

Surrey Heritage's work with the refugee community

<http://www.exploringsurreypast.org.uk/themes/subjects/refugees/>

There are a variety of online stories reflecting refugee history in Surrey

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Ockenden International (refugee charity)

Surrey History Centre holds the archive of Ockenden International (formerly The Ockenden Venture), a Woking-based refugee charity formed in the 1950s to support the education of East European children from German DP camps in Britain. Over the next 50 years, Ockenden established schools for Tibetan refugees in India, sponsored the education of black South African students, and brought Biafran refugees to Britain. Educational and vocational centres were established for refugees in Sudan, Pakistan, Cambodia and Algeria. However Ockenden is perhaps best known for its major role in the resettlement in Britain of Vietnamese refugees in the 1970s and 1980s.

The archive is well-used by people who themselves, or whose families, were helped by Ockenden, who wish to discover more information about their personal history; we have published a guide on how to use the archive at

<http://www.surreycc.gov.uk/heritage-culture-and-recreation/archives-and-history/surrey-history-centre/surrey-history-centre-help-for-researchers/archives-and-history-research-guides/from-vision-to-venture-the-story-of-ockenden-international>

In 2008, a Surrey Heritage project 'From Vision to Venture: the Story of Ockenden International' received a HLF grant to preserve the legacy of Ockenden by cataloguing the charity's archive, undertake oral history interviews, and work with the Woking Community Play Association to produce a community drama celebrating the history of Ockenden. Ockenden has always been a subject of local pride in Woking, and in Spring 2010 the specially commissioned drama, 'The Vision: Tales from Ockenden', was performed wholly by volunteers, some of whom had worked with Ockenden refugees.

Even though the project finished a few years ago we continue to help those who were involved with or helped by Ockenden. We promote contact with the refugees helped by the charity through our web page on our Exploring Surrey's Past website which has feedback contributions from refugees helped by the charity

http://www.exploringsurreypast.org.uk/themes/subjects/refugees/ockenden_international_from_vision_to_venture/ There are several Ockenden reunion groups on Facebook including the Keffolds – Ockenden group which we also promote.

Polish Exiles in Surrey - Tweedsmuir Polish Resettlement Camp project

Surrey History Centre has supported a Heritage Lottery Fund project to celebrate the history of Tweedsmuir Military Camp, near Thursley. The camp was originally built by the Royal Canadian Engineers and during the Second World War. However, between 1947 and 1960, the camp was used as temporary accommodation for personnel of the Polish Resettlement Corps (PRC). It is the camp's Polish history that has been collated and preserved by the project, run by Wies and Zen Rogalski, two brothers who both grew up in the camp. The project created a permanent exhibition housed in a reconstructed barrack hut at the Rural Life Museum, Tilford, opened in August 2012, close to the former site of camp. The project involved Polish refugees who lived at the camp and their descendants, and commissioned interviews with them and the family members of PRC personnel. A large number of English and Polish volunteers, including local school children, also contributed to the project. There has since been a travelling exhibition for the project, and regular talks on the project are still carried out by Wies Rogalski.

Surrey Heritage worked with the project advising how to create an archive so that future generations could learn about the post-war development of the Polish community in the county. We gave advice on how to catalogue material accurately and the archive (SHC ref 9196), which contains personal documents and reminiscences of those who lived at Tweedsmuir, as well as project papers. The papers were first placed with Surrey History Centre in 2013 but additional material continues to be added on a regular basis.

As a result of the online presence of this project we have been approached by other members of the Polish community to feature further stories of Polish refugees, namely Marian Hemar

<http://www.exploringsurreypast.org.uk/themes/subjects/diversity/polish/marian-hemar/> and Aleksander Jarzembowski

<http://www.exploringsurreypast.org.uk/themes/subjects/diversity/polish/jarzembowski/> .

Surrey as a Place of Refuge - working with the Jewish community:

Surrey Heritage works with local organisations, such as Kingston Synagogues, to commemorate Holocaust Memorial Day and to promote awareness of Surrey's Jewish history. This is done through foyer displays, the creation of online content and through the collection of records relating to the county's Jewish communities.

More information can be found on our Exploring Surrey's Past website at

http://www.exploringsurreypast.org.uk/themes/subjects/diversity/jewish_communities_in_surrey/partnership/

The website features both current work that we are doing with the Jewish community, and historical research, meeting a demand for information about Jewish refugees and Kindertransport who came to Surrey from Nazi Germany. Historical content such as 'Surrey as a Place of Refuge' demonstrates the variety of Jewish groups that made Surrey their home
<http://www.exploringsurreypast.org.uk/themes/subjects/military/holocaust-memorial-day/refuge/>. We have included research resources available at Surrey History Centre and elsewhere, which may encourage both further research and contact through reunion groups.

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