



# Stolpersteine Malsch

First placement - 19<sup>th</sup> February 2018

HIER WOHNTE  
ROLF HESS  
JG. 1934  
DEPORTIERT 1940  
GURS  
KINDERHEIM ASPET  
MIT FLUCHTHILFE 1942  
USA

HIER WOHNTE  
RUTH HAMBURGER  
JG. 1930  
DEPORTIERT 1940  
GURS  
KINDERHEIME ASPET  
UND MOISSAC  
VERSTECKT IN FAMILIEN  
ÜBERLEBT



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## Foreword from the Mayor

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On February 19<sup>th</sup> 2018, the artist Gunter Demnig will place Stolpersteine in our village for the first time. The eight stones commemorate former Jewish fellow citizens who, during one of the darkest periods of German history were subjected to great injustice and suffering, which resulted in six of their deaths.

The atrocities committed under the Nazi regime still pose haunting questions today:

*How did it all happen?*

*How would I have acted at the time?*

*What must we do, both individually and as a community, to ensure that such crimes are never repeated?*

For me, an answer to the question ‘*What must we do?*’ is this:

We must remember those Jewish fellow citizens who suffered pain and injustice - in the words of Gunter Demnig, we must ‘put a face to them’. That is what our community, like many others throughout Europe, is doing openly by placing Stolpersteine in public spaces.

Remembrance also helps us to visualize the past. Among other things, this can result in better recognition of the causes and signs of antisemitism, intolerance and violence, which in turn leads us to reflect upon our own and collective values. This, for me, leads directly to advocating mutual respect, tolerance and nonviolence.

Our country has faced up to its past in a lengthy and painful process. It has re-established its democratic traditions and earned new trust in the international community. If we are to avoid a recurrence of the injustice which the Stolpersteine commemorate, each of us must play a part - maybe with the help of particularly dedicated citizens. I am pleased that Malsch has such citizens, including those who are members of the Stolperstein Initiative.

We cannot undo the past about which the placing of the Stolpersteine reminds us. But what we can do is this: make sure that today, we live in a community in which every individual enjoys respect, freedom and security and where citizens’ rights and dignity are protected, irrespective of (amongst other things) religious or political beliefs, appearance or ethnic origin.



Sibylle Würfel

*Sibylle Würfel, Mayor  
Translated by Peter Silver*



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## Message from Ruth Hamburger Luftman

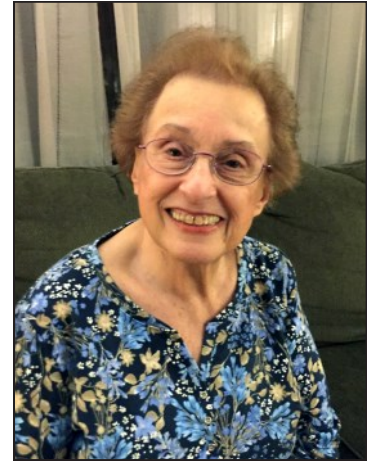
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I am profoundly grateful to the people of Malsch for commemorating my parents Heinrich and Flora Hamburger and my grandparents Isaak and Justine Hilb by laying Stolpersteine at the site of our home. Very few of you were alive in 1940 when we were expelled; probably none of those who were alive then were old enough to bear any kind of personal responsibility for those actions. For any of today's German citizens, it cannot be easy to be reminded of such events or of the even more horrible things that followed. It certainly has never been easy for me to reflect on them, and I have always tried to look forward rather than to dwell in the past.

But it is essential that we all remember and teach future generations of our shared history. That you freely choose to remind yourselves of these things, and to include survivors like me in your commemoration, is truly remarkable. So as I relive my family's experience of the Holocaust through this message, I do so not to lay a burden of guilt on you personally for the crimes committed against my family, but to assist you in your efforts to remember them.

It has been 77 years since my family was driven from our home. Along with virtually all the Jews of the region, we were stripped of our citizenship and property and expelled without warning, deported to the distant Camp de Gurs in France. I was ten years old. I understood little of what was happening, only that we had a few short hours to pack our suitcases for a long, cold journey in October as winter approached. My mother asked why I didn't pack my favorite doll, which had been a gift from Rösel Hess. I said that we needed the space in the luggage for extra clothes and other essential things. It was the end of my childhood.

The deportation was the culmination of several years of Nazi policies to destroy our rights, our freedom and our livelihood. My family had served the community of Malsch and we had served Germany, but by October 1940 we had been reduced to poverty and to the status of enemy aliens. Looking back at that day, I can imagine that some of the people of Malsch were horrified by what was being done to us. I know that some of our Christian neighbors had quietly continued to treat us decently, as human beings and friends. But I know also that there were many others who were not kindly disposed, who believed the lies, who believed that we were Germany's misfortune, who were glad to see us go. Whether sympathetic or not, no one in the town would have dared to speak out against our expulsion.



Ruth Luftman née Hamburger

Within a year, my grandmother and grand-father had died in Gurs. Within two years, my parents had been murdered in Auschwitz. I survived because my parents had made the painful decision to send me out of Gurs to live in a children's home 170 km away in the Pyrenees, where they knew conditions would be better. Perhaps they already sensed that it was my best chance for survival. Other parents chose to keep their families intact, to keep their children with them in the internment camps. Few of those children survived.

I remained in France until January 1947. At the end of the war, I had the opportunity to return to Germany, but I could never imagine setting foot in the country again. I moved to America to join relatives of my father, and I started a new life filled with many joys. I did return to Malsch for one day in 1968 with my family. My husband and I wanted our three sons to have a better understanding of the Holocaust and the story of my family. But we stayed for only an hour; it was too hard for me, and too soon.

Now I am deeply grateful for your invitation to attend the Stolperstein ceremony in Malsch. Although I am not able to attend, I am honored that my sons and members of their families will be there with you, to represent me and to share in the commemoration of their grandparents and great-grandparents. We warmly wish you all health and peace, and many thanks for the goodwill you are showing us.

*Ruth Hamburger Luftman*

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## Message from Rolf Hess

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To the people of Malsch.

First I would like to thank Dr. Johannes Rott, Hans-Georg Schmitz and the entire team for keeping alive the memory of the Jews of Malsch.

The fact that you have recognized the atrocity of the Holocaust and made many efforts not to ignore the Holocaust is certainly a step in the right direction. There is a deep feeling that both of us regret the past, but we look to the future and it looks bright.

I regret to say that I will not be able to come on February 19<sup>th</sup> for the laying of the Stolpersteine but on that day my thoughts will be with you and my heartfelt thanks to all of you.

*Rolf Hess*



Rolf Hess

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## Why Stolpersteine?

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There are different ways in which we remind ourselves of the dreadful crimes committed under the rule of the National Socialists and commemorate their victims.

Since 1995 a memorial stone has commemorated the destruction of the synagogue in Malsch during the night of November 9<sup>th</sup> 1938.



The inscription reads:

*“Here stood the synagogue of the Jewish community in Malsch. The house of worship was destroyed by fire and partial demolition during ‘Kristallnacht’ on the night of November 9<sup>th</sup> 1938.”*

The book recording 1200 years of Malsch village history, published in 1983, also makes reference to the Jewish religious community.

On remembrance day we remember all victims of war and tyranny in general. Occasionally,

individuals or contemporary witnesses have re-told stories about people or events and thus passed their knowledge on verbally; but the number of these ageing people is dwindling.

Why did we decide to place ‘Stolpersteine’ in Malsch?

When the ‘Jewish Life in Malsch’ research group was first established in 2013, no one could have foreseen how much information about the former Jewish community here would be found, nor the many and varied encounters and experiences which would come about as a result.

We were able to make contact with the last two survivors of the 1940 deportation: Ruth Luftman (*née Hamburger*) and Rolf Hess. Their accounts and surviving letters from the internment camp in Gurs (Southern France) provide us with a vivid picture of life at the time.

Ruth’s description of the events of Kristallnacht tells of her and her family’s fears as they fled to the attic to escape the raging mob. It was not simply the destruction of a building (the synagogue) as is stated on the memorial stone plaque; above all it was the systematic humiliation, debasement and plundering of people which was carried out throughout Germany after Hitler came to power.

The artist Gunter Demnig confronts this



annihilation of entire sections of the population through his art project 'Stolpersteine'. The National Socialists wanted to erase the names of their victims - Gunter Demnig gives them back their names. He quotes from the Talmud: "A person is only forgotten when his or her name is no longer remembered."

