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Uhřiněves 1670– 12 September 1942

יזכור
In memory



Introduction

The Czech scroll at Finchley Reform Synagogue is one of 1,564 scrolls that were brought to London by Westminster Synagogue from Prague, following negotiations in 1963 with the Artia State Corporation. These Torah scrolls were a part of the huge collection of Jewish ritual objects sent to the Jewish Museum in Prague from the deserted synagogues across Bohemia and Moravia. The Nazis had approved a proposal from leading Jews to bring these treasures to Prague for safekeeping. Whether the Nazis planned a “museum of an extinct race” is conjecture since there is no evidence to support the idea. The scrolls arrived in London in February 1964, and were returned to Jewish life by being distributed on long-term loan to synagogues across the world by the Memorial Scrolls Trust.

Our scroll, number 286 is estimated to be over 200 years old and came originally from Uhříněves (oor-zhee-neves), a small farming town 15 miles south-east of Prague.

The earliest written records of a Jewish community in Uhříněves date from 1670. The so-called “Familiant Register” of the Uhříněves estate mentions 16 permitted Jewish families between mid-1700 and mid-1800. The “Familiant Law” of 1727 stipulated the maximum number of Jewish families permitted to reside in the Czech Kingdom: Bohemia 8,541 and Moravia 5,106. While the census of 1880 records there were 47 Jews (2.9 per cent of the town population)

the religious congregation incorporated over 30 neighbouring villages and hamlets. A history of the Jews of Uhříněves by a Czech Jewish historian, Blanka Rozkosna suggests a very active Jewish communal life from the mid-18th century.

The Nazis drew up a list of 392 Jews living in Uhříněves and nearby villages. On Rosh Hashanah, 1 Tishrei 5703 (12 September 1942), 210 Jews, including 36 from Uhříněves, were sent by train from Prague on transport “Bg” to the Terezin ghetto. From there, over the following months they were sent to Auschwitz, Treblinka or other death camps. Of the original 392, there were only 14 survivors. After the war, the synagogue building became municipal property and in 1995 it was restored to the Prague Jewish community. It is no longer used as a synagogue.

Our scroll is a memorial to the Jewish inhabitants of the town as well as being an authentic and potent reminder of the holocaust for the FRS community. It is also a symbol of hope and reconciliation. Members of FRS have developed close ties with the town of Uhříněves. Through co-operative efforts a memorial plaque was erected on the exterior of the former synagogue building in October 2000 and a leaflet describing the Jewish heritage of the town was published in 2004. Without the tireless dedication of Libuse Votavova, a retired teacher from Uhříněves, none of this would have been possible.



1

1 Uhříněves Synagogue exterior

Until 1847, the local Jewish population worshipped in a family home. Public collections were organised and in 1848 the synagogue was erected in neo-classical style. Religious services took place here until the Nazi occupation in 1939. From the late 19th century to the 1920s, the community employed a rabbi.

From 1949, the synagogue building was used as a laundry and in 1999 it was converted to a double-glazing showroom. The ownership was

restored to the Prague Jewish community in the 1990s.

