

2024 Edition by Irmgard Shepherd and Des Shepherd

## Index

Introduction

### Part 1 Geographical and Historic Context

1. Upper Silesia .....	3
2. Oberglogau .....	4
3. Hampf Family Business .....	6
4. Hitler's Rise to Power .....	8
5. Jewish People .....	9
6. The 'Jewish House' .....	10
7. Outbreak of War .....	12

### Part 2 Irmgard's Story

8. Childhood .....	14
9. My Youth .....	21
10. Adulthood .....	25
11. Post War Germany .....	31
12. Family Life .....	42

### Part 3 Other Recollections

13. The Hampf Family in Later Years ...	48
14. Breslau and Dresden Revisited .....	55
15. My German Heritage .....	71

### Appendix 1 Hampf Family Tree .....

79

### Appendix 2 Maps .....

81

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## Introduction

This book is a reprint of Irmgard's story, first written and published in 2006.

Whilst preserving the original text, this edition includes additional descriptions from Irmgard and recollections from two of her sisters, Inga and Helga, together with some background information to put Irmgard's story into context.

Before we start the story, I look at the geographical context as well as Germany during the 1930's and 40's and how that part of Germany was affected by the Second World War. This is written from the Hampf perspective and is largely based on written recollections from Inga, Helga as well as Irmgard.

As far as the Hampf family is concerned, Karl Hampf was one of six children. He had four sisters (Maria, Lena, Gretta and Trudle) and one brother (Sepp). His parents lived in Oberglogau where his father had a hardware shop and plumbing business.

Irmgard's mother was Marie (nee Jarosch). She is often referred to as Mutti (mother). Her parents lived in a village not far from Oberglogau. Marie had at least one sibling, a sister, Wallie.

After Marie's death in 1927, Karl remarried and his second wife, Angela is often referred to as Mutti 2. Her parents, the Marcinek family had moved and settled in Oberglogau. Angela had two siblings, Engo and Elizabeth (Elsbeth).

A detailed family tree, as known at the time of writing this, is set out in Appendix 1. Under the Nazi regime, German citizens were required to produce a family tree going back two generations to prove they had no Jewish blood in their line. This document gives details of both Karl and Marie's parents, grandparents and great grandparents.

I hope you find Irmgard's account and the accompanying text interesting and thank you for taking the time to read it.

Des Shepherd  
June 2024

## **Part 1 – Geographical and Historical Context**

It should be noted that this section of the book was written by Des Shepherd using transcripts and audio recordings from Irmgard's sisters, Inga and Helga. Therefore, the descriptions of life during the Second World War are very much a reflection on their experiences and how they perceived things which are, of course, quite different from the British perception.

Irmgard was born in a small town called Oberglogau (now known as Głogówek) in Upper Silesia, an area that was part of Germany at the time.

### **1 Upper Silesia**

Upper Silesia is the south-eastern part of the historical and geographical region of Silesia. The area is situated on the upper Oder River, north of the Sudetes Mountain range. It is currently, located mostly in Poland, with small parts in the Czech Republic. But the area has had a chequered history.

Since the 9th century, Upper Silesia has been part of (chronologically) Greater Moravia, the Duchy of Bohemia, the Piast Kingdom of Poland, again of the Lands of the Bohemian Crown and the Holy Roman Empire. In 1871 it became part of the German Empire.

Despite this, there were clear divisions between the Polish and Germans communities with a poll in 1921 showing a majority of 59.4% voting against merging with Poland.

In 1945, after the Second World War, the area was placed under the administration of the Republic of Poland. Following the German-Polish border treaty of 14 November 1990 it formally became Polish. A majority of the German-speaking population had by then either fled or had been expelled. Those being forced to leave were transported to Germany and replaced with Poles, many from former Polish provinces taken over by the USSR in the east. The expulsions of German-speakers did not totally eliminate the presence of a population that considered itself German. As I understand it, some members of the Janetzko family (Inga's husband, Bobbie's family) were still living and farming in the area in the 1980's when Irmgard and Philip visited.

To see the geography of the area, please refer to the maps in Appendix 2.



## 2 Oberglogau

Głogówek (German Oberglogau) is a town in Poland located in the Opole province in Upper Silesia. It lies approximately 35 km (22 miles) from Opole, and is about 10 km (6 miles) from the Czech border. The name of the city comes from the Polish word *głóg*, meaning hawthorn. The plant grew quite thickly in the area when the town was founded.



