Their Journey ...

... my journey

by Grahame Soden, ARPS

Their Journey ...

... my journey

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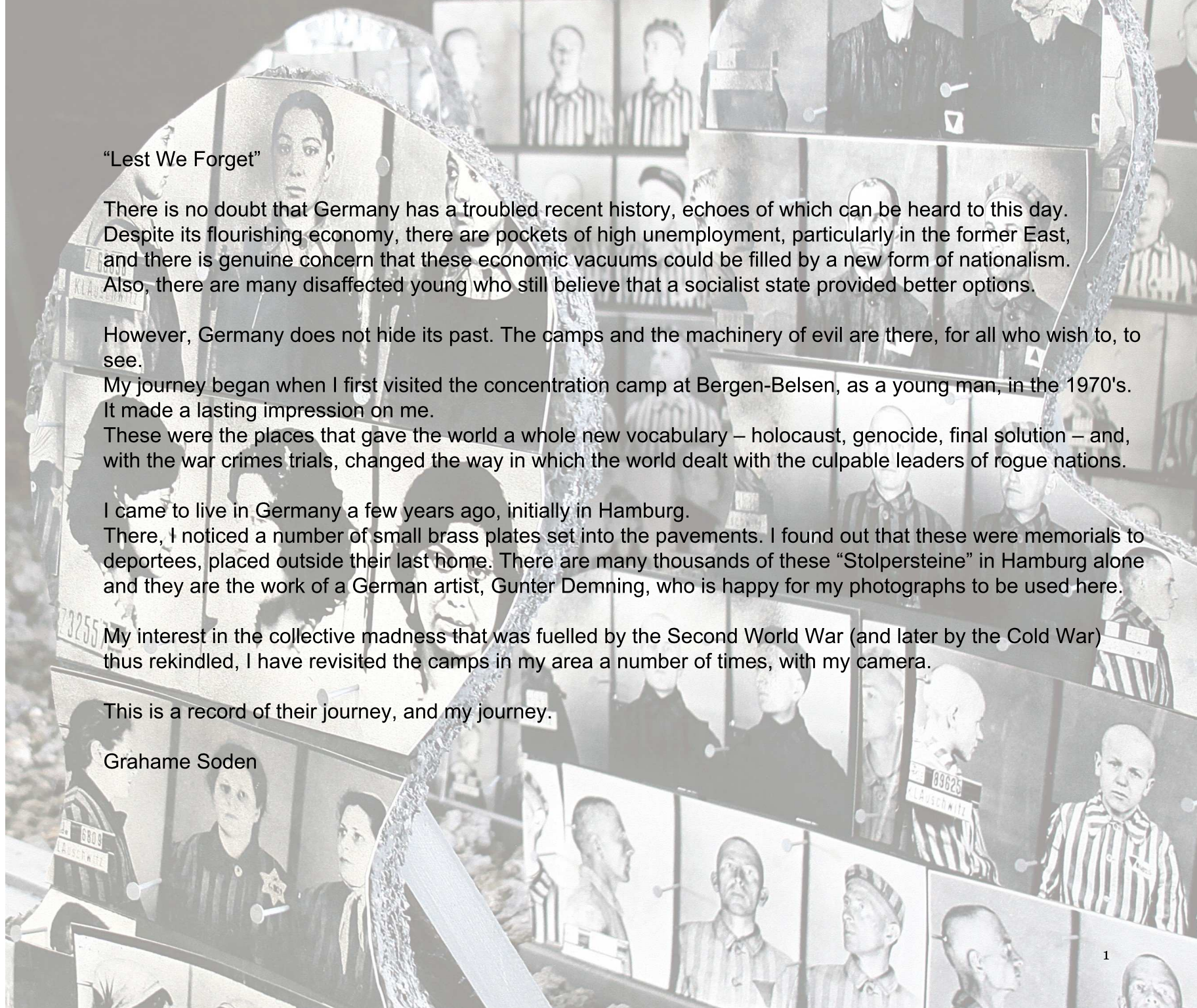
blurb

Their Journey ...
... my journey
HIER RUHEN
1000 TOTE
APRIL 1945



“Lest We Forget”

There is no doubt that Germany has a troubled recent history, echoes of which can be heard to this day. Despite its flourishing economy, there are pockets of high unemployment, particularly in the former East, and there is genuine concern that these economic vacuums could be filled by a new form of nationalism. Also, there are many disaffected young who still believe that a socialist state provided better options.

However, Germany does not hide its past. The camps and the machinery of evil are there, for all who wish to, to see.
My journey began when I first visited the concentration camp at Bergen-Belsen, as a young man, in the 1970's. It made a lasting impression on me.
These were the places that gave the world a whole new vocabulary – holocaust, genocide, final solution – and, with the war crimes trials, changed the way in which the world dealt with the culpable leaders of rogue nations.

I came to live in Germany a few years ago, initially in Hamburg.
There, I noticed a number of small brass plates set into the pavements. I found out that these were memorials to deportees, placed outside their last home. There are many thousands of these “Stolpersteine” in Hamburg alone and they are the work of a German artist, Gunter Demning, who is happy for my photographs to be used here.

My interest in the collective madness that was fuelled by the Second World War (and later by the Cold War) thus rekindled, I have revisited the camps in my area a number of times, with my camera.