2 Uhříněves Town Centre

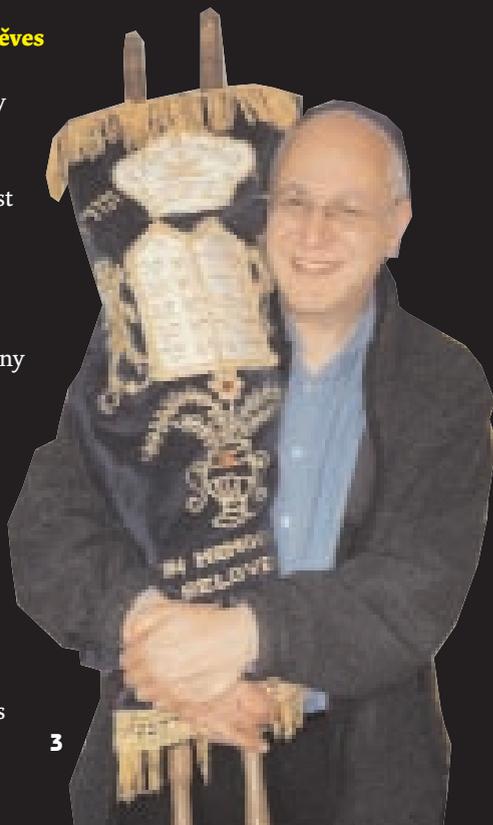
Uhříněves is a small town approximately 15 miles south-east of Prague. Jews have lived in the area of the town since the 16th century. The census of 1890 shows that there were 43 Jewish residents, 2.9 per cent of the population of the town. The familial laws of 1727 set limits on the numbers of Jewish families who were allowed to live in an area.



2

3 Scroll number 286 from Uhříněves

In the late 1960s, when Finchley Reform Synagogue was a relatively new congregation, Rabbi Henry Goldstein, the principal rabbi, wrote to the Memorial Scrolls Trust requesting a memorial scroll. The community received a scroll, number 286, from Uhříněves. The scroll was in good condition and served the community well for many years. When the community grew and newer scrolls were acquired, the Czech scroll was retired to the cupboard below the ark. There it remained for the next 30 years until a dedicated display cabinet was installed in 2006. The scroll was used occasionally for the High Holy Days but is now considered *pasul* (not strictly kosher) because some of the letters have become indistinct and



3

is not used on a regular basis.

However, since 1999, most years, it is read from on a Shabbat close to 12th September (the date of the deportation in 1942) in memory of those who perished. The scroll is approximately 200 years old and was probably written in Germany. It is distinguished in having unusually wide columns. Photographed holding the scroll is Jeffrey Newman, Emeritus Rabbi of FRS.

4 Uhříněves Synagogue interior

The synagogue had 48 seats for men downstairs and 27 seats for women in a gallery upstairs. Until 1818 the ownership rights of the seats were recorded in a book. It is recorded “Jakub Beykovsky bought in the year 1863 the men’s seats numbers 2-9 and the women’s seat number 3 for 94 Gulden 10 Kronen and ensured them with a contribution of 3 Gulden a year”.



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5 Uhříněves Synagogue – Bimah and Ark

The wooden synagogue ark was designed in the classical style. Formerly it contained seven torah scrolls. The other six scrolls from the Uhříněves synagogue are on permanent loan to the Beth El Synagogue, Fort Worth, Texas; Bushey and District Synagogue; Beth Emeth Congregation, Sun City West, Arizona; B'nai B'rith Klutznik Exhibition Hall, Washington DC; Century Pine Jewish Centre, Pembroke Pines, Florida; and Temple Sinai, Atlanta, Georgia.

6 Uhříněves Synagogue Torah mantle from the Jewish Museum of Prague

The Jewish Museum in Prague has about 40 synagogue items from Uhříněves. All are textile items apart from two pointers and two shofars. The oldest item is a torah mantle from 1798.

7 Important figures of the Uhříněves Jewish Community I

Rabbi Daniel Kohn. He died in 1892 after 30 years of service. Josef Beykovsky, the first chairman of the community 1893-

1901. Wilhelm (Vilem) Beykovsky, treasurer 1901-1919. Wilhelm was a farmer and owned an estate in Pitcovice a nearby hamlet. Josef Rezek, chairman 1912-1919. He owned a general store and a bar.

8 Important figures of the Uhříněves Jewish Community II

Karel Beck, deputy president of the Benevolent Society. Adolf Freund, council member 1903-1909 and president of the Benevolent Society. Heinrich (Herm) Polacek, synagogue council member. He owned a textile store. Oskar Rezek, chairman 1919-1930. He was the local butcher.