In 1327, Oberglogau, like all other Silesian villages, came under Bohemian rule. After the First Silesian War in the 18th century, Oberglogau and many other villages in the area then came under Prussian control. In 1765, the village was for the most part destroyed in a large fire. The town, as it had become, was connected to the railway network in 1876 when its population stood at around 6,000 inhabitants. By the start of World War II, the population was around 7,500.

As Inge wrote: *“Oberglogau was a small, comfortable, clean little town with around 8000 inhabitants. It was called a garden town. Everybody knew everybody. The town was quite wealthy with many Jewish shops.”*

During the Second World War, the town was the base for a working party of British and Commonwealth prisoners of war, under the administration of Stalag VIII B/344 at Lamsdorf (now known as Łambinowice). The prisoners worked in a local sugar beet factory.

In January 1945, as the Soviet armies resumed their offensive and advanced from the east, the prisoners were marched westward in the so-called Long March or Death March. Many of them died from the bitter cold and exhaustion.

The lucky ones got far enough to the west to be liberated by the allied armies after some four months of travelling on foot in appalling conditions.

Since 2009 the town has been bilingual in German and Polish, a substantial German population having remained in the area after Silesia was ceded to Poland at the end of World War II.

People connected to the town include Ludwig van Beethoven, who came to stay in the castle, where he finished composing his fourth symphony, and the grandfather of American actress Uma Thurman. Friedrich Karl Johannes von Schlebrügge was born here in 1886 before emigrating first to Sweden and then the US. Another connection is the former US Secretary of State, John Kerry. His great grandmother, Mathilda Frankel, came from Oberglogau. The Frankel's were in the cotton industry and were a well-known Jewish family that lived in a building on the Market Square.



*Der mächtige Turm der 8-Uhr-Glocke. Davor die Mariensäule von 1676.  
An der Nordseite des Ringes war 1901 das neue Apothekengebäude entstanden.  
Es enttäuschte sehr, weil die frühere Harmonie der Barock-Giebel weiter zerstört worden war.*

*The market square with Castle Street leading off on the right.*

### 3 The Family Business

Karl Hampf was a heating engineer with his own business. Oberglogau was quite a wealthy town and through mutual business contacts, Karl sold and installed luxurious heating equipment and bathrooms to very rich families in the area.

The business was based at the family home at 24 Schloss Strasse (Castle Street). This was a rented property, owned by the Castle. The building still exists and on a recent visit, the downstairs shop area is now a pizza restaurant.



**Karl Hampf**  
Permtal 101. Ober Glogau O.-S. Permtal 101.  
1881 1882 1883 1884

**Abt. Installation.**  
Zentralheizungen.  
Spezialität: Narag-Classic-Heizungen.  
Warmwasserbereitungen aller Art.  
Kostenlose Warmwasser-Erzeugung  
durch Ausnutzung der Feuegase im Küchenherd.  
Bade-, Klosett- und Waschanlagen.  
Wasserversorgungen, Entwässerungen,  
Kläranlagen.  
Pumpwerke mit elektro-automatischem Betrieb.

**Viehtränken**  
nach dem neuesten System.

**Abt. Klempnerei.**  
Dachrinnen, Dacheinfassungen.  
Dachdeckungen in sämtlichen Metallen,  
Dachpappe und teerfreier Spezialpappe.  
Aspirationsanlagen für Mühlen, Fabriken etc.

Karl's family shared the home with his parents. His family occupied the second floor. On the ground floor Karl had his offices and to the rear of the house there were store rooms, workshops and technical offices. One room was equipped for apprentices who lived there (board and lodgings). Karl's father had a shop on the ground floor where he sold household items and ironmongery. A bit like Robert Dyas in the UK. He also had a plumbing business.

Karl was one of the first people in the town to have an Opel car. He also had two motorbikes and four bicycles for the workers to use if they had to go a bit further on their fitting jobs.

Karl took on apprentices, generally boys, who had no parents. Up to the completion of their apprentice they lived four per bedroom, 2 up and 2 down in bunks. They had blue bed linen. When they passed their exams, they moved out to make room for the next contingent.

Despite being a successful business, in the late 1920's, early 30's cash flow was always an issue, with payment of invoices slow in coming. However, he budgeted well to buy clothes and shoes and his family was always well dressed.

By the early 1930's unemployment in Germany was around 10% and many people could no longer buy what they needed and the supply of money was becoming shorter and shorter. Business people, farmers and handymen all complained. Karl's otherwise successful business suffered, there were fewer and fewer orders and the work that was completed could no longer be paid for. At that time Karl employed around 15-20 workers and fitters and 6 apprentices. Some lived in Oberglogau and others in surrounding villages.