This is a record of their journey, and my journey.

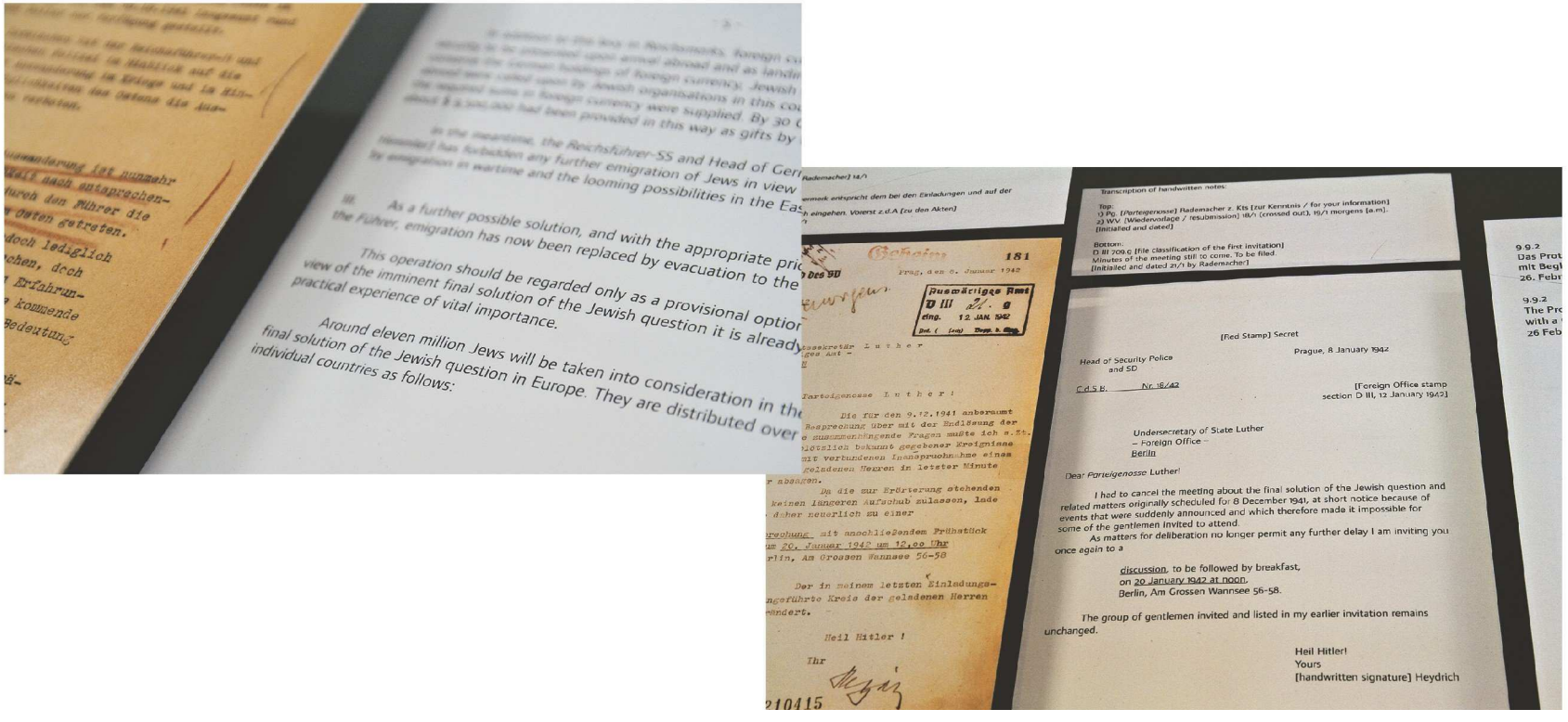
Grahame Soden

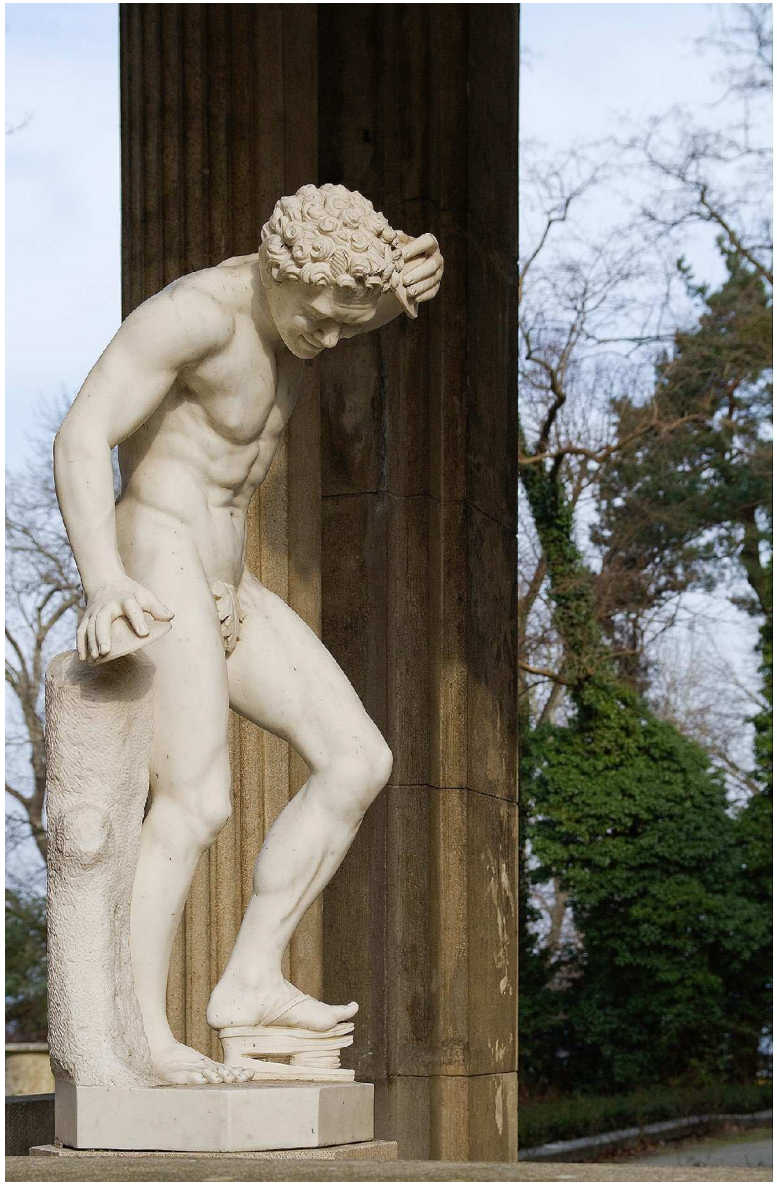
This is where many of the journeys began, the house at Wannsee where the Final Solution to the Jewish Question in Europe was discussed and ratified.

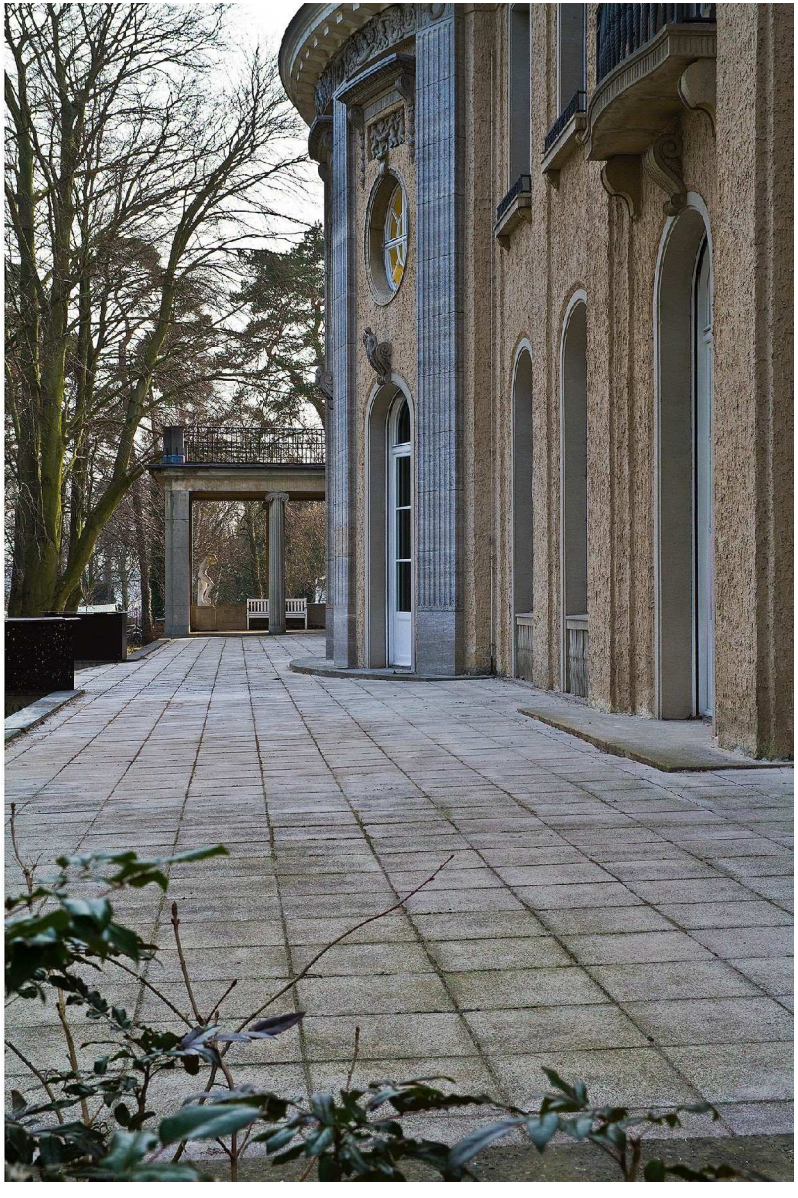
In January 1942 the hierarchy of the National Socialist Party met at Am Großen Wannsee 56-58 for the Wansee Conference.

There had, of course, been deportations to various camps before this date, but the conference was to extend & ratify the ad hoc arrangements in order to deal with the estimated eleven milion Jews throughout the whole of Europe.

Jews, Gypsies, Communists, Homosexuals, the mentally deficient were all likely to be subject to this Final Solution.