Beneath the heading 'here lived', each stone bears the name of a person, their date of birth and the stages of their persecution - one stone for each individual. Families which were torn apart are thus symbolically reunited at the place where they previously lived together. That is why it is important that a stone also be placed for surviving family members.

After much in-depth discussion about the pros and cons, we consider this de-centralized and

local form of memorial to be a striking yet discreet method of commemoration in the public sphere.

The crimes of the National Socialists did not begin in the concentration and extermination camps; discrimination and persecution started within the local communities. The placing of the Stolpersteine reaffirms the fact that those who were driven out and murdered were once an integral part of our community and in a way they are now being brought back.

The first stones to be laid are for the families of Ruth Hamburger and Rolf Hess, because we feel it is important that they should have the opportunity to witness the event themselves.

*On behalf of the Malsch Stolperstein Initiative  
Ludwig Fröhlich and Tanja Becker-Fröhlich  
Translated by Peter Silver*



The artist, Gunter Demnig

## Where are the Stolpersteine located?



**1** Hauptstrasse 88: Isaak Hilb  
Justine Hilb (*née Buttenwieser*)  
Heinrich Hamburger  
Flora Hamburger (*née Hilb*)  
Ruth Hamburger

**2** Mühlgasse 8: Simon Hess VII  
Rosa Hess  
Rolf Hess

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## List of Stolpersteine placed in Malsch

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HERE LIVED

**ISAAK HILB**

BORN 1865

DEPORTED 1940

GURS

DIED 7.11.1941

HERE LIVED

**JUSTINE HILB**

NÉE BUTTENWIESER

BORN 1863

DEPORTED 1940

GURS

DIED 3.11.1940

HERE LIVED

**HEINRICH HAMBURGER**

BORN 1897

DEPORTED 1940

GURS

INTERNEED DRANCY

1942 AUSCHWITZ

MURDERED 4.9.1942

HERE LIVED

**FLORA HAMBURGER**

NÉE HILB

BORN 1898

DEPORTED 1940

GURS

INTERNEED DRANCY

1942 AUSCHWITZ

MURDERED

HERE LIVED

**RUTH HAMBURGER**

BORN 1930

DEPORTED 1940

GURS

CHILDREN'S HOMES ASPET

AND MOISSAC

HIDDEN BY FAMILIES

SURVIVED

HERE LIVED

**SIMON HESS VII**

BORN 1878

DEPORTED 1940

GURS

INTERNEED DRANCY

1942 AUSCHWITZ

MURDERED

HERE LIVED

**ROSA HESS**

BORN 1911

DEPORTED 1940

GURS

INTERNEED DRANCY

1942 AUSCHWITZ

MURDERED

HERE LIVED

**ROLF HESS**

BORN 1934

DEPORTED 1940

GURS

CHILDREN'S HOME ASPET

ESCAPED WITH HELP 1942

USA

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# They were part of us

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## A brief history of the Jewish community in Malsch

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### Earliest evidence: Grave stones and payment lists

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The earliest evidence of Jews living here dates back to 1646. It is a fragment of the oldest grave stone from the Obergrombach cemetery: the name is missing and other details are hard to decipher, but the place of birth can just be made out and appears to be Malsch. Not until 1714 do we find names such as Segle, Abraham, Mayer and Michel, which appear on a list of shared costs to which every family had to contribute in order to be allowed to maintain the cemetery.

In addition to the cemetery record-books, the episcopal indexes and documents from Speyer form the most important sources of information about local Jewish history. According to those records, in 1721 Malsch was the largest village in the sub-district of Rotenberg with 515 inhabitants and the only one where Jews lived: ten unnamed adults, five men and five women. A record of the time mentions a 'Judengasse' (Jews' Lane), which was situated in the poorer district of Malsch, approximately where Brunnengasse is today. A list of house owners from the same time appears to contain the name Bodenheimer, also a Jewish family.

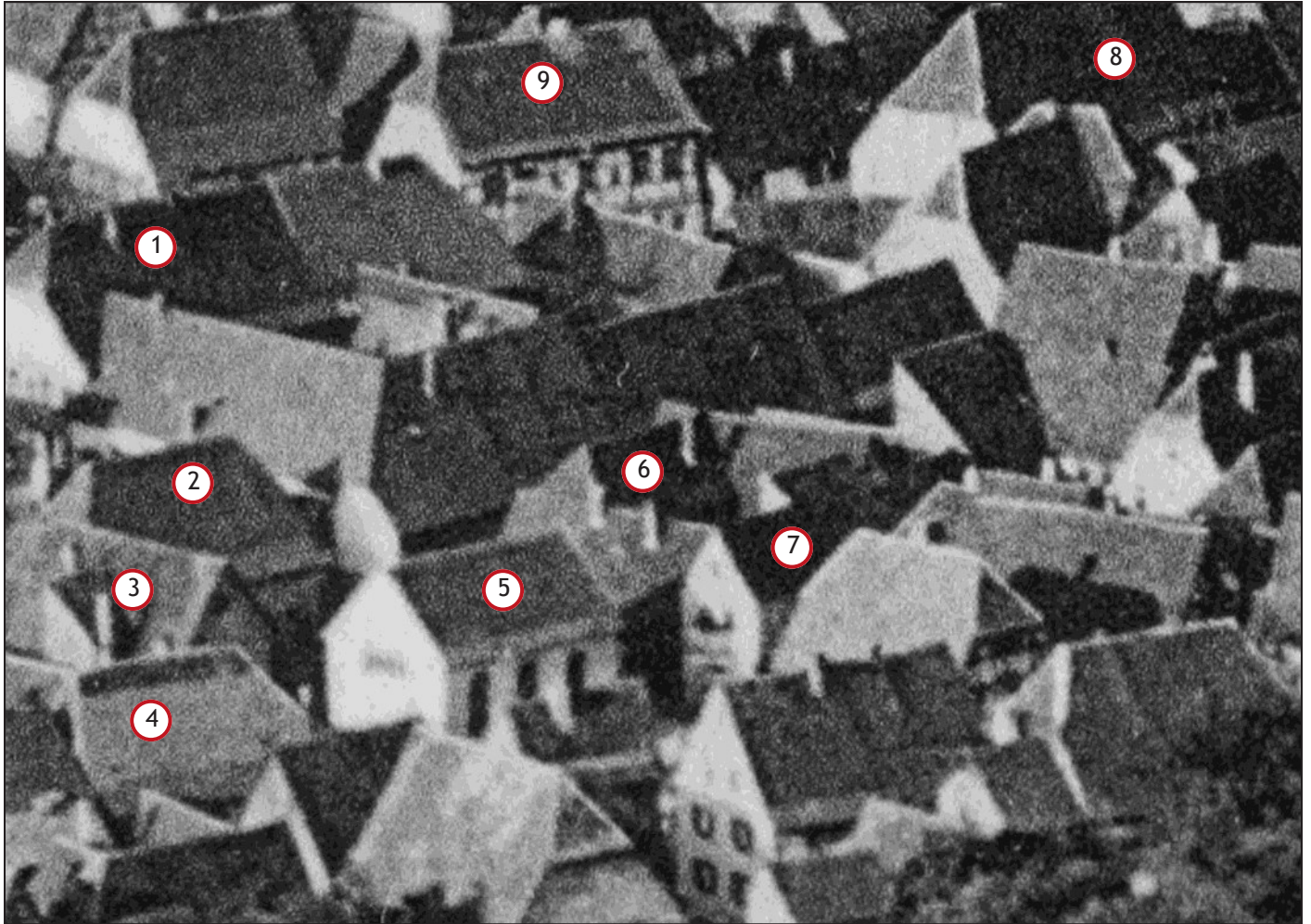
The books from the district offices of Roten-

berg or Kislau regularly chronicle the money paid for protected status; such lists date back to 1755. In order to be admitted to the territory, Jews had to surrender a quarter of their entire assets; this was also the case if a son received permission to marry and start his own household. Now they had to pay 'protection fees'; in exchange they were guaranteed safe abode in the prince-bishopric for five years. Instead of just the usual tithes etc. they also had to make additional annual payments. If a family fell on hard times (due perhaps to poor health and inability to work) and could no longer pay their dues, the landlord could withdraw protection and even expel them.

By the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> century at the latest, the community was large enough to hold its own regular religious services; 10 men (including youths who had reached the status of religious maturity) were required. In addition they engaged a cantor, who soon also became a teacher. The services were held in a prayer room in one of the Jewish homes.

