

Bringing home the Holocaust

Thought for the Day

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On Sunday I attended the Scottish Holocaust Memorial Day event in Kirkcaldy. This was the brainchild of some local school pupils who visited Auschwitz last year.

The night before they left Scotland, they met Ernest Levy, a survivor of both Auschwitz and Belsen who now lives in Glasgow. He told them that he can't go back to the hell he had survived, and asked them to go for him, and then to tell what they had seen.

These pupils have done that and more! They were so horrified by what they saw and heard that they were inspired to set up an action group, to bring home the lessons of the Holocaust. With the support of teachers and Fife Council, they began to organise events. As others joined in, they were able to mount a quite remarkable three weeks of drama, exhibitions, and other activities.

Their programme reached its climax on Sunday. Anne Frank's cousin Buddy Elias spoke at an exhibition about Anne's short life and its message for today. The main Council Chamber was given over to *Dr Korczak's Example*, a play about this humanitarian doctor's struggle to maintain some semblance of dignity in an orphanage in the Warsaw Ghetto just before it was wiped out by the Nazis. There was an exhibition about Holocaust survivors who found refuge in Scotland.

Then, after dark, a procession of 1000 torches wound through Kirkcaldy to a moving closing ceremony at which the pupils who planned and orchestrated this wonderful event spoke of their feelings about the Holocaust, supported by music and drama from local schools, and by speakers including Rhona Brankin, the new Minister for Communities.

Just a hundred years after George Santayana famously said that those who do not learn from history are condemned to repeat it, Fife's Auschwitz Experience Group have taught their elders a lesson that we – and more importantly they – will never forget:

It's no good just mouthing the slogan "Never again". We have to do something to ensure it can never happen again, and that coming generations know how easily hatred begins, and to what depths it can lead.

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