On Friday evenings, the wages were paid to the workers. Often Karl had to tell one or the other of the fitters there was no work for them the next week. This, regardless of whether he had a family to support. He told them he would fetch them as soon as he had an order. It was often his daughter, Inge, who was tasked to visit them to ask them to come and work. They were glad to get the work.



## 4 Hitler's Rise to Power

When Hitler came to power in 1933, better times were promised. As Inga recalls:

*“On the political front, one could only hear good things. People were once again employed, businesses were booming and people had money to spend again. Karl was able to improve his business. The orders were big and he could employ more people. It all seemed very positive.”*

The country was breathing a sigh of relief. People had money again to go out. Restaurants and hotels were used a lot more. Everywhere building work was being done and in the whole country was thriving. There was a lot of confidence for the future because everything grew and in the first 4 years it seemed that the promises Hitler made were kept. As a result, slowly but surely, the population followed his regime.

School children were required to join the Hitler Youth. Up to their 14<sup>th</sup> birthday, the girls were called ‘young maidens’ and the boys belonged to the ‘young boys’ club. It was well received; young children were off the streets and had lots to do – travelling, music, singing and dancing. They learned musical instruments, went on hikes and journeys. It was an opportunity to travel to other parts of our country. Inga recalls being allowed to go to Breslau to a large singing and sports festival. Here, young people were encouraged to do sports, gymnastics, swimming and folk dancing. When they reached 14, boys were automatically transferred to the Hitler Youth.

The Hitler Youth was a ‘voluntary’ working service for young men and was a partially paramilitary organisation for 14-18 year-olds. They were given a home, their orders, and towns, streets, footpaths and waterways were kept clean and tidy.

After Hitler's first 4-year plan, things became stricter. Belts were tightened but generally people followed everything. Life went well and there was order and peace; no one went hungry and everyone had work.

When war broke out in 1939, all the male workers had to join the army. Karl was excused, partly because he had a very bad lung injury from the First World War, and partly because his business was important for the war effort. He had to install heating and shower units plus repairs in army quarters in the area, along with other public buildings, churches, households and businesses.

Together with Angela (his second wife), her father, Inga and the apprentices (female and male), the business carried on as best as it could.

Inge did the clerical work, namely delivery notes, orders, bills, estimates plus all the correspondence. Karl and Angela looked after the finances and book keeping.

## 5 Jewish People

Oberglogau was a wealthy town with many Jewish shops. Inga recalls that at school she liked knitting, sewing and other handicrafts. On one occasion, she needed some multi-coloured wool. In the market place there was a Jewish shop and as children, she and her friends went there to purchase the wool, which was sold very cheaply, together with other small things they needed for school. One roll of coloured wool, which they used to make kettle holders, cost just 2pf.

One day after visiting the shop, she noticed some men with cameras who took pictures of her. This happened time and time again until one day Karl got a threat saying that his daughters must not buy in this shop anymore and if it happens again, he would be forced to close his shop/business. This threat was made public, so Inga and others had to stop using this Jewish shop.

It was said that Jewish people should emigrate and leave the country. The Jewish people did speak amongst themselves about their concerns but slowly the big Jewish business people, doctors, solicitors and so on, left. It was believed they went to America. Israel as a country did not exist at that time and Hitler often suggested the Jewish population in Germany should go to Palestine. Apparently quite a few did. Slowly but surely more and more Jewish people left the town.

Karl's daughters were told they had gone but they didn't know whether they went by own free will or were rounded up. Inga recalls that she only found out it was the latter during the war. But according to Helga, it was a taboo subject, something people didn't talk about. But what did Karl think about it all? According to Helga, it was one of the things he didn't want to talk about. She remembers that:

*"When he had his shop, he had to display the Nazi flag when Hitler had his birthday and on other occasions. If he did not do this people would talk about it. But what he really thought about it – I don't know. But I'm sure most Germans were against Jewish people. They didn't talk about it but it's happening again today in Germany but this time against people from other countries (immigrants). It's so ingrained in people – a legacy from the past and even during the 1<sup>st</sup> World War they were against the Jews."*

The local German people bought up the shops and life carried on. Eventually, there were no more Jewish people and one left it at that. It was only later that Inga learned this was absurd. It is very difficult for people, including myself, to understand that she, and others living in Upper Silesia, where there was a concentration camp, apparently did not know what happened to Jewish people.