Commerce was the only source of income for most Jews. They were effectively excluded from the skilled trades because the guilds only admitted Christians. Agriculture was also impossible as they were not allowed to acquire any land. So most of the time the men would travel to and from villages in the region with a rucksack full of everyday items which





The synagogue district in 1929

① The 'Rose' Inn

② Present day village barn

③ Jewish school

④ Simon Hess VII

⑤ Synagogue

⑥ Salomon Hess  
(Now 'Bärtiger Winzer' Inn)

⑦ Schuster family

⑧ Samuel Hess IV  
(Now Volksbank)

⑨ Former town hall



the farmers couldn't easily produce for themselves. At the same time they acted as agents or middle men for livestock deals.

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## **Start of emancipation: Fighting for citizens' rights**

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With the establishment of the Grand Duchy of Baden and thanks to edicts between 1807 and 1809, the legal status of the Jews improved considerably; their religion was now tolerated and they were equal citizens in the eyes of the Law. But this did not yet mean that they could settle wherever they chose, take part in politics or work in the civil service.

Of great importance for their culture was the duty, after choosing which hereditary family names to assume, to record births, marriages and deaths in registers, which were maintained by local priests. In rural areas these books often provide the first comprehensive source of information for genealogical and family history research. The 1815 list of Jewish residents and their surnames shows the following nine households:

*Raphael Jakob BODENHEIMER, livestock trader, with wife and 5 children.*

*Marx Jakob BODENHEIMER, second-hand trader, with wife and 6 children.*

*Michael KAHN, second-hand trader, with wife and 3 children.*

*Kallmann Simon HESS, livestock trader, with wife and 6 children.*

*Samuel Simon HESS, second-hand trader, with wife and 4 children.*

*Mendel Simon HESS, livestock trader, with wife and 3 children.*

*Lazarus FALK, livestock trader, with wife and 3 children.*

*Samuel Kaufmann SCHUSTER, haberdasher, with wife and 3 children.*

*Lea, Kauffmann's widow (not identified to date), knitter.*

The Jewish community in Malsch was clearly prepared to take in strangers and integrate them. Often, such newcomers assumed important roles within the group within just a few years. And so there were soon new community members: in 1818 Lazarus Marschall, in 1828 Herz Hilb and in 1831 Isaak Schwed. They all came from 'abroad' (Rheinpfalz and Württemberg) and married into well-established families which could provide them with an opportunity to make a living here. That's what happened with Lazarus Falk, when in 1811 he married the widow of a cousin of the three Hess brothers.

The Jewish families' financial situation seemed to be stabilizing. They continued trading as before but started to specialize. One dealt in dry goods and haberdashery, another in hops and tobacco, whilst another traded furs and hides and yet another traded livestock.

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## **The community strengthens: own synagogue, school and cemetery**

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In 1834 a synagogue, together with adjacent ritual bath (mikveh), was inaugurated. The



Part of the West gable of the synagogue in Malsch. It can be seen in the background of a photograph of a wedding party in Mühlgasse taken in 1936. This is currently the only known front-on photograph of the house of worship.

vacant plot called ‘Bathhouse Square’ in the middle of the third ward (the ‘poor neighborhood’) was purchased from the municipality for the purpose. Most of the 60 congregation members lived in this neighborhood. To date, nothing is known about any earlier bathhouse in Malsch. In any event, there must have been a sophisticated system of springs which fed water into the mikveh. The nearby ditch, which ran through the whole village and alongside the synagogue, only served to channel water away after heavy rain; later it fed

the drinking trough and fire brigade reservoir in Ringstrasse. In 1868 the mikveh’s water was so polluted that the health authority closed it down and it was probably never used again.

A good education, at least the ability to read and write, has been of great importance among Jews for over 2,000 years. Even before 1800 the Jews of Malsch had their own teacher, who at the same time acted as cantor at religious services and did most of the kosher butchering. Even though they still carried the burden of debt from the building of the synagogue, in 1860 the community bought a tiny piece of land near the lower end of Mühlgasse in order to set up a teaching room and provide teacher’s accommodation in the single-story building.

In 1862 the Jews of Baden were granted full citizens’ rights with access to all state authorities. From 1872 they could, like anyone else, also apply for municipal citizenship which gave them the right to use the meadows, gather and use firewood in the local forest and receive relief for the poor.

Things further eased for the Jews of Malsch in 1878: together with their fellows from Mingolsheim and Östringen they established their own cemetery in Mingolsheim. Now they no longer had to undertake the 25 km daylong journey to Obergrombach for every funeral.

The association with the neighboring villages was not only necessary from a financial point of view, but also because of the particular structure of the community in Malsch, which from the beginning was predominantly made up of the Bodenheimer and Hess families, who

belonged to the cohanim, or priestly clan of Israel. These families observe special ‘purity laws’ or taboos: they are not allowed to touch the bodies of the dead. So while they could be involved in the administration of a cemetery, they could not participate in many of the practical aspects of a funeral. The graves of the male members of these families are easily identified by the symbol of the ‘blessing hands’.

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## **Driving force of industrialization; peak and decline**

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In 1885, the Jewish community in Malsch reached its peak of 123 individuals, about 8.5% of the total population. Some of the Jews had become pioneers of industrialization in the village, in particular through the construction of lime kilns, the limestone for which had long been gathered from the Galgenberg and Letzenberg hillsides. Others contributed to the changing business profile by operating as wholesalers. Above all they purchased tobacco and hops from the farmers and sold the goods on to the newly-established factories. Yet others became an important part of village life by running stores selling dry goods, drapery and haberdashery, whilst others soon started to sell shoes. After WWI, another store opened selling household items.

The Jewish children attended the village grade school from 1876. Only religion was taught separately. August Rosenbusch was the first Jew to be employed as a regular teacher in the Malsch grade school.

In 1894, the Jewish community sold its tiny schoolhouse and purchased the property at no. 2 Brunnengasse, next to the synagogue, to use as a school and community meeting place and to provide accommodation for the teacher and his family. It was the very same building which 100 years earlier had housed the prayer room which had been in use up until the synagogue was built.

Jews were also among the local inhabitants who left their homeland and emigrated, mostly to America. Some of them ran major businesses; the Hess brothers, for instance, founded a department store in Allentown, Pennsylvania, which soon became the biggest and most modern in the USA. From 1862, the new freedom to settle encouraged a large proportion of the business-oriented Jews to leave the villages of south-west Germany and relocate to the larger cities. There they benefited not only from broader business opportunities but also better educational possibilities for their children. The Jewish population in Malsch therefore soon began to decline, even if not quite to the same extent as in the surrounding villages. In 1910 there were still 76 individuals here but only 32 in Mingolsheim and 33 in Östringen. The long-established family names of Bodenheimer, Marschall and Schwed had by now disappeared from Malsch.

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## **Love for their country and brutal extermination**

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Whilst the Jewish population was enjoying increasing equality as citizens, racial antisemi-

tism in Germany was also on the rise. This was less pronounced in Baden, especially in many of the more rural regions and in Malsch.

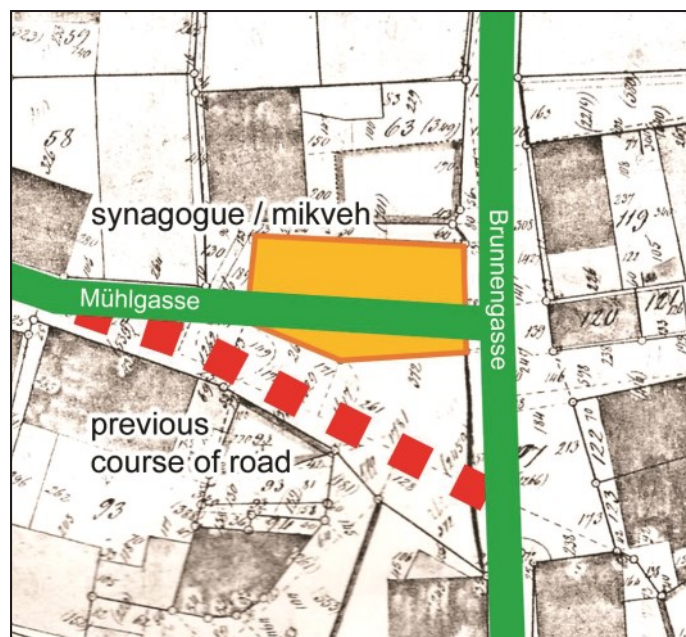
As had been the case in 1870, in 1914 the Jews considered it their patriotic duty to go to the front to fight. Some of them had leading roles in the veterans' organization. Four Jewish men are also named on the war memorial at the entrance to the Malsch cemetery which commemorates those who fell in battle.