Oskar was married to Olga and had three daughters. Libuse Votavova remembers that Olga and her daughter Helena taught her in primary school but Jews were then banned from teaching in 1940, and they were obliged to wear the yellow star in September 1941. They were sent to Terezin and later to Auschwitz. Mrs Votavova recounts that according to their aunt they had sent a letter saying, "Tomorrow we are going to the gas chambers, we are not afraid and we will sing the national anthem"

9 Uhříněves Cemetery 1910

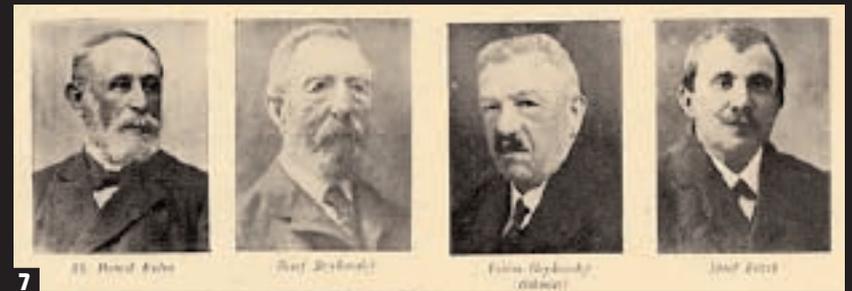
It is likely that the cemetery was established some time in the late 17th century. It contains some 300 headstones. The oldest headstones are from the early 18th century. A number of beautiful 18th century Baroque gravestones remain such as that of David Jehuda with an engraving of a lion dated 1747. The last burials, including Vilem Beykovsky, took place in 1942 but no stones were erected. The cemetery served the surrounding area which includes some 20 villages.

10 Uhříněves Cemetery

This extraordinary photograph taken in the 1960s shows a headstone that has been partially engulfed by a tree. Today the headstone has almost completely disappeared from view.



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11

(Previous pages) Libuse and Hana

The original photos were given to FRS by Libuse Votavova.

11 Hana's school photo

Hana Polackova is in the second row, sixth from the right. Jirina Mullerova, another girl with Jewish ancestry is in the back row, third from left. Jirina wrote in Hana's autograph book on 22 September 1940: "Spread love around and goodness where others have forgotten them". Hana was transported to Terezin on transport "Bg" on 14 September 1942 and died in Maly Trostinec, a death camp in Poland, on 22 September 1942.



12

12 Poster for Hans Krasa's operetta Brundibar

The Terezin concentration camp was used by the Nazis for propaganda purposes to demonstrate to the world media that Jews were being resettled in Jewish towns. To bolster this illusion, Jews were given limited freedom to engage in cultural activities such as concerts and lectures. Between 1942 and 1945, despite the appalling conditions, there was an astonishing amount of artistic and musical creativity much of which has survived. *Brundibar* was by far the most successful musical entertainment produced in the ghetto. Hana Polackova remembers with nostalgia playing the part of a cat in the show.



14



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13 A transport of Czech Jews to Terezin (Theresienstadt)

The photo shows families walking the last part of the journey from the station in the village of Bohusovice to Terezin. Jews from Uhříněves left for Terezin from a gathering point in Prague; most of them went to Terezin on 12 September 1942 on transport "Bg". The date coincided with the first day of Rosh Hashanah. From Terezin, the old and the weak were immediately transported east to death camps in Poland.

14 Hana Polackova and her mother 1934

Having annexed the Sudetenland in October 1938, the Nazis invaded the rest

of Czechoslovakia in March 1939 and immediately imposed harsh racial laws on the Jewish population. For example, Hana was not allowed to go to school or ride a bike. On 12 September 1942, at the aged of 12, Hana was transported by the Nazis to the Terezin ghetto, a concentration camp approximately 80 miles north of Prague, leaving behind her parents in Uhříněves. Hana survived for three years in Terezin. During those dark days one of the few pleasures that Hana experienced was performing in Hans Krasa's operetta for children, *Brundibar*. Finally, in September 1945, Terezin was liberated and Hana set out, barefoot, on the long journey home to Uhříněves.