Auschwitz was about 100 miles away. Angela (Karl's second wife) was born in Oswiecim, the town where the Auschwitz camps were later built. They moved away as her father worked on the railway. He and family often moved around and their move to Oberglogau was the last before he retired. But they still had family links in Oswiecim. Irmgard went to a school in Hindenburg (now Zabrze), a largish town then on the border with Poland. This town had three forced labour sub camps of the Stalag camp and a sub camp of Auschwitz.



## 6 The Jewish House

After many years sharing the family home with his parents, Karl bought a large house from a Jewish person. This property was also in Castle Street, a little nearer the market square.

The rooms in the original house were too small and Karl's father wanted the family to move out as he wanted more room for himself. He had a shop himself with household articles which was expanding and he was still doing his plumbing work.

The Jewish house (no. 4 Castle Street) was, according to Inge, purchased by Karl all above board. The house was going up for auction. The owners, a married couple, were going through a divorce and had been separated for some time. Herr Zussman had moved to Berlin whilst Frau Zussman still stayed in the house in her former flat.

Karl went to Berlin where he met Herr Zussman, signed a contract with him in the witness of a solicitor and paid everything in cash. Helga recalls that her uncle was also interested in buying the house but Karl beat him to it (family rivalry?). The family subsequently moved into the house in 1938.

Karl let Frau Zussman continue to live upstairs in her flat. Many remaining Jewish families went up to see her every Sunday afternoon. Karl's children could not help but hear how they were annoyed and how they shouted about Hitler and what was happening in Germany at that time.

Karl was happy to let Frau Zussman stay until once again he received threats. He explained this to Frau Zussman, who by that time had become very weak and feeble, and she asked him to take her into an old people's home. He bought some of her very good furniture so that she had some money and took her to a well-regarded old people's home in a nearby town. She no longer had any relatives who would have looked after her. He made sure she was well accommodated and people assured him of her good care. It is not known what happened to her.

Inga, in her memoir, claims the house was "*bought honestly; did not get rid of anybody and were proud.*" However, Helga writes that in Angela's last few years before she died, she mentioned the Zussmans but didn't say anything about the house purchase. Helga got the impression that something was not quite right as in her later years the matter seemed to trouble Angela.

Helga was not sure that Karl paid the market value of the property at the time. Many Jewish people took what they could as they needed money to leave the country.

I don't know whether this is connected, but many years later in the 1990's, Irmgard paid for her daughter-in-law's mother, Gillian Simons, to visit the UK from Australia. She apparently admitted to her husband, Philip that she 'wanted to give something back'. To this day I have no idea what she knew about what happened in Germany at that time as she has never spoken about it.

But back to what was now the family house.



*Left: The house in 2018 with a shop on the left but with the accommodation converted into a number of apartments.*

*Above: post war picture of the rear of the house showing the workshops on the right.*

On the ground floor on the left was a large window – it was a shop where you could look at bathroom fittings, central heating systems etc. which is what Karl sold.

On the first floor the room on the left was the bedroom where Helga slept with Karola and their mother (Karl didn't want his children to be alone). Helga recalls that her father had another bedroom but when her mother went to see him in the night, she had to creep through three other rooms. Inga recalls that when she went the girls said oh my goodness, we're going to have another child. Angela became pregnant several times but had a number of miscarriages.

The middle room on the first floor was the dining room and the room on the right had the library, a piano and big leather chairs. It was not usually used by the children but by Karl and Angela in evening, although it was where the family spent Christmas.

Behind these rooms was a big playroom and at the back of the house were the workshops and on top of these a terrace garden. The attic had accommodation for the maids although some lived locally in the town.

Inga described it as a very big business house with exhibition and office rooms, store rooms, a workshop and technical offices with a shop in the front.

*"We got a very big roof terrace. Vatti made a fountain with a water feature – it was possible for the children to bathe in there. We had a sand pit for the little ones and all around, boxes with flowers, coloured geraniums. We had nice garden furniture and I felt as if I were in the cinema. We believed we had earned these luxurious things."*

## 7 Outbreak of War

On 1 September 1939 there was the news that war had broken out with Poland. Hitler had occupied Poland and the war should only last about 3 weeks. They talked of a 'blitz krieg' or a 'quick war'. Inga was working in Breslau at the time and her employer, Herr Gottschalk, had to go into the army – he was an officer, and was sent to the front.

Across Germany, men were called up into the army. All leave was cancelled. Inga recalls that the feeling was very odd. How and when should all this end? But in Breslau and Upper Silesia it didn't feel much of the war.

There were various orders broadcast on the radio. All the towns had to be darkened at dusk especially the larger towns like Breslau. The street lights were covered up with black paper. All the windows of flats and houses, businesses premises, railway stations and trains had to be darkened.