As in many nearby villages, the National Socialist Party was first established in Malsch in 1932; before then it played no part in village life. Now it terrorized the whole population with its hordes of Stormtroopers. Only a small number of the villagers supported this; some dared to put up passive resistance.

In 1933, 40 Jewish citizens still lived in Malsch. As soon as the Nazis took over, they started commercial boycott actions throughout Germany and systematic deprivation of rights, ostracism and dispossession of the Jewish population. The lack of solidarity from their fellow men, increasing reprisals and finally impoverishment forced the Jewish neighbors to leave their homes.

During the Germany-wide 'Night of Broken Glass' (Kristallnacht) on November 9<sup>th</sup> 1938, Stormtroopers from Wiesloch were sent to Malsch. Aided by local Party supporters they broke into the synagogue, threw everything out onto the street, poured generous amounts of petrol into the building and set it alight. The few remaining Jewish businesses and houses were also ransacked and looted. All

males over the age of 16 were taken into 'protective custody'. Just a few days later, mayor Fleckenstein had the synagogue site levelled and took the funds to do so from the assets of the Israelite Religious Society, which the government had downgraded to the status of a Registered Society and was therefore subject to taxation. The land boundaries were altered in such a way that the road now runs straight across the buried synagogue foundations.



Extract from the cadastral map (ca. 1930) with the new roads (as of 1939) overlaid in green. The site of the synagogue and mikveh is highlighted in yellow.

By now, no Jews were permitted to carry out a trade and all companies had to dismiss their Jewish employees. Many families no longer even had the financial means to leave. Others had already made preparations and emigrated as soon as their previously arrested menfolk were released and returned from Dachau. On



22<sup>nd</sup> October 1940, the last fifteen Jewish residents who had not managed to flee were deported from Malsch to the camp at Gurs in the foothills of the Pyrenees. They were:

1. *Therese Heß née Kaufmann (92), Letzenbergstr. 5*
2. *Wilhelm Heß (62), Hauptstr. 86, son of 1.*
3. *Betty Heß née Löb (55), Hauptstr. 86, wife*
4. *Isaak Hilb (almost 75), Hauptstr. 88*
5. *Justine Hilb née Buttenwieser (77), Hauptstr. 88, wife*
6. *Flora Hamburger née Hilb (42), Hauptstr. 88, daughter*
7. *Heinrich Hamburger (almost 43), Hauptstr. 88, husband*
8. *Ruth Hamburger (10), Hauptstr. 88, daughter*
9. *Rosa Heß (65), Raiffeisenplatz 4, sister of 10.*
10. *Ludwig Heß (63), Letzenbergstr. 9*
11. *Klara Heß née Simon (57), Letzenbergstr. 9, wife*
12. *Manfred Heß (27), Letzenbergstr. 9, son*
13. *Simon Heß VII (62), Mühlgasse 8*
14. *Rosa Heß (28), Mühlgasse 8, daughter*
15. *Rolf Heß (almost 6), Mühlgasse 8, son*

When they arrived in Gurs, nothing had been prepared for them; the Vichy government was thoroughly taken by surprise. Men and women were split up and placed in separate sections, fenced in with barbed wire. At first there was virtually no chance of contacting one another.

At the end of February 1941, the French organization Oeuvres de Secours aux Enfants

(OSE) and the American Friends Service Committee (the Quakers) helped to transfer the children Ruth and Rolf from the camp to a children's home; they were saved. Of the others deported from Malsch, three died in Gurs camp, one died in an asylum; in August 1942 seven were taken by train via the transit camp in Drancy (near Paris) to Auschwitz, where they were murdered. Only Ludwig Hess (*Hersche Louis*) and his wife Klara survived in France. In 1949 they returned to their former home in Malsch, full of hope of support and spending their twilight years there in peace. However, they spent their remaining time in abject poverty and died in 1954 and 1960 respectively. They were buried in the Jewish section of the Bergfriedhof in Heidelberg.

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## Present day

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Malsch's Jewish community has ceased to exist. In the intervening years a surprising number of emigrants and their descendants have visited their place of origin. Naturally, many of the former Jewish homes have over the years been demolished, but some still stand. Few today know anything about their former history or inhabitants. These visitors are therefore all the more grateful that a small group of people got together five years ago to gather evidence of and research into Jewish life here and can now tell and show them more and more interesting things. In future, the Stolpersteine will form an additional talking point.

In January 1995, a memorial stone with information panel was erected near to where



the synagogue once stood.

In 2015, confirmands designed and produced another memorial to the eradicated former Jewish community in Malsch; two examples were produced, one of which now stands at Neckarzimmern as part of the collective memorial to all the Jews of Baden, whilst the other is on permanent display in Malsch town hall.

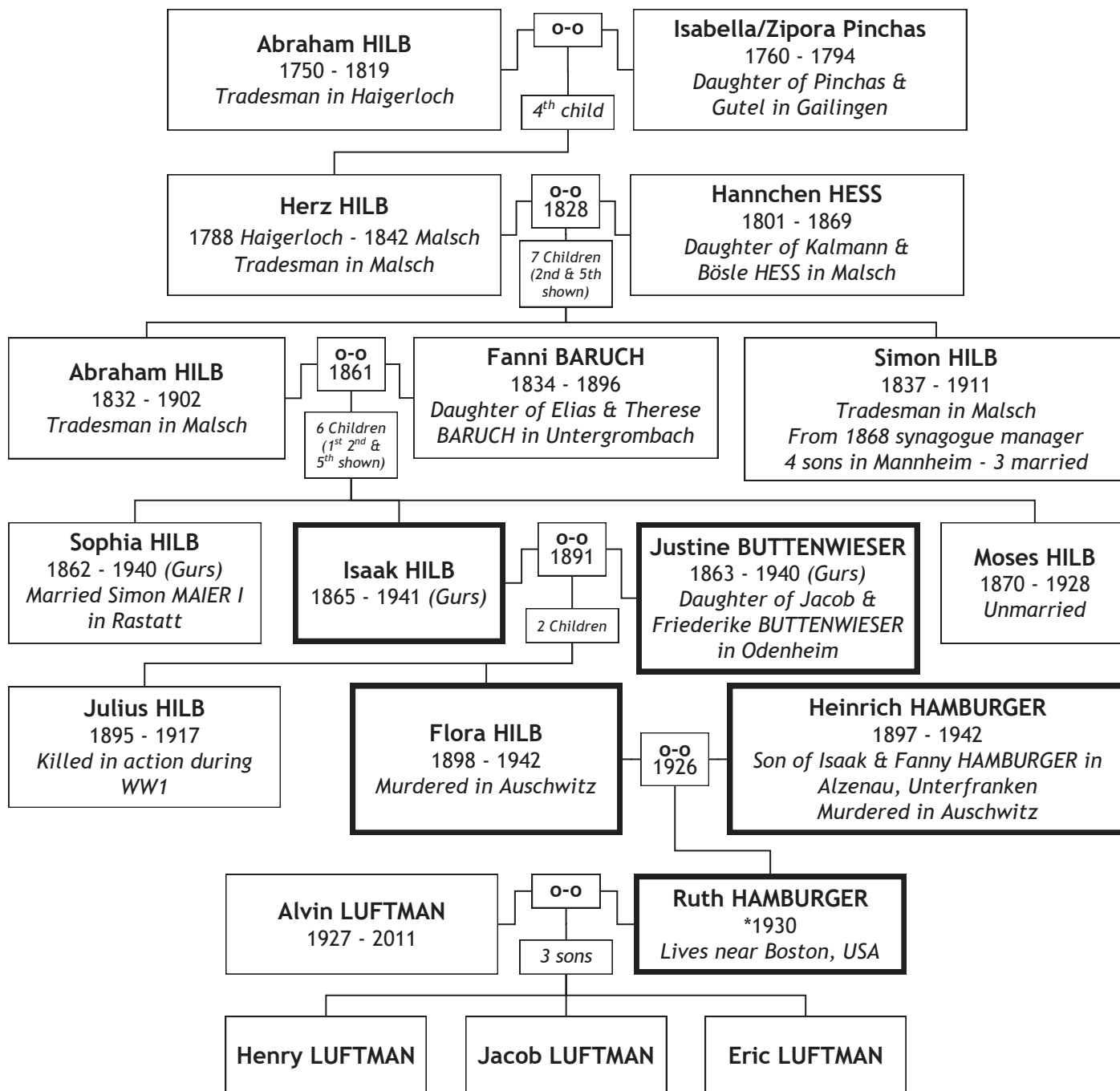
The youth of today should be reminded of this important chapter of local history and learn from the dreadful mistakes which were made. When the lower village square is remodeled, it is hoped that the outline of the former synagogue, mikveh and school buildings will be marked out and that at the same time the parish will create a worthy memorial site.