15



16

In an interview in 2003, Hana recalled the following:

“In Terezín there was an epidemic of dysentery. 200 people died every day. I became seriously ill. A family friend took care of me before she had to go on a transport to Poland. Before that she managed to find me a place in the so-called Kinderheim L 410 where we were 35 to 37 kids in a place. She even found me a ‘guardian’. It was I. Krausová who took care of us until she went to Poland also.

I had typhus, a chronic lung inflammation, later a spot on the lungs, rheumatoid arthritis and encephalitis. Thanks to the Jewish doctors that worked under such difficult conditions and made great sacrifices I survived all those hardships and sufferings. I shall never forget what they did for me. In the end they too had to go on a transport to Poland.”

15 Libena Fleischer (from Hana Polackova’s autograph book)

“Life is not a fairy tale, life is not a dream, it is will that wins in life, work and strength” written on 4 January 1942. Helena was born in 1920. She was transported to Terezin on 12 September 1942; her final fate in unknown. Libena was offered the chance to escape to France but she refused it as she did not want to leave her parents.

16 Libuse and Hana

One of Hana Krasa’s closest friends when she was growing up in Uhříněves was Libuse Votavova. The youngest child is Libuse’s sister.

17 Postcard from Terezin

A postcard written by Hana Polackova in Terezin to her parents in Uhříněves. Hana had been in Terezin since September 1942.

18 Postcard from Hana Polackova, reverse side

Hana reassures her parents that she is in good health. The postcard seems to overly stress this. From what we know of Nazi propaganda methods, it is likely that Hana was told what to write. The translation of the text from the original German:

Dear Parents, I am now with Uncle Ulli who spoke to my doctor today. The doctor is a friend of the uncle. From what the doctor says I am quite healthy and I feel very well, so there is no need for you to worry. Ulli and Lilka have received the parcels. I think of you a lot and I am very well and looking well too. I am looking forward to hearing good news from you. Love and kisses from your Hanka

19 Fricek (Fritz) Neugeborn c.1935

Fricek was a friend of Hana Polackova. He lived in Letna Street, Mal Sternberska.

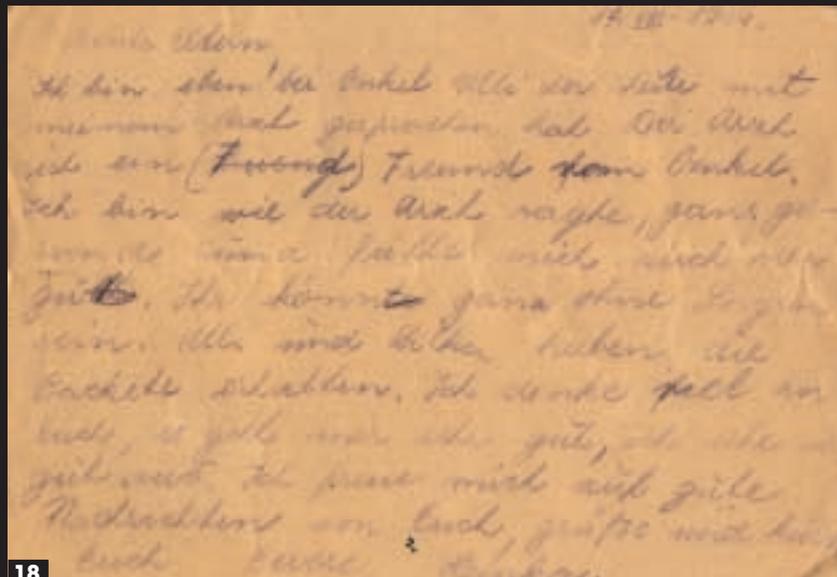
He escaped from a transport with Hana’s help. He went into hiding from the Gestapo in Prague. Later he escaped to Ostrava and was hunted by the Gestapo. In 1945, when half of Ostrava was already liberated, he was challenged for not having his ID and was shot and killed.