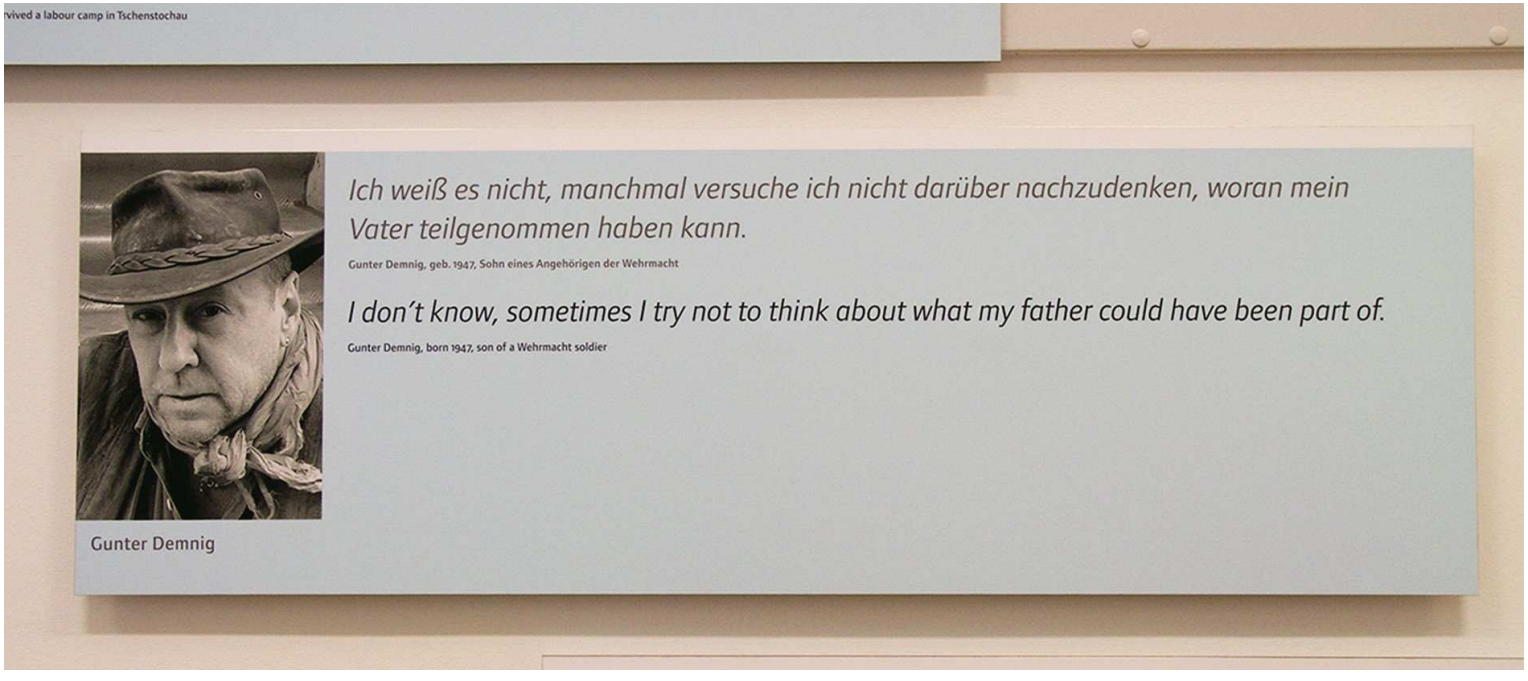




Stolpersteine

The Stolpersteine “Stumbling Stones” are an ongoing art project by the German Artist Gunter Demning.
They are small brass plates embedded in the pavement outside houses from which people, mainly Jews, were seized for deportation.
The plates are inscribed with the person’s name (and maiden name where appropriate), their date of birth, when & where they were deported to, and what finally became of them if known.
The oldest deportee that I have seen recorded was a woman of 84 years.

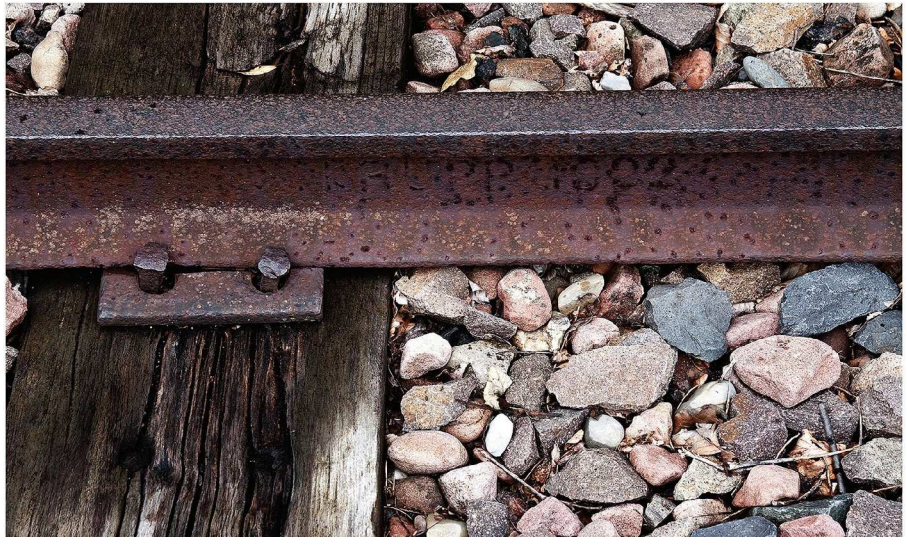
By mid 2010, over 25,000 Stolpersteine had been laid in some 500 cities & towns throughout Europe.
The project can be viewed at www.stolpersteine.com