*Hans-Georg Schmitz*  
*Translated by Peter Silver*

This column was designed and created by confirmands between 2013-2015 for the Ecumenical Youth Memorial Project in Neckarzimmern. Engraved into the glass top is a verse from the prophet Isaiah (11:1), describing how only a stump remains of Israel, but that from it new growth will spring. The youngsters' new engagement and interest in local Jewish history and the contact with survivors and their descendants is a sign of hope. The fifteen vine leaves denote those who were deported from Malsch.



# The Hilb Family Tree (omitting children who died young)



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## The Hilb / Hamburger family - Hauptstrasse 88

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Isaak Hilb (1865-1941), Tradesman  
Justine Hilb née Buttenwieser (1863-1940)  
Flora Hamburger née Hilb (1898-1942)  
Heinrich Hamburger (1897-1942), Tradesman  
Ruth Hamburger (1930, married Luftman)

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### Origin

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Forefather of the family, Herz Hilb, came from Haigerloch, which belonged to Hohenzollern. A large Jewish community developed there which made up more than 20% of the population and benefited from its own rabbi and Torah school. Herz's father, Abraham, came from a large family. Herz Hilb had earlier visited our region on business trips. In June 1828 he settled in Mingolsheim and in November that year he married Hannchen / Hindel Hess, the daughter of Kalmann Simon Hess, here in Malsch. The newly-weds then lived here and soon bought from a weaver a tiny house between Hauptstrasse and Mühlgasse. Herz Hilb probably dealt in dry goods or perhaps haberdashery. When he died at the end of 1842 only two sons out of their seven children were still living.

Fifteen years later, his widow made a very forward-looking and provident decision: she purchased the impressively grand house at Hauptstrasse no. 88 and sold the small one. Then in 1861 and 1864 respectively she gifted half of the house to each of her sons, Abraham and Simon, on the occasion of their weddings.



After the war, Hauptstrasse 88, the Hilb-Hamburger family's home, was used as the Milk House (Milchhäusl). It was demolished in 2008 to make way for the redevelopment of the town centre. *(Picture of the Luftman family in front of their former home during their short visit in 1968)*

Now the Hilb brothers owned the house together and ran a business selling drapery materials and dry goods. Their mother, Hanna, may have started the business and run it together with her sons, but at age 55 she had probably had enough of travelling long distances to sell her wares. When she died in 1869, four grandchildren were already living in the house.

Simon's four sons moved to Mannheim, where three of them married into the same long-

established and respected family. Their father followed them in 1895 and retired there.

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## Isaak and Justine Hilb

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Isaak Hilb



Justine Hilb

Until his death in 1902, Abraham Hilb ran the business in Malsch together with his son Isaak.

His eldest daughter, Sophia, had married and moved to Rastatt while his youngest son, Moses (1870-1928), remained a bachelor and helped out in the store.

Isaak Hilb was born in Malsch on November 2<sup>nd</sup> 1865. In 1894 he got married to Justine Buttenwieser, born in Odenheim on July 7<sup>th</sup> 1863. Her parents had started a shop there selling textiles, which continued to be run by Justine's sister, Dina and her husband, Gustav Fuchs.

Isaak and Justine Hilb had two children. Their elder son, Julius, was seriously wounded during the First World War and died in a field hospital in 1917 aged just 21. His name is on the war memorial at the entrance to the cemetery in Malsch; he was buried in the

Mingolsheim Jewish cemetery. Isaak and Justine's daughter, Flora Hilb, was born in 1898.

Isaak Hilb was a respected man in the Jewish community. When the Malsch Jewish Men's Club started up with 16 members in 1914 with the aim of helping the sick and needy, he was voted onto the committee. After the war he was also a member of the synagogue council.

On invoices dated 1927, Isaak Hilb claims to be a purveyor of manufacturing goods, trousseau items, off-the-peg clothing and umbrellas and sometimes the availability of *Krautkopf's knitted suits* is particularly prominent. Time and time again the capable businessman drove with his wares to the surrounding villages to show his customers the latest products.

The document pictured below was found in an

**ISAAK HILB, MALSCH**  
Manufakturwaren, Aussteuer-Artikel, Konfektion und Schirme  
→ Telefon Nr. 6 Amt. Mingolsheim : Postscheck-Konto: Karlsruhe i. B. Nr. 11243 ←

Fol. *B. 308* MALSCH, den *24 Mai* 192*7*  
(bei Wiesloch)

**Rechnung**  
für *Fr. Lorenz Knorr, Kamenberg*

	RM	Pf.
<i>3<sup>1/2</sup> mtr. Buttkin</i>	<i>13</i>	<i>41 00</i>
<i>Futter hierzu</i>		<i>14 -</i>
<i>R. MK</i>		<i>55 00</i>

*Dankensgalt*  
*Isaak Hilb*



attic in Rauenberg and kindly presented to us. It shows that, with the telephone number '5', Isaak was amongst the first to be connected in the Mingolsheim district. According to some older residents, the people of Rauenberg very much appreciated the fact that they had the choice between the finest goods from *Stoff-Herzl* in Malsch and those from several shops in Wiesloch, which were also run by Jewish citizens, one of whom was Leopold Marschall, who came from Malsch.

In 1991, Isaak was very fondly remembered during a meeting of Malsch seniors, as was reported by Rudolf Lehr in the daily paper:

*He had a soft spot for poor people... He collected his money 50 pfennigs at a time.*

In Malsch and vicinity both the shop and the family were known as *Stoff-Herzl*; this almost certainly dated back to the time when Herz Hilb or his widow first opened the shop.

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## Flora and Heinrich Hamburger

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Isaak and Justine Hilb's younger daughter, Flora Hilb, was born in Malsch on 5<sup>th</sup> January



1898.

In 1926 she married Heinrich Hamburger, who was born into a family of livestock traders in Alzenau (Unterfranken) on 31<sup>st</sup> October 1897.

During the war, Heinrich was awarded the Iron Cross 1<sup>st</sup> Class. Later he worked as a trader in places such as Nürnberg, Frankfurt and Heidelberg. His only brother, Berthold, was best man at his wedding. However, Berthold died in an accident in 1930 just one year after his own



The Hilb-Hamburger family pictured at the back of their house in 1930

wedding.

Soon after moving into the Hilb household, Heinrich Hamburger took over his father-in-



law's position on the Malsch synagogue council. He also got involved in village life by joining the volunteer fire brigade.

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## Ruth Hamburger

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Ruth, an only child, was born in Heidelberg in January 13<sup>th</sup> 1930. She grew up in Malsch and went to school here. However, during her third year in 1938 it became more and more difficult to attend school. Some of the teachers turned the other children against 'the Jews', sowed hatred in their minds and treated the Jewish children very cruelly. Some of the boys started to bully Ruth, threw stones at her and tried to beat her up after school. On the other hand, the class teacher, Isidor Emmerich, tried to protect her as best he could; sometimes he let her go home early before the other children.

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## “Kristallnacht”

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Kristallnacht (the Night of Broken Glass) on 9<sup>th</sup> November 1938 marked a turning point and left a permanent impression on Ruth. Fifty years later she wrote down what she remembered for the benefit of her descendants:

*That day the newspaper headline screamed*

*“The Jew Grynspan shoots vom Rath in Paris” This served as the excuse to unchain the hatred of the Jews that inspired the events throughout Germany which became known as ‘Kristallnacht’. Sometime after midnight we awoke to the sounds of splintering wood and breaking glass as a mob of shouting Brown-shirts or Stormtroopers broke into our shop downstairs and tossed bolts of fabric outside to participating Christian townspeople.*

*We fled to the uppermost level of our attic and closed a trap door behind us. Through a slit in the roof we could see a similar scene taking place at our neighbors' homes next door and across the street. The noise from the mob became more and more ominous and*



Burning synagogue in Ober-Ramstadt; it looked very much like the one in Malsch.