20 Hana Polackova in her room in the Charles Jordan Home 2002

When Libuse Votavova made enquiries to locate her old childhood friend, Hana, she discovered that she was living in very poor circumstances. Libuse contacted the Jewish community on her behalf and after campaigning, Hana was eventually offered an apartment in the Charles Jordan Jewish home in Prague.



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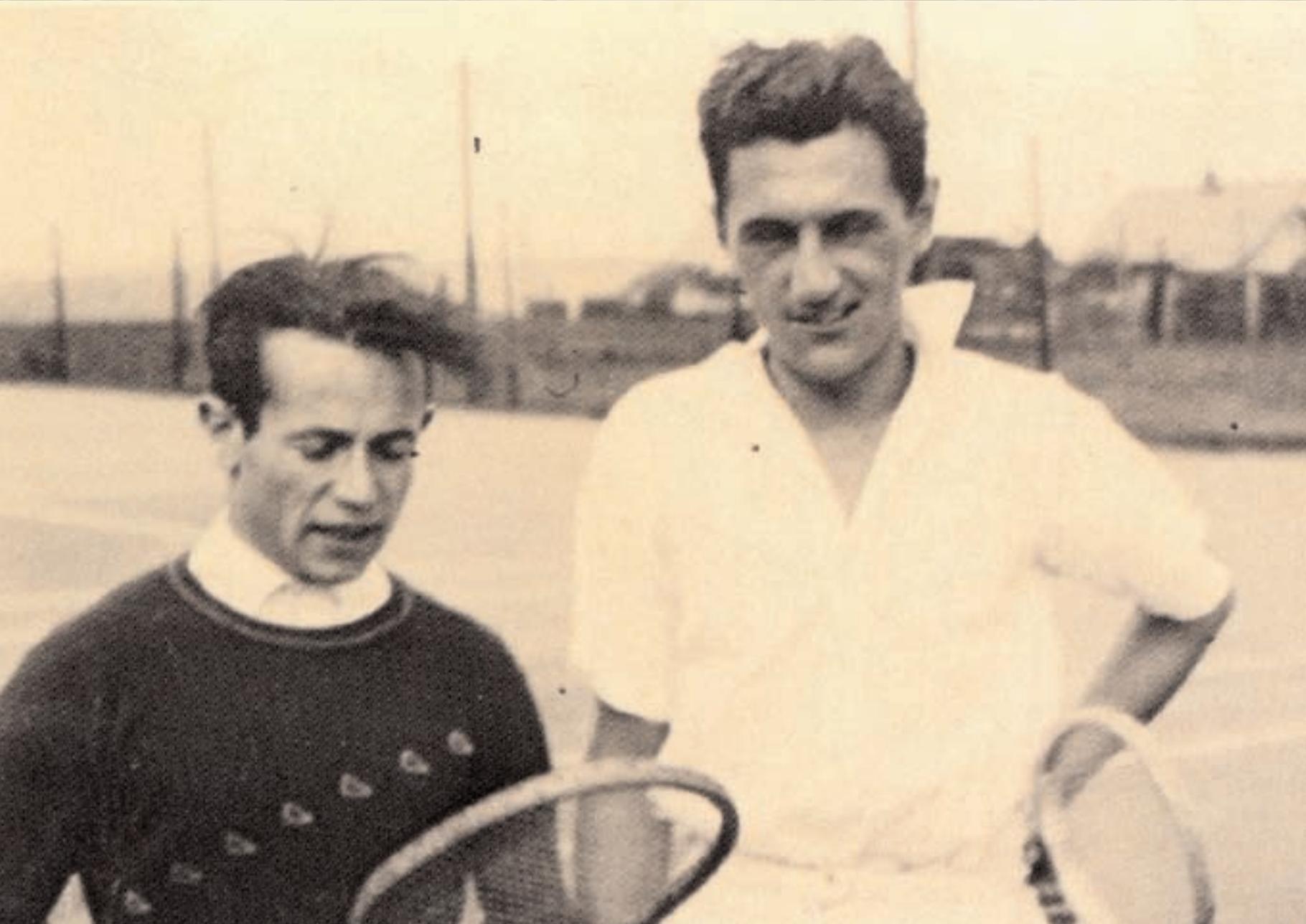
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Eva, Anna and Lily Dub (l to r)