Inga recalls: *"It was strange and one cannot believe how people got used to it and took it in their stride."*

*"Life carried on in the large towns. We all went out a lot. It was astonishing that with this complete darkness at night, there was no robbery or mugging. One could walk late at night and nobody did anything, especially as there were a lot of soldiers in the streets. If something had happened, the punishment was very harsh."*

*"But there was a strange image or feeling everywhere. On stations in restaurants and wherever one went you saw young men in uniform. They wore their uniforms according to where they were allotted; the Army, Air Force, Navy etc. In our area we only saw a few mountaineering soldiers because they were training in the high mountains."*

Inga's boyfriend, Bobbie, was called up and joined the mountain troops. She wrote:

*"We all had hope and confidence that all our relations and friends will come home well again and not hurt. No one could see the terrible extent to what the coming war years would bring. The news and special reports came very fast about the victory of the Germans because Hitler took one country after the other."*

*"After having occupied Poland, he went to Czechoslovakia, Austria and France and so on in the course of the following 5 years."*

*"The German big towns with factories that made war materials were bombarded daily by England and America. They dropped their bombs in Berlin, Hamburg, Bremen, Koln and Dusseldorf. They were all lived in towns. People only knew one life, namely in their cellars. They were partly bombed out and towns were flattened."*

*"The towns in the north and west of Germany were first hit. The towns in the East and middle Germany like Leipzig and Breslau were not hit. Loads of news came in of families who had family members who were either killed or taken prisoner. There was a lot of grief on the German side in spite of all these victory reports."*

Irmgard remembers:

*"I was 15 years of age when war broke out. My home was in the most eastern part of Germany, in Oberglogau, a small town in Silesia. The first thing I noticed was that the town was pitch black in the evening. All dwellings, public buildings and other light spending objects had to be covered with black cloths to make them inconspicuous.*

*"We were told what to do and where to go if there is an air attack. Most German houses were built with cellars and they were very good shelters. We all received ration cards so you only were entitled to a certain amount of food. We did not have any bananas or oranges and the younger children had never seen such fruit.*

*"Life changed. A lot of men had to join the forces. A few of our teachers were called up, also some friends and my favourite cousin. We listened to the radio to hear the news. Life was relatively quiet at the beginning. Later, we heard that many places in the west and north of Germany were bombed and partly or wholly destroyed.*

*"When I was 16 years old, after taking my "O" levels I went to a boarding school about 80 km (50 miles) to the south, away from my home. I went home in my holidays and thought people were very anxious and worried. When will we be bombed? However, when you are young you don't worry about the future and enjoy the present."*

## Part 2 - Irmgard's Lebenslauf (The Course of Life)

### 8 Childhood

I was born on 23<sup>rd</sup> June 1924, Irmgard Edeltrud Hampf, in Oberglogau, a small town in Upper Silesia. Everyone called me Irmi.

I am the third daughter of Karl Hampf and Maria nee Jarosch.



*My parents wedding picture, 1920*

My parent's first child was Inge, born on the 7<sup>th</sup> March 1921, followed by Erika, born on the 25<sup>th</sup> February 1922.



*Erika and Inge, 1923*

When Erika was about 4 years old, she contracted meningitis and unfortunately did not survive. She was a lovely little girl, full of fun. Her little white coffin was put in our living room and lots of people came to bid her farewell.

I do not remember the occasion as I was less than 2 years old and I spent a lot of time at my mother's sister (Walli). Walli wanted children but did not have any, so I made up for it.

Inge recalls:

*"I especially remember my younger sister, Erika. Every week a man came from the country to deliver fresh goods and he took little Erika to his heart. We called him the Egg and Butter Man. He enjoyed talking to her."*

*"Erika was a sunny, happy child and to the Egg and Butter Man, she always sang her latest songs propped herself up in front of him in her latest dress or showed him her new golden earrings."*

*"One day, when Erika was 3 ½ and I was 4 ½ years old, we both got new dresses. They were both the same but Erika's was light green with a big embroidered butterfly on the front, and mine was lilac. To match these we received earrings. Erika's had a light blue stone with a little star and I had a small red coral with a golden dot in the middle."*

*"Happy and proud, Erika placed herself in front of the Egg and Butter Man. She ran up and down in the room and said 'Butter Man – have I got a nice dress? Have I got nice earrings?' He always admired her lovely things and Erika was proud."*

*"She sang 'Time and Time' to the Egg and Butter Man – a curious little nursery song for which she placed her little hands on her hips and ran up and down in the room."*