*was soon joined by the sound of crackling flames and then the smell of smoke. A look in another direction showed it was coming from our synagogue just a block away.*

*My father, a volunteer fireman, was unable to*

*help put out that fire. Neither did anyone else. By morning, the synagogue and the mikveh, too, would be burned to the ground.*

*After about two hours of unabated frenzy a voice demanded through a bullhorn that all Jewish men come outside. My father and grandfather were taken away with all the other Jewish men over the age of 16. An unnatural quiet followed. During that time the town's only police officer (a decent and kind man) appeared and suggested that all the Jewish women and children gather at the two adjacent Jewish homes so he could protect us. He then ordered a few of the Brownshirts to stand guard in front of the houses until daylight.*

*Two days later my father and grandfather were released. Other younger men were sent to Dachau concentration camp and remained incarcerated for many months. After that, demeaning decrees followed one after another:*

*Jewish children were no longer permitted to attend school;*

*All Jewish businesses must close;*

*All liquid assets (e.g. bank accounts) were frozen and doled out to us in monthly subsistence increments;*

*All valuables had to be declared and were then confiscated etc.*

*These and more culminated in the ultimate decree - our deportation...*

*After Kristallnacht Ruth was no longer allowed to go to school with 'Aryan' children. A few*

*years ago a former fellow student said: "I still remember how in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, after Kristallnacht, Ruth was taken out of the school. A couple of men came. I know, because I used to sit behind her in class."* For several weeks to follow, Ruth stayed at home as she was suffering from diphtheria.

In Heidelberg, teachers who had long since been dismissed from public service, taught in Jewish community rooms, giving the children the opportunity to receive an education and providing them with a safe haven. Ruth attended this school from January 1939, which meant that she had to stay in Heidelberg during the week. She was given accommodation by Salomon and Paula Deutsch, whose children were grown up and had moved out. No Jewish families were now able to earn an income; they had to live off their savings and sell their possessions bit by bit.

Heinrich Hamburger was glad to help Julius Falk with his farm work and in that way to earn a little money. One day, whilst he was riding to work on his bicycle as usual, he met a former customer from the shop and asked him to settle an outstanding account as soon as possible. However, the customer instead went to the local Nazi party leader and accused Heinrich of making an anti Hitler remark. For that reason, Heinrich Hamburger was arrested and thrown into the local jail. As soon as Flora heard about this she went to the local party leader to appeal for her innocent husband's release. She also reminded him that they had been to the same school together and that she had often helped him with his homework. He just slapped her and sent her

away. However, her husband was released the following day and not sent to Dachau.

This episode illustrates the Jewish population's total lack of rights. Under the NS regime it was not possible for them to defend themselves in court against slander or libel or to enforce payment for work they carried out. It is equally clear how ruthlessly a large portion of the population exploited this situation and by telling lies wanted not only to gain personal advantage but also to put their fellow citizens at great risk of life and limb. In the end one can see that the party leader clearly had a sense of guilt but it was more important for him to demonstrate his loyalty to the party.

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## Deportation

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Officials banged on the door of the Hilb / Hamburger's house in the early hours of 22<sup>nd</sup> October 1940 and ordered them to pack, take food for 3 days and hand over all their valuables. They were to go to the town hall within a few hours and would be 'relocated'. Ruth was with her parents on that day, probably because it was the last day of Sukkoth.

When the truck arrived to take them away, Heinrich Hamburger was wearing his war medal, the Iron Cross 1<sup>st</sup> Class. It is said that a member of the Gestapo tore it from him and threw it away.

Once in Heidelberg they boarded a long train which nobody was allowed to leave for 3 days. Justine Hilb died a week after arriving in Gurs as a result of the extreme stress, dreadfully poor hygiene conditions, hypothermia and

malnutrition. Not long after, her brother, who had been deported from Mannheim, also died, as did Isaak's sister, Sophia and her husband, Simon Maier from Rastatt, where Stolpersteine have since been placed in their memory. A year later, Isaak also succumbed to the strain and died.

With the help of the American Quakers and the French organization OSE, Ruth was placed in a children's home in Aspet at the end of February 1941. There at last she was well fed, had a proper bed, received tuition (in French) and could play with other children. It was a difficult decision for her parents to make to be parted temporarily from their only child but they very much hoped they would all soon be reunited with relatives in America. By then, those relatives had learned of the family's fate and from March 1941 tried to obtain entry visas for the USA for all of them. They even deposited the money for their passages as early as in May. If possible, Ruth was supposed to arrive ahead of the others with a children's transport. They also sent a number of food and clothing parcels.

In the home, Ruth was encouraged to keep in touch with her parents and grandfather by letter. She also helped do the same for Rolf Hess, who at the beginning had not yet learned to write. Instead, he described the new 'paradise-like' conditions with little drawings. Ruth wrote down what Rolf said to her and read out loud to him letters which came from his family in Gurs.

When they started to clear out the camp in August 1942, Heinrich and Flora Hamburger



Camp de Gurs, 5. 8. 42

Mein liebes Kind!

Dein lb. Briefchen v. 30. 7. 42 habe ich heute erhalten & hast Du meine Schrift schon gebessert. Auch über den Inhalt Deines Briefchens haben uns sehr gefreut besonders auf die Aussicht auf Dein. in Aussicht gestelltes Urlaub. aber ich glaube, dass es sobald nicht daraus wird, indem wir nächster Tage eine Arbeitsübernahme erfahren. Ich bitte Dich aber unbedingt noch solange an die alten Arbeiten von mir od. lb. Metti zu schreiben, da es schnellstens nachgesandt wird, & zwar so lange bis Du durch uns oder von anderer Stelle unsere neue Anschrift erfährst. Ubrigens glaube ich auch, dass Du bald zu Tante Helge kommen wirst! ~~Die~~ Tantechen hat Jose Kamburger, Herbstchens Onkel in Portugal bestellt & haben wir bis jetzt davon 8 Stück bekommen seit Januar 1942, es sollen noch 7 Stück kommen. Werden uns nachgesandt. Für heute sei herzgl. gegrüßt & geküßt von der Liebe Ruth! <sup>Papoa!</sup> Mit Deinem lb. Brief freue ich mich sehr Dein Wohl zu hören. Du brauchst Dich nicht zu beunruhigen wenn einige Zeit keine Post bekennt. Bleibe gesund & brav. Herzgl. Guss & unzählige Küsse von deiner Ruth!



were among the first to be deported.

The postcard shown is the last sign of life from Heinrich and Flora Hamburger. It is dated 5<sup>th</sup> August 1942 and postmarked 8<sup>th</sup> August. They had already been sent to Auschwitz on the first transport from Gurs on 6<sup>th</sup> August. It had been said that they were being sent to another camp and that mail would be sent on. They innocently believed that. During their almost two years in Gurs there had been constant movement of people to other Vichy-Government camps. Occasionally people came back again and their was correspondence between the camps. Up until then, there had

been no transportation to the German extermination camps and none of the inmates knew of their existence.

The 'Tante Helga' (Aunt Helga) mentioned in the top left corner of the address-side of the card is Heinrich Hamburger's cousin in Boston, who later took Ruth in. She had emigrated in 1938.

Heinrich and Flora were moved at short notice from Gurs to the transit camp at Drancy, near Paris. On August 10<sup>th</sup> they were taken on a three-day journey in cattle waggons on transport no. 17 to Auschwitz. Flora was probably sent to the gas chamber on arrival; Heinrich was murdered on September 4<sup>th</sup>.

Ruth knew nothing of these terrible events.



Her parents had only told her that they would soon let her know their new address. The aid organizations had planned for Ruth to emigrate to the USA on a children's transport that same year, but due to the war there were no more such transits.

When German troops invaded previously unoccupied southern France in November, Ruth was sent to the children's home *Le Moulin*, organized by the Jewish scout movement Eclaireurs Israélites de France, at Moissac, northwest of Toulouse. Because the Gestapo now roamed the area, the children were at times sent to camp out in the woods or fields. After the Warsaw ghetto uprisings during Passover in 1943, the Gestapo started carrying out searches again. For this reason in June the aid organizations, in cooperation with the French resistance movement, hid the Jewish children and provided them with false papers.