Josef Rezek's daughter Irma married Robert Dub and had three daughters. Eva was born in 1925 and survived the war after being in a number of concentration camps. She was found by a deserting Jewish Russian soldier. They got married and moved to Israel. Anna and Lily were killed by the Nazis.

(Previous pages bottom)

Alfred Kolben 1930

Alfred Kolben (left) with Berna't (?) after a tennis match at the Uhříněves Lawn Tennis Club. Berna't narrowly won 2:6, 6:3, 8:6. Alfred was executed in Maly Trostinec camp on 22 September 1942.



21

21 The family of Milos Jedlinsky 1936

Back row (l to r): Arnost Lustig, uncle; Jaroslava, cousin; Josef Jedlinsky, father and Jarmila Jedlinska, mother.

Front row (l to r): Anna Lustigova (nee Pickova); Barbora Pickova, grandma; Leopold Pick, grandfather and Milos Jedlinsky, grandson. Milos survived but his parents Jarmilla and Josef died in Auschwitz on 18 May 1944.



22

22 Jirina and Arnos Kraus 1939

Arnos Krauss and Jirina Wantochova on their wedding day. Jirina was born on 8 September 1911 in Uhříněves where her family owned a distillery. They were transported from Prague to Terezin on 17 May 1942 and immediately from there to Majdanek in Poland where they were killed. Frantisek Krauss, Arnos Krauss' son by his first marriage, survived and was present at the plaque unveiling in October 2000.



23

23 Rudolph and Paula Fischerova

24 Luise and Victor Beykovsky 1915

This photograph was sent as a postcard with the following inscription "Dear Grandfather (Josef Beykovsky) I send you this postcard of my mother taken here at the summer house. I am quite satisfied here in Pitkovice. Loving greetings to you and Uncle. From your grandson Victor 27/7/1915".

Louise was a fine cook and her recipes have been handed down through the family until today.

25 The Beykovsky farm in Pitkovice

The Beykovsky family were wealthy landowners and Julius Beykovsky lived like a country squire. His wealth and position had no influence and Julius perished in Auschwitz in 1942.

27 Marianne Lowe 1952

Czech scroll projects reveal strange coincidences. One of the most

astonishing coincidences concerned Marianne Lowe. David Rose used the Jewish genealogical website to locate descendants of Uhříněves families. He was contacted by Peter Lowe in Hertford who said he was distantly related to the Beykovsky family of Uhříněves. David Rose says:

"Explained to Peter about the scroll and he asked me where the synagogue was located and I said Finchley. Much to my surprise he told me that his mother Marianne Lowe lived in Etchingham Park Road (a nearby road). He then asked me in which street the synagogue was located and when I told him Fallow Court Avenue he gasped and told me his sister lived in the same road. It transpired that Dorrit and her husband Eric lived in the house directly opposite the synagogue. Marianne became a regular visitor to our community until her death in 2003".



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(Following pages top) Ludwig and Anna Dux and family 1914

Ludwig and Anna Dux are shown with their daughters Ruzena and Marta in front of their textile and shoe shop opposite the synagogue. The family were transported to Terezin on transport "Bg" on 12 September 1942. Ludwig was sent to Auschwitz where he was killed but Anna and her daughters survived.



(Previous pages bottom)

The Wantoch Family

The Wantoch family were renowned wine merchants in Uhříněves. They produced a celebrated cherry brandy. Jiri and Karel Wantoch left before the war and joined the RAF and fought in North Africa.