Stolpersteine

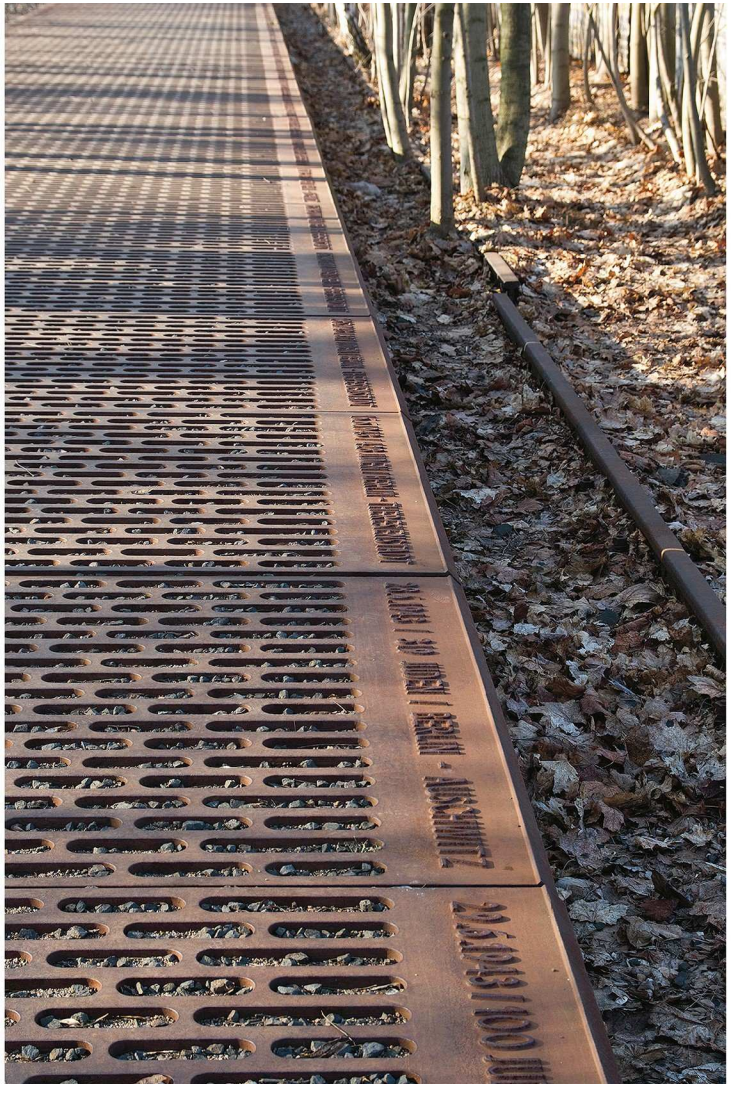
Entrance to Platform 17, Grunewald Station, Berlin.
There were over 50,000 deportations from Berlin during WWII.

am Bahnhof Grunewald, Gleis 17 / Platform 17, Grunewald Station, Berlin



Arrival Platform, Buchenwald Concentration Camp

The poet Goethe lived a few miles away from where Buchenwald Concentration camp now stands. Legend has it that he had a favourite oak tree,“Goethe Eiche” where he would sit & compose. The camp was built around this tree.

