



# The Holocaust and Wales

## Jewish Refugee Doctors, Dentists & Nurses in Wales

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### Jewish Refugee Doctors, Dentists & Nurses in Wales

This resource looks at Jewish refugee doctors, dentists and nurses who fled to Britain in the 1930s. Jews in the medical profession were among the first to be persecuted by the Nazi regime. Several of these refugees eventually made their way to Wales.

It contains:

- Background information on Jewish refugees in the medical profession and where to find out more
- Photograph of Paul Bosse meeting Adolf Hitler
- Short biographies of Josephine Bruegel, Alfred Feiner and Jacques Kurer
- Link to audio clip of oral history recording of Josephine Bruegel
- Photograph of Jacques and Theodora Kurer, 1950s
- Transcript of the audio clip

The resource assumes a basic understanding of the Holocaust. You may wish to cover the Holocaust Educational Trust's (HET) worksheet ['Defining the Holocaust'](#) before exploring these resources. See also the HET's ['General Principles for Teaching the Holocaust'](#).



## Background information on Jewish refugees in the medical profession

The Nazis came to power in January 1933 and soon began placing restrictions on Jews in the medical profession. By April, Jewish doctors were excluded from the public health insurance programme and by the summer they were instructed not to cooperate with their non-Jewish colleagues.

Within a year, over 2,600 Jewish doctors were removed from their posts and after the Nuremberg Laws of 1935, Jews were banned from qualifying as new doctors or dentists. In July 1938, they were prohibited from having 'Aryan' patients and in September 1938 they were decertified completely. Unable to work, many decided to emigrate.

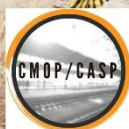
An estimated 1,200 doctors, mostly Jewish, arrived in Britain from Germany and Austria between 1933 and 1939. However, due to reluctance from the British Medical Association, General Nursing Council and British Dental Association to recognise their qualifications, they had to study and pass a further British examination.

The Welsh National School of Medicine set up a 'special scheme of instruction for refugee students' and 12 German students were enrolled here between 1933 and 1934. In 1938-39, they were joined by seven Austrians and 15 Czechoslovaks.

Dentists from other countries were even more strictly controlled. Following a review in 1938, the rules that severely restricted them from practising in the UK were relaxed and 40 Austrian refugee dentists were permitted to enter.

For more information on Jewish refugees in the medical profession, see:

- <https://wp-research.aber.ac.uk/nsrefugeeswales/history/life-for-refugees-in-wales/medical-services/>
- Michael H. Kater, 'Unresolved Questions of German Medicine and Medical History in the Past and Present', *Central European History*, 25 (1992), pp 407-23
- John Zamet, 'German and Austrian Refugee Dentists: The Response of the British Authorities, 1933-1945', PhD thesis (Oxford: Oxford Brookes University, 2007), available at <https://radar.brookes.ac.uk/radar/items/e0d3e236-585a-4c8e-a61f-ee0830585b0a/1/>



Historical source 1: Paul Bosse (standing, left), father of refugee Kate Bosse-Griffiths, meeting Adolf Hitler in Wittenberg, 1935



This photograph was taken after an explosion at a nearby munitions factory. Paul was a highly respected surgeon who had been injured serving in the German Army during the First World War. He was also the doctor for the German sprinting team during the 1936 Olympic Games. Paul's wife, Käthe, was classified as Jewish by Nazi racial laws. Despite all his work, Paul's refusal to divorce her meant he was dismissed from his role as chief surgeon in the local hospital.

Image: People's Collection Wales

Link: <https://www.peoplescollection.wales/items/1893251>

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For more information on the Bosse family, see the resource on [The Welsh Language](#)

## Historical source 2: Short biography of Josephine Bruegel

Josephine Bruegel was born in 1914 in Stráž in the Austro-Hungarian Empire (modern-day Czech Republic). She was a medical student in Prague when the Germans invaded Czechoslovakia. She fled to Britain, where she worked as a nurse in London, and attained her MD (Doctor of Medicine degree) in 1943. She was evacuated to Cardiff in 1944. Here, she volunteered for the Emergency Medical Service and was sent to the Llwynypia Hospital in the Rhondda Valley. After the war, she and her husband moved back to Czechoslovakia, but returned to Britain following the Communist takeover of her homeland in 1948. She continued to practise medicine and was a founder of the National Schizophrenia Society. She died in 2005.

## Historical source 3: [Audio Clip: Josephine Bruegel on attaining the MD Czechoslovakia](#)

## Historical source 4: Short biography of Albert Feiner

Alfred Feiner was born in Walddeg, Austria, in 1897. From a Jewish background, he practised as a doctor in Austria before fleeing with his wife Herta and young son after the Anschluss in 1938. He enrolled in the Welsh National School of Medicine in

Cardiff to retrain while Herta worked as a housekeeper and cook to support them. After three years, Alfred completed his studies and the family moved to Pontypridd. He worked as a General Practitioner (GP) there between 1941 and 1977. According to Herta's obituary, they had to overcome 'a great deal of suspicion and animosity' in Pontypridd, but ultimately they 'gained the respect and admiration of the local population'. Herta died in 1976, while Alfred died in 1993.

'Obituary: Herta Feiner', in *AJR Information*, March 1977, p. 12  
([https://ajr.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/1977\\_march.pdf](https://ajr.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/1977_march.pdf))

## Historical source 5: Short biography of Jacques Kurer

Jacques Kurer was one of 40 Austrian refugee dentists who were permitted to enter the UK in 1938. He was able to move another eight members of his family, including his wife Theodora and two sons Peter and Hans, thanks to the sponsorship of two Quaker families. Although Jacques had acquired a medical degree from Vienna University in 1925, he was forced to complete another dental degree at Manchester University in 1939.

He was given permission to open a practice, but in 1941, both properties in which the family were staying were bombed, and they were all evacuated to Llandudno. Here, Jacques opened another practice, the high standard of which was popular among the local population. Jacques and Theodora had another child, a girl, and Hans and Peter had their bar mitzvahs. They moved back to Manchester in 1944, and both Peter and Hans also became dentists. Jacques died in 1974.



Historical source 6: Photograph of Jacques and Theodora Kurer, 1950s



Source: People's Collection Wales

Image: <https://www.peoplescollection.wales/items/2156471>

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## Transcript

### [Audio Clip: Josephine Bruegel on attaining her MD Czechoslovakia](#)

And then...it must have been February or March [1941], the Czech government-in-exile, which came from France, established itself here, and with the Czech army there came about fifty soldiers who were in the same position as I was – that they had not quite finished their medical studies but had done the clinical years, so it was arranged that they and I could finish their studies here. So, we were all put into various universities.

[...]

And then came the queer situation that...what the kind of degree to give us. This degree had to be valuable also in Czechoslovakia, because everybody wanted to go back, and didn't want to do any of the examinations again. So, what happened was, that Oxford University adopted the Prague University, which was closed, so I got this diploma in Oxford in a great kind of glory. It was called MD Czechoslovakia.