29 Rezek Family 1908

Back row (l to r): Kamilla, Marie, Irma, Berta, Elsa. Second row: Anna and Joseph Rezek. Front: Victor and Frederick Rezek. Frederick emigrated to Toronto in the 1920s. He married and had a son, Joseph and a daughter, Ann. Joseph married Avery Denfield from London and they

made their home in Israel in 1973. Joe and Avery have visited FRS and have contributed several photographs to this booklet.

Marie and her family managed to get the last train out of Vienna in 1939 en route to Toronto. The train passed through Prague and while the train stopped for a short time their relatives in Prague managed to smuggle a good luck message to them.

Elsa married a distant cousin, Ernst Boehm, a cellist in the Huberman orchestra in Palestine. Four days after the wedding Elsa died of a brain haemorrhage.

30 Berta Rezekova

Berta Rezekova was born in Uhříněves on 26 March 1894, the third of eight children of Joseph and Anna Rezek. She was a spinster and was affectionately known as Bronco. Her niece Eva described her as “a wonderful intelligent woman, highly educated. She was manageress of the Koinor business. She spoke five languages. We used to make fun of her that she never married”. Her niece Eva Dub recounts, “One particular guy she rejected because his tie was blue and his socks were yellow”. She died in Prague in 1961.



28
28 Marta, Ruzena, Villem and Anne Duxova 1917



29

31 Marta Duxova

Marta Duxova was Ludwig Dux's daughter and was born on 23 November 1911. She was sent to Terezin on 8 September 1942 and returned to Uhříněves on 5 May 1945. She died on 15 December 1992.

32 Ruzena Duxova

Ruzena Duxova was born on 6 April 1908. She joined her sister Marta in Terezin in February 1945 and was liberated in May 1945.



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(Previous pages) Bernard Dux 1926

Bernard Dux was the father of Ludwig and great-grandfather of Hana Kubova Duxova who still lives in the Uhříněves area. Hana visited FRS in 2000.



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33 First Scroll Service 18 Sept 1999

The FRS Czech Scroll project was launched in 1999 and one of its primary objectives was to establish an annual memorial service to honour the Jews of Uhříněves who perished in concentration camps. The inaugural service was especially memorable as 12 other “Czech scroll communities” in the area brought their Czech sifrei torah to the service.

“The atmosphere in the synagogue was solemn, warm and very moving. As the 13 scrolls were carried around in procession many could be seen reaching for their handkerchiefs. The Czech Ambassador, His Excellency Pavel Seifter was overcome by emotion as he addressed the congregation after the service. Mr Seifter's father was Jewish

and he was smuggled out of Czechoslovakia as a small child before the Second World War” *Ruth Young*.

34 Diane Langleben cleaning a headstone in the Uhrineves Cemetery

During the October 2000 trip FRS members rolled up their sleeves and helped tidy up the Uhříněves cemetery.

35 FRS Trip 20-25 Oct 2000

A group of FRS members visited the Czech Republic, at the invitation of the Uhříněves town council, to attend the unveiling of a memorial plaque on the exterior of the former synagogue building. The erection of the plaque was the result of a close collaboration of FRS members and citizens of Uhříněves.

36 Frantisek Fendrych, chairman of the ZLU in Prague

FRS has been supporting the Jewish Liberal Union (ZLU), a progressive Jewish community based in Prague, since its inception in 2000. Benjamin Kuras, a founder member of the ZLU, is a member of FRS.

37 Choir trip, October 2004

The FRS choir undertook a tour of the Czech Republic and gave concerts in Brno, Olomouc, Decin and Prague. This photograph was taken outside the synagogue in Uhříněves.

38 David Rose, Neil Pike, Micha Myers Belkin and Neil Pike's children, September 2003

The FRS Czech scroll group was inspired by the example set by Neil Pike of Nottingham. His community's involvement with their "Czech scroll town", Slavkov (Austerlitz), led to the old synagogue being rebuilt. They discovered a survivor living in the town who had not encountered another Jew since the war. With their encouragement she became a teacher of Jewish history to local schoolchildren.



