Each name represents a destiny

Descendants of Jewish Meimbressen residents took part in the laying of stumbling stones

by Natascha Terjung

Meimbressen. Around 70 people of the Jewish faith lived in Meimbressen until early 1933. After the National Socialists seized power, they were expelled, forced to give up their businesses and homes, fled abroad or perished in concentration camps. The association 'Judaica in Meimbressen' is committed to preserving the memory of these people's fates. To this end, the association has once again laid stumbling stones in the Calden district, this time with the participation of descendants of Jewish families.

Pupils from the Heinrich Grupe School (HGS) provided an insight into the lives of Jews in Meimbressen. They read specially written texts about the history of the people at each newly laid stumbling stone, making it clear that it is above all the individual fates behind the names on the stumbling stones that must not be forgotten.

It was therefore not surprising that the descendants who had travelled from Israel, the USA and Great Britain were visibly moved by the emotional nature of this event during the tour of the town.

Houses were destroyed

In front of the house on Lindenberg Street, a fifth memorial stone was laid for Bertha Goldwein, in addition to the four already existing ones. Bertha Goldwein and Samuel Goldwein lived in Meimbressen with their three children, Louis, Rosa and Amalie Mathilde.

When Samuel Goldwein died in 1935, Bertha Goldwein moved in with her son Louis in the house on Lindenberg Street. During the November pogroms of 1938, the family's home was almost completely destroyed. In 1939, Bertha Goldwein had to leave her house and move to Kassel. In September 1942, she died in the Theresienstadt concentration camp. Her children also died in concentration camps – only Bertha Goldwein's granddaughter Marga survived and emigrated to Israel.

Bracha Lahav, Bertha Goldwein's great-granddaughter, travelled from Israel with her husband for the laying of the Stolpersteine and was visibly moved by the students' presentation about her ancestor. „*It was very exciting and emotional*

to hear this and to stand in front of the house where my mother lived,“ she said in an interview with our newspaper.

Much of what she had learned about her family in Meimbressen was new to her. „*My mother never talked about it much*“, said Bracha Lahav. Her experiences must have been too terrible. Even on the day of remembrance for the victims of the Nazis in Israel, her mother could not bear to watch the ceremonies on television.

For Bracha Lahav, there is no question that something like this must never happen again. This was also repeatedly expressed in the pupils' presentations: „*It is important that we know these stories so that the victims are not forgotten and so that we can ensure that something like this never happens again*“, said one pupil in front of the house on Lindenberg.

But it was not only the fate of the Goldwein family that showed how difficult life was after the Nazis seized power. For example, it was reported that the Levi and Mathilde Goldwein family, who had lived in a house on Nebelbeeke, had their cattle trading business and thus their livelihood taken away from them by the Nazis.

People were betrayed

However, the good relationship with their neighbours did not break down; the Sauer family helped the Goldweins in their plight, for example by throwing bread and butter through a hole in the cellar. However, this was betrayed, and shortly afterwards a Star of David and the words ‘Judenknecht Sauer’ (Sauer, servant of the Jews) were emblazoned on the Sauer family's front door.

Salomon and Rosalie Loewenstein also lived in Meimbressen until they fled. Descendants of their five children travelled from the United Kingdom and the United States to attend the stumbling stone laying ceremony. Grandchildren and great-grandchildren were present, including Peter Loewenstein from England, who had already spoken to HGS students about anti-Semitism last week (we reported).

The commemorative event concluded at the former site of the synagogue and school in Meimbressen. Heinrich Neutze recounted how the synagogue had been desecrated during the November pogroms. Among other things, Torah scrolls had simply been thrown into the stream. Rabbi Shaul Nekrich from Kassel also came to this historic site in Meimbressen and sang a Jewish prayer.

During the event, Heinrich Neutze emphasised that the Judaica Association was not only committed to laying stumbling stones, but also to preserving the memory of the Jewish community in Meimbressen in general. Local mayor Friedhelm Dilcher emphasised the importance of the association's work for Meimbressen and beyond: „*Injustice remains injustice! It is very important that we do not forget this.*“