

Harry Bibring

Harry Bibring was born in Vienna to Michael and Esther Bibring who were middle class and owned a menswear shop – they lived above the shop and were lucky enough to have a telephone and radio. Harry had a sister called Gertie. He went ice skating twice a week and loved speed skating. His parents closed the shop in July or August for two weeks and went on holiday.

When Harry was 10 years old his parents were looking at grammar schools for his secondary education. Around this time Hitler wanted to annex Austria to Germany. The Jews in German from 1932 were having problems – from 29th April no Jews were allowed in school or to go to public places. The parks were closed to Jews, the swimming pools, the cinemas and Jewish shops were boycotted. His parents had no income. At Harry's school in his class of 30 children, eleven were Jewish. Harry was turned away from the ice rink – he couldn't understand why and went home to ask his parents.

Harry remembers Kristallnacht on 7th November 1938 when his parents flat were raided – they were taken to a Nazi headquarters in under house arrest for ten days with small rations. They were with other families. His parents decided to pawn some items to raise enough funds for a ticket out of Austria. The "Inter Aid Committee" took 13 to 15 year olds to the UK. Harry and Gertie were part of the group that travelled on 13th March 1939 by train with 600 children from Vienna to Liverpool Street Station in London.

Harry and Gertie wanted to stay together. They were offered accommodation with a family in Willesden where there was one bedroom. Gertie stayed there and Harry was placed in a family in Walthamstow - which is a long way from Willesden. He learnt English quickly and eventually moved to Stoke Newington to stay with an aunt.

In Sept 1939 when WW2 attacks started on London Harry was evacuated to Peterborough and Gertie was evacuated to Llandudno in Wales.