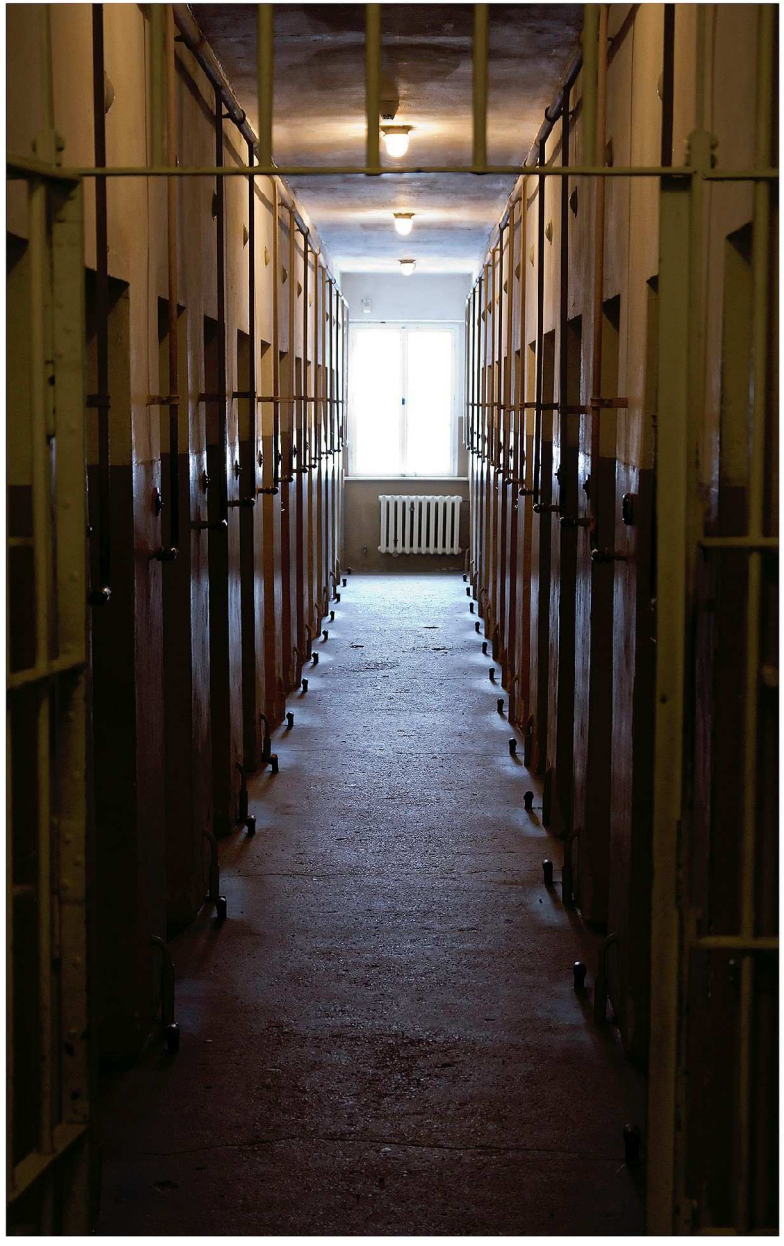


Platform 17, Grunewald Station, Berlin

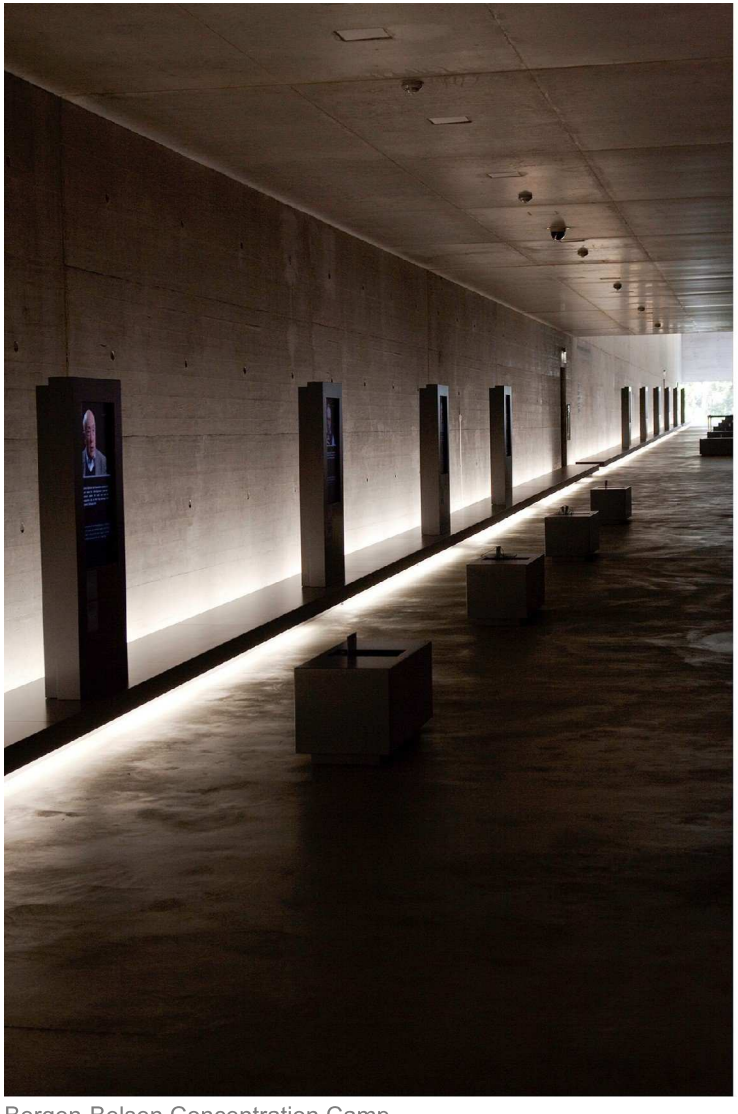
The Crematorium, Buchenwald Concentration Camp