*'We live here only a short time with a lot of trouble and sadness.  
Hi little man come and dance with me and let us be happy.'*

*"She clapped her little hands and turned and laughed and danced. We all admired the dancing and singing of this happy child and nobody thought of anything bad."*

*"When Erika was 4 years old, she contracted meningitis. Unfortunately, no medicines or doctors could help and my darling little sister died. As there were no mortuaries at that time, the small white children's coffin was standing in our flat right up to the funeral. Erika looked like a little angel. She wore a very pale pink dress with pink bows on each shoulder, white stockings and black little shoes. It was very sad for our family."*

On the 5<sup>th</sup> September 1926 my parents had a fourth daughter, Vera. My little sister was only 6 months old when my mother, who had complications after a gall bladder operation, died. I was only 2 ¾ years old at the time.



Inga recalls that after Vera's birth, Marie contracted gall bladder trouble. The consequences were often very painful. She was fed up with all the pain and quickly decided to go to Breslau for an operation to remove gall stones. Vera was just 6 months old at the time.

Karl frequently visited her, travelling to Breslau a couple of times a week. On 7 March 1927 (Inga's 6<sup>th</sup> birthday), Karl was in Breslau to stay with Marie and Aunt Walli stayed so the children were not alone.

Inga recalls that evening:

*"She read to me a story. I had a nice birthday with candles, chocolates and a birthday cake."*

*"However, one of the workers came upstairs and whispered something very secretive to my aunt in her ear."*

He told her that he took a telephone call from Breslau with the news that Marie had died.

*"Aunt Walli tried not to cry for my sake and I only had a notion of what could have happened but the mood was gone."*

*"The next morning Vatti fetched me very tenderly and asked me to come into his bed and told me full of sadness that Mutti had died. Our dear Mutti was dead and only shortly before that, Erica. Why?"*

Marie's body was brought back from Breslau and she lay in state in the living room. The funeral itself went with a long procession from the town to the cemetery. The whole town seemed to be there. People came as they all liked Marie who always had a good word for everybody. Inga remembers that years later she kept hearing how popular Marie was and how shocked the whole town was about Karl's fate with his 3 little children. Inga commented that it was no wonder as when Marie was alive, she was content and happy.

Our poor father was left with 3 little children and he sorely missed my mother who was a very accomplished and efficient secretary as well as a good mother. A maid and a nanny were employed to help look after us. My father was a central heating engineer and had an installation business for central heating, bathrooms, boilers etc. and undertook various jobs including plumbing and lead covering on roofs (churches). He employed several apprentices and specialists.

My Aunt Walli asked father if she could look after me since he had enough worries and could spare one of his little ones. So, I stayed with her and her husband for a year and a half. Just over a year following my mother's death my father married again and soon after came to take me home to grow up with my sisters. Our "new" mother was very nice and we liked her very much. We called her 2<sup>nd</sup> Mutti. I remember my time at Aunt Walli's and the return home.

In 1928 Karl remarried. Inga recalls:

*"One day it was noticed that Vatti, with one of the apprentices, sent flowers to an address in Hinterdorfer Strasse. And once a Fräulein (Miss) Angela Marcinek visited us and Vatti introduced her to Vera and myself. I was enthusiastic about the beautiful, friendly lady and quite happy to have such a Mutti. To Vatti's joy she managed us very well and understood us and they got married in July 1929.*

*"I was proud to carry her train at the wedding and was very pleased to have again a dear and beautiful Mutti. The wedding was great fun. Vera was by now 2½ and I was 7½ years old.*



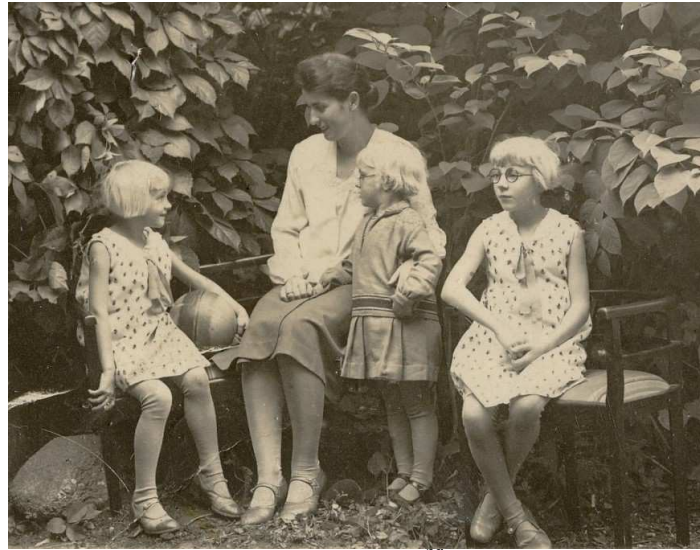
*"I didn't move from Mutti's side from then on. We then again had a whole world – a complete family. Vatti was happy beside a dear and understanding wife and also to have found a good mother for his children. We loved our second mother like our own and would not hear of it if anyone mentioned the word step-mother. We didn't have a step-mother."*

Vera and I were sent to a kindergarten, which was run by nuns. I was a very pale and delicate child and did not want to eat but somehow I managed to survive.

