

# Remembering Kitchener Camp: A memorial concert for Yom HaShoa

On Thursday 28 April 2022, a [special concert](#) to evoke memories of the Kitchener Camp will take place at London's Wigmore Hall as part of this year's [Yom HaShoah](#) commemoration.

The Kitchener Camp opened in Sandwich, Kent, in January 1939, and saved the lives of 4,000 Jewish refugee men from Germany, Austria, Czechoslovakia and Poland. Many of these men had been arrested and imprisoned in concentration camps such as Buchenwald and Sachsenhausen following Kristallnacht in 1938. In Britain, the Jewish community and others persuaded the UK Government to relax visa entry restrictions, paving the way for the Kitchener Camp scheme.

The camp was intended to provide sanctuary for a steady flow of refugee men who were then expected to emigrate to Australia, America or Canada. A small number of women, often with very young children, who had gained entry to Britain with domestic visas, were able to temporarily join their husbands; but these were the lucky few. Sadly, most of the men would never see their families again.

The camp operated like a small town and had its own post office, hospital and cinema. Music became hugely significant and as more refugee musicians arrived, a camp orchestra was formed. Such was the orchestra's reputation that arrangements were made in August 1939 for a live BBC broadcast of one of their concerts. The onset of war unfortunately scuppered these plans. But now, over 80 years later, and around the corner from Broadcasting House, the Wigmore Hall will symbolically stage the BBC Kitchener concert that never took place. With narration from Jon Sopel and Emily Maitlis, and music from the Ensemble 360 String Quartet and the London Cantorial Singers, the concert will honour those who established the Kitchener Camp, as well as the memory of the millions who were not able to find refuge from the horrors of Nazism.

The event will conclude with the awarding of British Heroes of The Holocaust medals to descendants of brothers Jonas and Phineas May, and Ernest Joseph – three men who played pivotal roles in establishing and running the Kitchener Camp.

The British Heroes of the Holocaust medal is awarded by the UK government in recognition of British citizens who helped or rescued Jews or others in the Holocaust; either through extraordinary acts of courage, or by going above and beyond the call of duty in the most difficult circumstances. Since its inauguration in 2010 it has been awarded to 41 individuals.

Coordinated by Learning from the Righteous, the Holocaust Education charity has teamed up with World Jewish Relief, the Jewish Lads' and Girls' Brigade, the Association of Jewish Refugees, the '45 Aid Society, the Board of Deputies and the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities to present this year's memorial concert.