The Killing Room, Buchenwald Concentration Camp

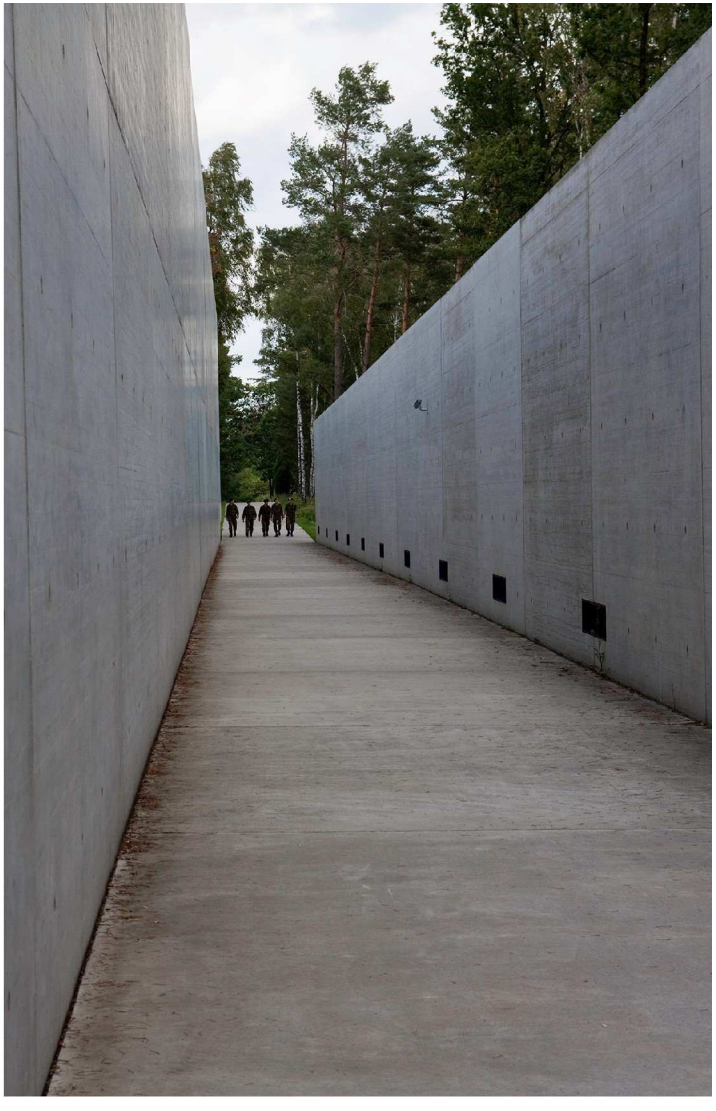
The Crematorium, Buchenwald



Bergen-Belsen Concentration Camp
The inscription reads "Here Rest 5000 Dead"



Bergen-Belsen Concentration Camp



The grave of Anne Frank and her sister, Margot, Bergen-Belsen Concentration Camp.

The Jewish Memorial, Bergen-Belsen Concentration Camp

Anne Frank

For many long months I hid away
No friends, life or play
Just a tree;
But I kept a diary
And I kept the faith.
But all games end – a virus took me
But Europe was saved.

The Bridge of Spies - The Glienicke Bridge, Potsdam

After WWII, the madness continued with the Cold War. The camps were still used, just the colour of the guards' uniforms was changed.

The centre of the Glienicke Bridge marked the border between East & West and was one point where spies were exchanged. The photograph is from the Potsdam (East German) side of the bridge, looking towards Berlin.

Appendices

i Poetry

ii Print Hanging Plan for ARPS submission

iii Print Hanging Plan for LRPS submission

Appendix i

note:
For the original hand-printed photobook submission to the Royal Photographic Society,
these verses were printed on 1/2 page sheets that were inserted into the book at the appropriate place.

Are We Nearly There?
"Are we nearly there yet?"
Yes child (but wishing we weren't)
"Are we nearly there yet?"
Three days in the dark and the stench
Of this rattling hell on wheels. No trip with bucket & spade to the sea;
Perhaps just a short eternity.
"Are we nearly there yet? I'll look through this crack and see
Yes, it's the end of the line and there's a funny old sign
Arbeit macht frei"

The Doctor
"Come quickly Doctor, there is a problem …"
"What problem? It is night, it is dark"
"Not so dark, not yet"
"But what is the problem?"
"You, Doctor. You are the problem"

You were 84 yrs old
You are 84 years old;
You sit in your apartment filled with memories
of younger times.
You are 84 years old and share those memories just
with the birds on the sill, or the trains rumbling past.
More trains now?