In 1930, when I was 6 years old, I started school (in Germany all children start at 6). Primary school was a segregated one with old-fashioned teaching methods such as "only speak when you are spoken to". Depending on the teacher, a smack with a ruler or cane for laziness or misbehaviour was not uncommon. I remember a smack across my hand because I did not answer a times-table quickly enough. A year later, a medical examination revealed a small shadow on my lung.

I was sent to a children's recuperation home in the mountains with lots of good air for 6 weeks. I was very homesick there but it must have done some good.

After my return I remember countless sessions at our doctor's surgery lying under an ultra-violet lamp. Two and a half years later I had to go to another home, also in the Riesengebirge (The Giant Mountains) with good, mountain air. There were many children there and we had a good time. I don't know how much good that had done me, but I remember Mutti buying me a complete new outfit to go there, and that probably had the desired effect. I spent 6 weeks there. A small scar, which remained on my lung, is still sometimes making me cough, but a specialist recently assured me that it is harmless.



*Irm, Vera and Inge with '2<sup>nd</sup> Mutti', 1930*

In summer we had long holidays, about 8 weeks, and before the holidays started, we used to carefully watch a thermometer which was placed outside a school building. When it reached a certain temperature (I can't remember, 28 or 30 degrees C I think), lessons ceased and we were all sent home. In the summer holidays I remember going with my sisters, an aunt and 4 cousins to a nearby river. We took a picnic and bathing costumes and enjoyed playing in the water. Although we saw water rats and other creatures at times, it was a great adventure. My aunt had brought a lot of white linen (sheets, table cloths etc) which she spread on the meadow and kept sprinkling with water when they became dry, thus bleaching them snowy white by the sun.

At home, I remember on very hot days Mutti dampening lots of sheets and hanging them in front of sun-filled windows and repeatedly dampening them, thus keeping the rooms cool (air conditioning?) Later on, when I was 11 or 12 a beautiful open air swimming pool with play areas, a café, lawns for ball games and sun-bathing area were built in our town and we spent most of our summer holidays there, having bought a season ticket. We never went away in our holidays.

In winter we spent our spare time skating on the lake in our park. The pond had to be frozen to a certain thickness and then it became a business proposition.

A caretaker was installed who sold tickets, there were benches for us to sit on when putting on our skates, there were coat racks for garments if one became hot with the exercise and there were illuminations for the adults to skate in the evenings. I remember getting very very cold on occasions and arriving home crying, but a cuddle from our nanny, a dripping sandwich and a hot drink soon put me right again.



When I was 11 or 12 we also started skiing. Father Christmas very kindly obliged with skies and suits. My father was a very accomplished skier and the only holidays he ever took were in winter when he travelled to a high range of mountains called Altvatergebirge.

At home our family spent the majority of winter Sundays getting up early and, having prepared our gear & rucksacks the night before, catching a train, travelling 3 or 4 stations along the line before taking a bus to the foot of a mountain called Bischofskoppe. There we put on our skis and walked steadily uphill, enjoying the winter landscape, the sunshine and the invigorating clear air. About half way, after 2 hours, there was a hunter's hut, where a lady always had some milk ready for us. On we went up, up and up (there were no lifts in those days). Finally, after about 3 ½ - 4 hours we arrived at the mountain hut (more of a restaurant).

Inside there was a wonderful atmosphere. It was warm, there were comfortable chairs and someone on the harmonica playing jolly and traditional tunes. There we had an excellent dinner - we were very hungry after our exertion! Then we had a good rest and afterwards we went to the back of the hut where there was a nursery slope. There we practiced a bit and fooled around until it was time to go home.

Just as the upward trot was gentle so was the downhill journey. The 4 hours we spent going up were now rewarded by the 40 minutes coming down, right to the spot where the bus waited to take us home. Dead tired but happy we fell into our beds. I must admit there were times when I would have preferred to stay at home on a Sunday but it became enjoyable again later on when I was allowed to bring a boyfriend.