Ruth was now known as Régine Hendriot and was taken to a remote farm where a Protestant Swiss family by the name of Baumann took in children and adults of many nationalities. They made music, had very educated discussions and everyone helped out on the farm. When it became too dangerous even there, Ruth was sent to stay at a nearby farm run by a French family, who passed her off as their orphaned niece. She lived in constant fear of being discovered by the Gestapo but fortunately was spared that fate.

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## A fresh start in America

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When in August of 1944 the region was freed

from the German occupation, Ruth Hamburger returned to the children's home in Moissac. It had a vocational school where she learned to sew. It was there that she also began to learn of her family's fate and that of other relatives and people from Malsch.

Her father's cousin, who from the beginning had been trying to arrange the Hamburger family's release from Gurs and emigration to the United States, re-established contact with Ruth and finally brought her to Boston in January 1947. Ruth enrolled in a girls' public high school where she quickly acquired English and learned bookkeeping skills and received her diploma in 1949.

In 1951, Ruth married Alvin Luftman. They had three sons and lived together with them in a town near Boston. In 2007, after 50 years in their own home, the couple moved into a retirement community. Their three sons had moved away, had their own children and careers. Alvin passed away in 2011; one of their six grandchildren has also since died.

Ruth Luftman has never lost her ability to speak German. She is still mentally very fit and can do many things for herself at home but can no longer undertake long journeys. She actively and gratefully supports the work being done here in Malsch to research and perpetuate the memory of its former Jewish residents.

*Hans-Georg Schmitz*  
*Translated by Peter Silver*

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## The Hess Family - Mühlgasse 8

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Simon Hess VII (1878-1942), hide trader  
Rosa Hess (1911-1942), nursery school teacher  
Rolf Hess (born 1934)

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### Life as citizens of Malsch

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**Simon Hess VII** was born in Malsch on 10<sup>th</sup> April 1878. His parents were Heinrich (known as Hermann) Hess (1841-1904) and his wife Rösle (née Gutmann, 1841-1906) from Gerabronn / Württemberg. The Hess family tree can be traced back over five generations in Malsch to the early part of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The house, in what was known as the 'poor district' opposite the synagogue, had been acquired by Hermann in 1873. In 1907, after the couple had passed away, their son, Julius, emigrated to Cleveland, Ohio in the USA. Of Simon's six siblings only four were still alive and he was the only one who remained in Malsch, eventually inheriting the property.

Simon attended the grade school in Malsch until the age of 14. Later, along with his father, he started a business selling hides and furs. From 1899 to 1901 he served in the



military, before returning to Malsch to continue running the business. In July 1910 he married Auguste Levi (1875-1928) from Rexingen (now a district of Horb am Neckar). On August 1<sup>st</sup> of that same year he was granted local citizenship of Malsch. The couple's only daughter, Rosa, was born in 1911. From 1914-1918 Simon served in World War I and was wounded.

After the war he became deputy leader of the Jewish community and also took on responsibility for the municipality: in the mid 1920s he was a member of the citizens' committee. His wife died in June 1928 and was buried in the Jewish cemetery in Mingolsheim.



The right side of the headstone bears her inscription but the left-hand side remains blank - it had been intended to carry her husband's name. A contemporary witness describes Simon as a tall, dignified man, conspicuous for his very upright gait, which may have been a consequence of his war wound. His nickname was 'Kerzegrad' (*straight as a die*).



Rosa Hess

Simon and Auguste's daughter, **Rosa Hess** (known as Rösel), was born in Heidelberg on 29<sup>th</sup> December 1911. She attended the public school in Malsch and later was trained to be a nursery teacher in Karlsruhe. After the death of her mother in 1928, she

kept house for her father for several years.

Her son **Rolf** was born on 12<sup>th</sup> November 1934 in Frankfurt am Main. She later returned to Malsch. By early 1938 her father had had his business license revoked, thus depriving the family of their income.

Rolf still recalls the glow of the flames as



Rolf Hess

the Malsch synagogue was set on fire during 'Kristallnacht', the night of November 9<sup>th</sup> 1938. The house was just across the street from the synagogue and the light flooded his room, waking him up. His mother reassured him that he would come to no harm.

During the confusion his grandfather, Simon, rushed out to rescue a Torah scroll. He soon passed it on to Adolf Hess, known as 'Schuh Herzl', whose shoe shop at 81 Hauptstrasse had also been ransacked during Kristallnacht. Adolf had already prepared to emigrate to Chicago four weeks later with his wife Klara and son Kurt. Kurt joined a Jewish congregation in Chicago. When he died in 1993, unmarried and without any offspring, they found the scroll at his house. Unfortunately, here the trail goes cold - perhaps it was sent to Israel.

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## Life as a deportee

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The **deportation** from Malsch to Gurs in southern France on **22<sup>nd</sup> October 1940** came as a complete shock to the family and all the other Jews from Baden and Saarpfalz, particularly as it occurred on the last day of Sukkoth. A neighbor recalls that Rosa bid her farewell with these words: "*I've made a semolina pudding for Rolf and left it on the window sill to cool. We have to leave today.*" Leaving all their belongings behind apart from a little luggage and along with twelve more Malsch Jews, the family had to climb aboard the truck which stood in front of the old town hall. A contemporary witness recalls: *As the truck with the Jews on board drove past, my*

*grandma held her apron up to her face and said: "Those poor children! Will they ever see Malsch again?" Although I was only three years old at the time, I still remember. A three-day train journey carried them from Heidelberg to the camp at Gurs in the foothills of the Pyrenees. After the deportation, the Nazi State confiscated everything the family had left behind, including Simon Hess's house, and had auctioned everything by 1942.*

**The camp in Gurs** was completely unprepared and unsuitable for accommodating 6,500 people; everything was in short supply. The conditions were so dreadful that during the first winter about 600 people died, mainly the elderly, amongst them Therese Hess and Justine Hilb from Malsch. Sanitation and catering improved a lot during the second year thanks to international aid. At the time, southern France was not yet occupied by Germany. First of all, aid organizations moved many children into children's homes, as long as their parents were in agreement. On 26<sup>th</sup> February 1941 Rolf was taken to the **Maison**



Rolf Hess (3<sup>rd</sup> from L) in Maison des Pupilles in Aspet

**des Pupilles in Aspet** along with 47 other boys and girls, including Ruth Hamburger from Malsch. Because he had not yet attended school, Ruth wrote short letters for him and read out loud to him letters which his mother and grandfather sent.

On about May 27<sup>th</sup> 1942 Simon wrote to his grandson about the camp:

*You ask what I do all day: at 7.30 a.m. I pray, then I have coffee, then we prepare food and do all the other things that need doing such as chopping wood etc. At 11 a.m. I get something to eat from the ZZA, at 12 lunch then I rest in bed. At 3 p.m. I go to see your mother; we drink tea and eat whatever we happen to have. At 5.30 p.m. I go back and at about 6 p.m. I eat supper. And so the time passes - each day like the last. But I never really eat my fill.*

Rolf remained in the orphanage until his French exit visa was approved on 23<sup>rd</sup> June 1942. On 25<sup>th</sup> June 1942 he boarded the steamer 'Nyassa' in Marseille together with 38 other children. His mother and grandfather were able to visit Rolf in Marseille before he left. On 26<sup>th</sup> June 1942 Rosa wrote:

*My dear, good Rolf! By the time you get this letter we will be back in Gurs again. I hope the voyage has been good so far. We spent a lovely day together, didn't we! I thank the good Lord that I was able to see you again. Be good and take care that nothing happens to you. Yesterday we wrote to aunt Marie and I do hope you will meet her. If God so wishes then we too will soon come over so we can be together again. Don't let anyone take your*



*notebook away and look at the pictures of us often. It's very nice here but everything is very expensive. We're going back on Sunday evening. My dear Rolf, I used the bread ration coupons you gave me to buy a packet of oat flakes and a whole loaf; thank you so much. Now my dear child keep well, write often and remember your loving mum who sends you kisses.*

Underneath, Simon wrote:

*Dear Rolf! I hope you are well and that the voyage has been good so far. Where is it nicer - on the ship or in the dinghy? I'm glad that we had such a lovely day out on the water and I'm sure you will remember it for a long time. Dear Rolf, if you can, please send your dear mother a parcel; we haven't had any for a long time. Dear Rolf, when you are in America write to us once in a while and don't forget us. Look after yourself and give our good wishes to the other children. With fondest greetings and kisses from your loving grandpa.*

Only one letter from Rolf survived. He had posted it in Casablanca when his ship stopped off there at the end of June:

*Dear mum and grandpa, how are you? I am well. When we saw the 'Niassa' we were really happy. The food is good; it's kosher, too. There's also a playroom. We have comfy beds. The weather is almost always good. I was given two pairs of shoes. There's also a bathroom and a shower. Dear grandpa, will you please say hello to Mr. Hamburger from me? I've just come back from having a snack. There was bread and butter and tea with sugar. There's a nice playroom here on the*

*Niassa. That's all for today. Love and kisses from your Rolf*

This letter was returned to Rolf on 24<sup>th</sup> July. The camp at Gurs was being emptied. On 10<sup>th</sup> August 1942 the Gurs interns were deported from Drancy near Paris to Auschwitz. This involved a train journey lasting several days in cattle wagons on convoy no. 17. In addition to Simon and Rosa there were Heinrich and Flora Hamburger and Wilhelm and Betty Hess from Malsch. Three quarters of the people were murdered in the gas chambers the day they arrived in Auschwitz. Their bodies were cremated and their ashes scattered. No trace was to be left of those people or of the crimes to which they were subjected.

