

## **The Association of Jewish Refugees: Serving holocaust refugees and survivors nationwide**

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### *Frankfurt unveiling of plaque to British diplomats who helped Jews*

'Day by day for several months, these men provided comfort, advice and help to the unfortunate people filling the waiting room. This is surely a shining example of true humanity.' This quote, from Rabbi Georg Salzberger, appears on a plaque unveiled on 8 May on the site of the former British Consulate General in Frankfurt and refers to the former British Consul General Robert T. Smallbones and Vice Consul Arthur Dowden. Georg Salzberger was for 30 years Rabbi of the Liberal community in Frankfurt (today's WestEnd Synagogue) and later founded what is now Belsize Square Synagogue.

The bronze plaque, its cost borne entirely by the City of Frankfurt, was unveiled in a moving ceremony attended by some 100 invited guests. The key-note speakers were the Oberbürgermeister of Frankfurt, Dr Peter Feldmann, the British Ambassador to Germany, Simon McDonald, and Rabbi Jonathan Wittenberg, Senior Rabbi of the UK Masorti Movement. Present from outside Germany were members of the families of the two diplomats (Wellingtons from Brazil and Dowdens from the UK) and members of the families of those rescued represented by Rabbi Wittenberg and the Rothenberg, Goldsmith-Stanton and Blumenthal families.

Following the rise to power of the Nazis, not only did the Consulate become a safe haven for many Jews but, due to the unceasing efforts of Robert Smallbones and Arthur Dowden, many Jews were able to escape to England and Palestine. Mention was made of the 'Smallbones visa scheme', by which thousands of Jews reached safety.

Thanks to Robert Smallbones, the grandfathers of both Rabbi Wittenberg and of David Rothenberg were released from concentration camp and arrived in England just before the outbreak of war. My parents, Ruth and Max Goldschmidt, fled Germany in 1936 thanks to the efforts of Robert Smallbones (and Frank Foley in Berlin).

Vice Consul Dowden, immediately after Kristallnacht, drove in the Consulate car through the streets of Frankfurt distributing food to Jews forbidden to leave their homes for seven days. The car was later vandalised by Nazi thugs.

On 15 April 2013, at a ceremony in London, Robert Smallbones and Arthur Dowden were posthumously awarded the British Heroes of the Holocaust medal by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, The Rt Hon Eric Pickles MP.

The Frankfurt project was initiated by the author of this article (Ed.)