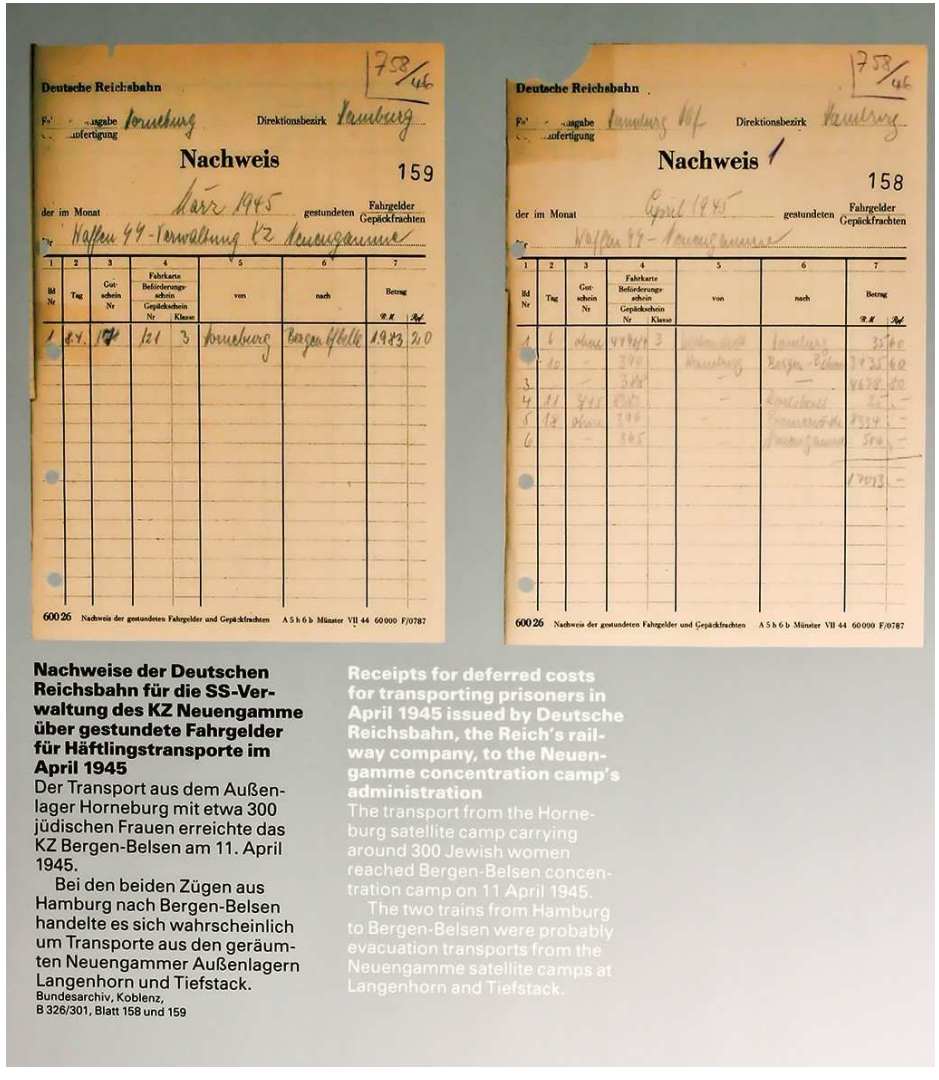
You are 84 years old but still the knock, the hammering shock,
comes in the night.
You were 84 years old as the train carried you past the apartment
filled with memories.
But you didn't see it.

The Anniversary
"Martha, come quickly. – see these young men –
they have arranged a surprise for us, for our anniversary.
See how they shine, in their finery
as we did once.
See how they laugh at our slowness …"
"But who are they, these young men?
We do not know them?"
But we will, we will.

The New Guard Dog
"I don't like this place"
"You must never like it"
"But why are the men so cruel, with their shouts
And their sticks and guns?"
"Because they are men, with sticks and guns.
Come now, we must join in – it is our duty.
Snarl, be fierce!
Bite one or two – but gently"

The Musician
"Musician, can you play for me?"
"Yes"
"And if you are blinded?"
"Yes. I will remember"
"And if you are lame, crippled, can you still play for me?"
"Yes. I will play"
"And if I hang you from this hook, will you play for me!"
"No. But I'll still hear the music".

On Hearing that the German Railway invoiced the military for every deportee kilometer.
"Fares please, show your tickets. Thank you sir, that will be 287,00 marks."
"That's a lot of money"
"You sent a lot of passengers"


Deutsche Reichsbahn

Nachweis 159

der im Monat März 1945 gestundeten Fahrgelder Gepäckfrachten

Deutsche Reichsbahn

Nachweis 158

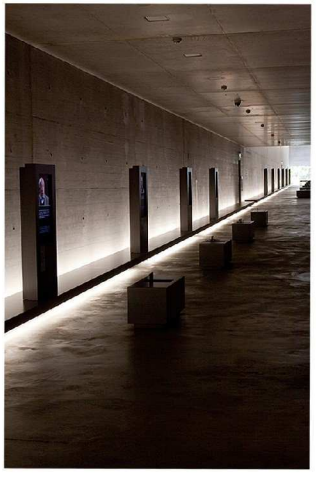
der im Monat April 1945 gestundeten Fahrgelder Gepäckfrachten

Nachweise der Deutschen Reichsbahn für die SS-Verwaltung des KZ Neuengamme über gestundete Fahrgelder für Häftlingstransporte im April 1945
Der Transport aus dem Außenlager Horneburg mit etwa 300 jüdischen Frauen erreichte das KZ Bergen-Belsen am 11. April 1945.
Bei den beiden Zügen aus Hamburg nach Bergen-Belsen handelte es sich wahrscheinlich um Transporte aus den geräumten Neuengammer Außenlagern Langenhorn und Tiefstack.
Bundesarchiv, Koblenz,
B 326/301, Blatt 158 und 159

Receipts for deferred costs for transporting prisoners in April 1945 issued by Deutsche Reichsbahn, the Reich's railway company, to the Neuengamme concentration camp's administration
The transport from the Horneburg satellite camp carrying around 300 Jewish women reached Bergen-Belsen concentration camp on 11 April 1945.
The two trains from Hamburg to Bergen-Belsen were probably evacuation transports from the Neuengamme satellite camps at Langenhorn and Tiefstack.

Appendix ii

Hanging plan for the 5 separate prints that formed part of the ARPS Distinction Submission



Appendix iii

LRPS Hanging Plan

Grahame Soden

LRPS Distinction Panel 13th November 2009

One copy of the original hand-printed photobook was accepted into the library & learning centre of

The Holocaust Education Trust, London

"Simply look with perceptive eyes at the world about you, and trust to your own reactions and convictions. Ask yourself: Does this subject move me to feel, think and dream? Can I visualize a print - my own personal statement of what I feel and want to convey - from the subject before me?"

Ansel Adams