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## **New beginning in the USA**

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Rolf arrived in Baltimore on 30<sup>th</sup> July 1942. He grew up in East Cleveland in a household with older people: Julius, his grandfather Simon's brother, a widow and three others. At age 18 Rolf became an American citizen. When he was 25 he got engaged to Marcia. He is now a retired businessman and he and his wife Marcia have four children and five grandchildren. The couple spend their time in Toledo or Florida.

Rolf spoke little about his experience of the Holocaust until 2009 when, as part of a school project, his granddaughter asked him to tell her about what it had been like to be an immigrant. This was the first time that Rolf shared his thoughts and memories.

Until a few years ago, nobody in Malsch knew

what became of Rolf after the deportation. Some time later he shared his thoughts publicly on the Internet and that was how the research group 'Jewish Life in Malsch' was able to contact him. Following that, the Malsch community issued an invitation to Rolf and his family.

On 22<sup>nd</sup> October 2015, exactly 75 years after his deportation from Malsch, Rolf revisited Germany and his former home town for the first time, along with members of his family.

An ecumenical church service and a reception in the Zehntscheuer marked the day of commemoration of when the Jews were deported from Malsch in 1940.

The Stolpersteine bring the memory of Simon, Rosa and Rolf Hess back to us.

*Dr. Johannes Rott  
Translated by Peter Silver*



Writing an entry in the 'Golden Book' - Rolf Hess and family with the mayor, Sibylle Würfel - 22.10.2015

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## The Malsch Stolperstein Initiative

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The Malsch Stolperstein Initiative developed from the research group ‘Jewish Life in Malsch’ with the specific task of planning and implementing the placing of Stolpersteine.

There are currently nine active members in the team. From left to right they are: Gaby Silver, Peter Silver, Ludwig Fröhlich, Tanja Becker-Fröhlich, Dr. Johannes Rott, Dr. Bettina Lieske, Hans-Georg Schmitz and Andrea Schäffner. *(Missing from the photograph - Christian Lieske)*



Stolpersteine commemorative plaques, laid throughout Germany and Europe in commemoration of victims of the National Socialist regime, are financed by donations. Each Stolperstein costs 120 Euros, which is about USD150. Additional costs accrue for the production of the accompanying booklet containing biographies of the individuals being commemorated. Any further donations received are used for continuing research into and documentation of local Jewish history. No donation is too small and we thank you in advance for supporting our project.

### **Account details for donations:**

Recipient: Gemeinde Malsch

Reference: Stolpersteine *(please be sure to quote this)*

IBAN: DE40 672 922 0000 230 092 00 Volksbank Kraichgau

*(Donations may be tax deductible. Please check whether your tax office requires an official receipt or whether, for smaller donations, a simple proof of payment such as a stamped bank cash receipt, a bank statement or printout of an on-line banking transaction would suffice.)*

Email: stolpersteine-69254-malsch@gmx.de

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## Acknowledgements

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The members of the Stolperstein Initiative would like to thank everyone who helped, through words or deeds, to make the placing of the Stolpersteine possible.

We thank the former Mayor of Malsch, Mr. Werner Knopf, who encouraged the research group 'Jewish Life in Malsch' to delve deeper into Malsch's Jewish history. We thank the contemporary witnesses, who told us their recollections of village life shared by both Christian and Jewish citizens. We thank Michael Marx from the USA, who furnished us with his family trees with hundreds of members of the Hess families, which was of enormous help to us in understanding and documenting the various biographies. We thank the municipality of Malsch for supporting our research for the biographies and the local council for approving, by a large majority, the placing of the Stolpersteine. Special thanks go to our Mayor, Mrs. Sibylle Würfel, who supported our work from the outset and is overall patron of the project.

Descendants of the former Jewish population who in recent years visited Malsch have given us access to information and documents in their possession. These have helped us gain an insight into their lives and the lives of their ancestors and has also led to the establishment of mutually enriching friendships. In this respect we particularly thank Michael Marx, Amanda Dryer and Rolf Hess and his family from the USA and Bernard Lazarus and his family from Israel. We are also especially grateful to Ruth Hamburger and Rolf Hess for sharing with us private correspondence between them, their parents and grandparents. We see this as a sign of confidence and trust in our team and in the people of Malsch as a whole.

Last but not least, our thanks go to all those whose donations helped to finance the laying of the Stolpersteine and the production of the accompanying booklet and to everyone else who assisted us, but whose names simply cannot all be listed here. The wide-ranging support helped to motivate the members of our team, who have dedicated their time and effort to this commemorative project on an entirely voluntary basis. Furthermore, we are willing to continue our work to commemorate other Jewish families in the future.



# Illustrations

Page	Image	Source
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00	Stolperstein (blank)	<a href="http://www.stolpersteine.eu/">http://www.stolpersteine.eu/</a>
2	Mayor Sibylle Würfel	Borough of Malsch
4	Ruth Luftman	Private - Luftman family
5	Rolf Hess	Malsch Stolperstein Initiative (Pfeifer)
6	Synagogue Memorial Stone	Private - Peter Silver
7	Gunter Demnig	<a href="https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Gunter_Demnig_01.JPG">https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Gunter_Demnig_01.JPG</a> Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 3.0 Unported license
8	Street map of Malsch	© OpenStreetMap contributors - <a href="http://www.openstreetmap.org/copyright">www.openstreetmap.org/copyright</a> - Open Data Commons Open Database License
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13	West gable - synagogue	Private - Michael Diebold, edited by P. Silver
15	Cadaster Map (Extract)	Borough of Malsch, edited by P. Silver
17	Youth project memorial	Private - S. Alisch
19	Hauptstrasse 88 Milchhäusl' 1968	Private - Luftman family
20	Isaak and Justine Hilb	Borough of Malsch
20	Bill	Private - Stier family, Rauenberg
21	Flora Hilb / Heinrich Hamburger	Borough of Malsch
21	Hilb / Hamburger family	Borough of Malsch
22	Ruth Hamburger	Borough of Malsch
22	Synagogue on fire	United States Holocaust Memorial Museum: <a href="http://www.alemannia-judaica.de/images/Images%20195/Ober-Ramstadt%20Synagoge%201938c.jpg">http://www.alemannia-judaica.de/images/Images%20195/Ober-Ramstadt%20Synagoge%201938c.jpg</a>
25/6	Postcard	Private - Luftman family
28	Simon Hess VII	Borough of Malsch
28	Headstone - Auguste Hess	Private - Dr. Johannes Rott
29	Rosa Hess	<a href="http://yvng.yadvashem.org/nameDetails.html?itemId=9696415&amp;language=en#%21prettyPhoto">http://yvng.yadvashem.org/nameDetails.html?itemId=9696415&amp;language=en#%21prettyPhoto</a>
29	Rolf Hess	<a href="http://www.bearingwitness Toledo.com/rolf.html">http://www.bearingwitness Toledo.com/rolf.html</a>
30	Maison des Pupilles in Aspet	United States Holocaust Memorial Museum
32	Signing the 'Golden Book'	Malsch Stolperstein Initiative (Pfeifer)
33	Malsch Stolperstein Initiative	Private - Katja Fröhlich

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Letters sent to Ruth Hamburger from the camp at Gurs	-
Recollections of Ruth Hamburger Luftman	-

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