

ROUND AND ABOUT IN THE PARISH...

In February 2018 I took part in the West Hoathly Local History Archive exhibition and for my research I borrowed the book "Memoirs of Dame Margery Corbett Ashby". In the book Dame Margery describes the following:-



"A little before Hitler's army invaded Czechoslovakia in March 1939 Lord Layton and two other distinguished men dashed out to Prague to rescue and bring back a number of Czech men who had openly resisted the Sudeten movement to cripple and invade the country and who were certain to be liquidated as soon as the Nazi's gained control. (Lord Layton lived at Danehill).

The Czech's arrived in London with no more than they stood up in, and as old friends of the Layton's my husband and I were asked if we could accommodate the Czech Jewish doctor, Emil Ungar, who was a very experienced radium specialist. Of course we agreed, and Dr Ungar came to our Putney home to live with us. We grew very fond of him. Sometime later his Roman Catholic wife joined him here with a very valuable amount of radium hidden in smart high heeled shoes. The Germans allowed her to depart as she was fortunately an ash-blonde and therefore not believed to be Jewish. She was a skilled X-ray worker and later she sat for and passed our English exams and became a radiographer at the Royal Cancer Hospital, Fulham Road, now the Royal Marsden.

In 1936 we had purchased a country house, 'Wickens', at Birch Grove, near Horsted Keynes, with its 7 acres, on the edge of Charles Corbett's wooded valley which I knew so well when I lived at Woodgate. We used 'Wickens' as a weekend house. Early in the war the Putney house suffered war damage, so we moved to 'Wickens' which became our permanent residence. The Ungar's moved with us, but after a while Dr Ungar returned to London and did such fine service at the Royal Cancer Hospital

that at the end of the war he was offered a Consultant post there. Patriotically he returned to Prague to become Head of the Health Service, until the Communists tuned him out in favour of a man who had taken refuge East instead of West."

In the book - "No Ordinary Press Baron - A Life of Walter Layton" it describes how Walter took the lead in campaigning against Franco's bombing and in raising money to help Basque children



come to England as refugees. A plan was made to bring 2,000 children to England, in the event over 4,000 children were brought to England. Walter also spent a lot of time in the last quarter of 1938 rescuing Czech refugees (such as Dr Ungar).

Walter had four daughters, who married highly extrovert foreign husbands, three of them Jewish refugees from Germany, Austria and Czechoslovakia, the other an Anglo-Egyptian. Walter had a pretty fair idea of the evil nature of the Nazi regime and wrote three articles in the News Chronicle which described the drastic action being taken against Jews and others. He took all the steps he could to save people and his actions are as described by Dame Margery Corbett Ashby.

Walter, with Churchill and Lady Violet Bonham-Carter, calling at 10 Downing Street, on their return from the Hague Congress on Europe, June 1948 (see p. 207).

Walter Layton on Winston's left

Walter Layton was later to become Baron Layton of Danehill and a photo of him, accompanying Winston Churchill at 10 Downing Street, is pictured above.

Jill Rolfe