on the Kindertransport together with his brother.

My father grew up in the small, sleepy, town, together with his brother and parents, next door lived his uncle and aunt and his three cousins and around the corner lived his grandparents, about sixty Jews lived in Jever at the time and from all accounts they were a thriving community albeit small.

My grandfather Julius Groschler was warden of the synagogue, a business man and a prominent member of the Jewish community in Jever. He and his brother Herman were the last two Jewish leaders of that community. This story unlike so many others that tells only of the terrible atrocities the German Nazi's inflicted on the Jewish people, also tells the story of a group of people who have really tried to make a difference. This was my third visit to Jever, the first time I went was in 1984 together with my parents and sister. This trip came about because a group of students and their history teacher Hartmut Peters in 1979, wanted to find out what had happened to the Jews of Jever.

On the night of the Krisallnacht, my grandfather was called to the burning synagogue, where he was then arrested. After a couple of weeks he was released and sent back to the town under orders to make the town 'Juden Frei' and indeed Jever was the first place in Germany to be rid of all its Jews. My grandfather put my father and his brother on a train to Hamburg where they took another



train and eventually came over to England on the Kindertransport. My grandparents then stayed in Jever helping others to find a route out. Some went to Israel some to Holland the UK and some to the USA, not everyone escaped, and those that didn't including my grandparents were rearrested and taken to the camps. Herman died in Bergan-Belsen, and my Grandparents were in Theresienstadt until early 1945, when they made their final journey to Auschwitz.

The group of students and their teacher Hartmut, tracked down all the surviving Jews, they held many fundraisers and asked lots of questions, by now a committee had been formed, called the 'working group' and was headed by Harmut and Volker. In April 1984 they invited the Jewish families who had survived back to Jever for a reunion, we all had the most incredible week, this has been well documented on the Groschlerhaus website, [www.groschlerhaus.eu](http://www.groschlerhaus.eu). For me one of the highlights was walking around the tiny cobbled streets with my Father, seeing him so animated as he showed me where he had lived, where he went to school and where he had played, he was only 12 years of age when he left Germany. Another highlight was to have tea in the Schloss (the castle) with the Mayor, this was so special for my Father who had never been inside the Schloss before, but as a child had played in its grounds. We were all made very welcome and for the survivors many old friendships were rekindled.

Over the next 30 years life moved on for everyone, one of the students, now in her twenties made Aliyah and took tours around Yad Vashem, and we kept in contact with Hartmut on occasions. During this time unfortunately for my sister and I both our parents had passed away. Then in 2013, we had a letter from Hartmut telling us that the house which had been built on the site of the synagogue in 1954 had become available to rent. Still in contact with his old committee, it was

### e einer zerstörten Synagoge

ausstellung mit Schautafeln, Videostation und Artefakten im Gröschler-Haus



indig (hinten, l.) und Hartmut Peters (hinten, 2. v. r.) mit Nachfahren der Familie Gröschler.

BECKER-HEMPFRED ONLINE

their intention to build a museum on the ground floor of the house and they wanted to name it the GroschlerHaus after my father's family. So in 2014 my sister and her family, myself and my family and other children, grandchildren and great grandchildren a number of around 30 people, all descendants from the Groschler Family, from the UK, Holland, Australia, Canada, and the USA, travelled to Jever for the naming of the Groschlerhaus. Once again we were all made to feel very welcome, dinners and receptions were put on, walks around Jever, slide shows and so much information was shared, our visit ended with us all gathering outside the Groschlerhaus, together with the local press for the naming ceremony.

Since 2014 the working committee have gone from strength to strength, the Groschlerhaus has been used to help educate all the children not only in Jever but in the whole area of Friesland, it is on the map for tourists and is often used as a base to hold many meetings of various kinds. The Groschlerhaus was boosted with an EU lottery fund, and in January of this year both Hartmut and Volker went to Berlin where they won and were presented with the Oermayer Award.

With the lottery funding they were able to now purchase the whole house where the Groschlerhaus Museum resides, and work was started to renovate the building both inside and out. During this time discoveries were made of the old synagogue underneath and excavations were carried out. They uncovered the Mikvah, and placed a glass floor in the museum to show their wonderful discovery as well as other items of interest all now on show in the newly renovated Groschlerhaus, including a layout and map of what the Synagogue originally would have been like.

Following this we were all invited once again to the official opening, so in April of this year as I said my sister and her family together with mine made the trip back to Jever.

The opening ceremony started in the town hall. The room was filled to capacity, with standing room only around the edges. Many dignitaries were present, the Mayor, local government representatives, the leader of the Schloss, as well as the press and media. There were speeches musical interludes, presentations and a short speech from me. I spoke of my previous trips to Jever and what the Groschlerhaus meant to us as a family and how proud my Father would have been to see his family name back in Jever. We then all left the Town hall and walked the short distance to the Groschkerhaus itself. A reception was laid on for all the guests but before that, there was one more formality. Lori and I had taken with us our parents Mezzuzah which had been on the front door of their home here in Chalkwell, and our boys then fixed the Mezzuzah

by the front door of the Groschlerhaus. This was a very special, emotional, heart-warming and poignant moment. 80 years after the synagogue was burnt to the ground on the Krisallnacht in November 1938, the great grandsons of Julius Groschler, fixed the mezuzah which had belonged to his son (my Father) on the building' The Groschlerhaus' which stands on the site of that Synagogue. Hard to believe this could happen but all thanks go to Harmut Peters and Volker Landig together with their wonderful team of people.

*Joanne Marcon*

## **Kosher London Beth Din Road Show Food Fayre (UK)**

Organised by Board members Aron Engel (whose idea it was) and Marilyn Salt, over 100 people including Chassidim and Reform residents and children visited this KLBD Road Show Food Fayre in the Synagogue Hall, Finchley Road.



They sampled over 200 of the latest certified products brought here by Sharon Feldman from the KLBD (most products where you would assume they are not kosher because they do not have a 'Hechsher') now available in supermarkets and health food shops, including snacks for home and ingredients for family meals.

Getting to know about the processes and free tastings were included and people were invited to join their Facebook group - KLBD Kosher Direct.

There was a raffle which was won by Guy Bebb.

*Geoffrey Pepper*



**Car Parking**  
When parking  
in  
Finchley Road

and the surrounding area, kindly be aware of people's driveways and park considerately.