

PRESS RELEASE



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COLLEGE WELCOMES HOLOCAUST SURVIVOR

On Thursday 3 June 2010, 85-year-old Holocaust survivor Harry Bibring came to Yeovil College to give a presentation about his experiences.

More than 100 staff and students came to the College's Lecture Theatre to hear Mr Bibring speak about his experiences as a victim of the Nazi regime. He spoke movingly of his childhood in Vienna, Austria, and the dramatic affect of Austria's annexation by Germany in 1938. Although, as a young boy of just twelve, he could barely understand what was happening, he suddenly found himself and his family the victims of the Nazi's institutionalised anti-semitism. He was dismissed from his grammar school and prevented from doing the past times he loved, ice skating, swimming and football, as facilities were closed down. The family also faced severe financial hardship as Harry's father was forced to advertise his faith and his menswear business lost customers. Following the *Kristallnacht*, the Nazi government stepped up their programme of subjugation and arrested Harry's father. The rest of the family, including Harry's sister and mother, were placed under house arrest and the family business looted and destroyed. When Harry's father was finally released, it was decided to send Harry and his sister on the *Kindertransport* to England. His parents planned to follow later, but Harry's father died of a heart attack when the authorities came to take him to an extermination camp. His mother and an aunt were sent to a concentration camp and later deported.

Mr Bibring arrived in England at the age of 13 and has lived here ever since. He returned to school and eventually trained as a Chartered Engineer, becoming a lecturer at Middlesex University. He retired in the 1990s and, since 2002, has given more than 130 talks about his story in the UK, Austria and elsewhere.

Mr Bibring said "*It's usually very difficult to judge how talks go, but the students at Yeovil College paid remarkable attention to me and what I told them and listened intently. Many came up to me afterwards to thank me and ask questions. They seemed very interested and genuinely appreciative of my visit. I like to speak to young people to make sure that these terrible events don't happen again. Discrimination is still severe and there is still hate against all sorts of people. I'm trying to do my little bit to make people see that you don't have to put out a programme of hate into the world.*"

The event was led by A Level students Hayley Rowden (18) and Sinead Ansley (18), both of Yeovil, who recently visited Aushwitz-Birkenau Concentration and Extermination Camp as part of a Holocaust Educational Trust scheme. They were so moved by their experiences that they asked the Trust to arrange Mr Bibring's visit to the College.

Sinead said *"We wanted to bring the experiences of our visit back to the College and share it with other students and staff here. The focus of the visit was very much the roles and personal stories of everyone involved – the victims, their prosecutors, the families and the bystanders. We were amazed how the prosecutors behaved like what they were doing was an everyday job and how the prisoners managed not to fight each other to survive. Since we've been back, we've talked to people about it all the time and have been encouraging everyone to visit. We're very pleased that Mr Bibring agreed to come to the College today. No one can pass on the message of what happened better than someone who survived the Holocaust, or emphasise how important it is that we prevent it happening again."*

A Level Psychology lecturer Wendy Jones also worked with the students. She said *"It is a great privilege for Yeovil College to welcome Harry Bibring. His testimony will remain a powerful reminder of what so many experienced for our students. We are grateful to the Holocaust Educational Trust for co-ordinating the visit and we hope that by hearing Harry's testimony, it will encourage our students to learn from the lessons of the Holocaust and make a positive difference in their own lives."*

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Notes to Editors

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Harry Bibring – Harry Bibring was born in 1925 in Vienna. Prior to Germany's 'reunion' with Austria in 1938, his father had a menswear business and the family had a good standard of living. Following the Anschluss and the Kristallnacht riots of November that year, the Bibring family was locked out of its home and had to stay in a flat housing 50 Jewish women and children. Harry's father was jailed. Upon his release, the family were allowed back home, but the family business had been looted and destroyed. They decided to leave the country as soon as possible. Arrangements were made for Harry and his sister to leave on the Kindertransport and he arrived in the UK with his sister in March 1939. His parents were to follow later, but tragically, Harry's father died of a heart attack in 1940 when the authorities tried to take him to an extermination camp. His mother and aunt were taken to a concentration camp and deported from Austria two years later. Harry has remained in the UK, eventually training as a Chartered Engineer and becoming a lecturer at Middlesex University. He retired in the 1990s and currently lives in London. He has given more than 130 talks in the UK, Austria and the USA since first approaching the HET less than ten years ago. A full copy of Mr Bibring's biography has been attached. To contact him directly, please telephone 02089509212 or email bibrings@sky.com.

Holocaust Educational Trust (HET)

The Holocaust Educational Trust was established in 1988 to educate young people from every ethnic background about the Holocaust and the important lessons to be learned for today. HET works in schools, universities and in the community to raise awareness and understanding of the Holocaust, providing teacher training, an Outreach Programme for schools, teaching aids and resource materials. HET regard one of their earliest achievements as ensuring the Holocaust formed part of the National Curriculum for History. HET continues to play a leading role in training teachers on how best to teach the Holocaust and last year, the Treasury pledged a three-year commitment to enable HET to administer a broad programme of teacher training. In November 2005, the Treasury announced funding of £1.5 million for HET to support its Lessons from Auschwitz Project. The funding has enabled HET to facilitate visits to Auschwitz for two students from every school in the UK. In February 2008, the Department for Children, Schools & Families announced renewed funding for English schools. In November 2008 the Scottish Government announced funding for Scottish schools and in 2009 the Welsh Assembly Government pledged support to enable Welsh schools to participate. For more information, please contact Lucy Craig of The PR Office on 020 7284 6946 or via lcraig@theproffice.com.