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39 Karolina Pirklova, Czech Ambassador, H.E. Stefan Fule and Libuse Votavova

The photograph was taken after the Czech scroll service held on 14 September 2003. This was Ambassador Fule's first official duty upon taking up office. Karolina Pirklova was attending in her capacity as Deputy Mayor of Uhříněves.



39

(Following pages) Unveiling of a memorial plaque, October 2000

A memorial plaque on the outside of the former synagogue building was unveiled by Terezin survivors Emma Krausova-Svabova and Hana Fuchsova on 18 October 2000. Hana is the granddaughter of Vilem Beykovsky (see caption 7).

Uhříněves

1670– 12 September 1942

1670

Earliest written record of a Jewish Community in Uhříněves.

1702

The register of salt consumers in Bohemia records that the estate of Uhříněves and the town of Říčany had 14 Jews older than 10 years of age residing there (Christians older than 10 years numbered 2,341).

1718

Oldest existing gravestone in the cemetery – Gumpl, son of Fejbl.

1724

First wooden prayer hall erected.

1727

The so-called “Familiant Register” of the Uhříněves Estate mentions 16 permitted Jewish families between mid-1700 and mid-1800. (The “Familiant Law” of 1727 stipulated the maximum number of Jewish families permitted to reside within the Czech Kingdom – Bohemia 8,541, Moravia 5,106.)

1780

Prayer hall (ohel) constructed at cemetery.

1810

Prayer hall built in a private house.

1848

Synagogue building completed in late classical style.

1880

According to the census there were 47 Jews (2.9% of all residents).

1892

Daniel Kohn, the first rabbi of the community died.

1892

Josef Beykovsky became chairman of the community.

1912

Josef Rezek appointed chairman of the community, Adolph Urbach appointed rabbi.

1924

The town chronicle recorded all businessmen and tradesmen, which included the following Jews: ● Bedřich Adler ran a general store and textile store (135 Pražská Street). ● Josef Rezek owned a general store and a bar (241 Zámecká Street). ● Ludvík Dux had a textile and shoe store (71 Pražská Street). ● Jindřich Poláček had a textile store (13 Pitkovická). ● Viktor Kraus a textile and shoe store (158 Pražská Street). ● Oskar Kraus was the local butcher and charcutier (328 Benická). ● Wantoch brothers made liqueurs (11 Pražská Street). ● MVDr. Leo Roubíček was the local vet (136 Žižkova).

1930

According to the census there were 55 Jews (1.23% of all residents).

1939

On March 16, Hitler invaded Czechoslovakia and from Prague Castle proclaimed Bohemia and Moravia a German protectorate.

1940

Jewish children were not allowed in school and the synagogue was closed down.

1941

From 1 September all Jews had to wear the yellow Star of David.

1942

12 September (1st Day of Rosh Hashanah) the remaining 36 Jews of Uhříněves were deported on transport “Bg” from Prague to Terezin.

1945

It is recorded in the Terezin Memorial Book that five Jews from Uhříněves survived.

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Visitors to The Czech Memorial Scroll Centre will find an exhibition illustrating the story of the scrolls. The exhibition is open on Tuesdays and Thursdays, 10am to 4pm. There is no entrance fee, but the Trust depends on donations. Leaflets are available, and books and postcards are for sale.

Kent House is at the corner of Rutland Gardens and Knightsbridge, opposite Knightsbridge Barracks. The nearest tube station is Knightsbridge on the Piccadilly line. Buses 9, 10 and 52 pass the door.

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Other Useful Web Links
www.czechtorah.org
www.jewishmuseum.cz
www.pamatnik-terezin.cz
www.praha-uhrineves.cz

Booklet designed by
Matt Brown, Designbranch
www.designbranch.co.uk

Printed by
Potts Printers