## 9 My Youth

In 1933 Hitler came to power but this did not affect me very much. I joined the Hitler youth (which was similar to cubs and scouts). I enjoyed the meetings we had, we played games, learned folk dancing and went camping.

After 7 years at the primary school, I was admitted to a grammar school. It was really a school for boys in our town, but as there was no girl's school, a few girls were permitted to attend. I spent 3 years there, which was a very happy time. However, we had our worries.

Our 2<sup>nd</sup> Mutti gave birth to a little girl, Karola, on the 7<sup>th</sup> February 1935 followed by Helga (25<sup>th</sup> February 1938). A sixth daughter was a slight disappointment for my father, as he had always wanted a son who would be able to take over his business. However, it was not to be. We treated them like our dolls, only they were alive! I spent a lot of time in my summer holidays in our town's pool, swimming, diving, reading and sun bathing.



*Irmi with Helga and Karola, 1939*



*Irmi, Karola and Vera with 2<sup>nd</sup> Mutti, 1937*

1938 was a very eventful year for the Hampf family. On 14 February Karl's father died at 75 years old whilst on 25 February Helga was born. Inga recalls that she was Vera's darling and looked very much like her. Vera looked after her just like a little mummy. She went with her for walks with her pram, played with her and puffed up her pillows.

In July 1938 the family moved into their own house at no. 4 Castle Street whilst in November, Vera died.

Vera was very enthusiastic about sport, swimming in particular. One day, in 1938, Vera came home from the town's swimming pool after doing various jumps and diving with an open hip wound. Suddenly she had to suffer excruciating pain and could no longer put her leg down. The doctor was called and Vera had to go into a hospital.



Initially polio was suspected but after treatment there was no improvement and she had to go to the hospital in Oberglogau. After a 3 month stay there, she went into a special clinic in Breslau. Vera had bed sores, got very thin. She put on a brave face despite the pain. The X-Rays showed blood poisoning and sepsis. She became weaker and on 2 November 1938 my lovely little sister died. She was just 12 years old. I loved her very much. She was brought back to our house and was laid out in our living room.



The coffin was laid in the house where many people, young and old, came to see her. She had many friends and was a popular girl. I kept sitting with her and could not bear to be separated from her. Many, many people were taking part or were watching the funeral procession. Her coffin was carried by boys who had been friends and wanted to do this last service. It was a long way, about  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a km.

Inga recalls:

*"The feast of the All Saints was always romantic in our little town. It was very festive.*

*"At the market place there was a big war memorial of the First World War (1914-18). This was surrounded with flower beds and many colourful lamps which were lit in honour of those who died. Beyond that, the town cemetery was nicely illuminated by little lamps which one could see from afar. Everyone went to the cemetery, even if they didn't have any relations or friends buried there. For us it was always very sad because next to Mutti and Erika, we now had to decorate and illuminate Vera's grave.*

*"So, the first Christmas came without Vera. We always celebrated Christmas Eve in a very luxurious manner. The gifts, after the festive supper, were always a big feast for us children with big surprises. In the large living room, each of us had our own place. The gifts were fairly luxurious as our parents had a good business and the family was well off.*

*"The first Christmas without our dear Vera was very bad. A little bell went and we went, one after the other, into the living room to our usual places. Vera's place was empty and we all cried. The always happy festive mood could no longer be created."*

Like my sister Inge, I had piano lessons. At first my teacher did not live far from us and I used to go to her house. Then she married and moved away, but I still went to lessons on my bicycle, it was quite a long way. When the winter and the bad weather came, my parents did not want me to go that far, so a teacher from my school was employed who came to our house. He was our music teacher and also taught mathematics. Through him I developed a liking for figures and became a star pupil in maths. But he became amorous and asked me to marry him. I did not accept and told him that I was too young (15 ½) and that I did not know what I wanted to do with my life. He was later drafted into the army and was killed in France.

My father thought I would be better off in a "girl's" school and in 1940, when I was 16, I went to Hindenburg (a largish town on the border with Poland and now known as Zabrze). I stayed in a boarding school, which I liked immensely but it was always nice to come home in the holidays. This school cost my father a lot of money. He was keen that I should go to university and study. I was away from home a lot and very early in my life and thus learned to become independent. At Easter in 1943 I sat my matriculation which enabled me to go to university.

By then, Germany was at war and times were very hard. A lot of bombing was going on, mainly in the west of Germany, and many people lost loved ones or their homes. Many soldiers lost their lives in active service, among them my favorite cousin Hubert (*below left*) and my boyfriend Herbert (*below right*) who became a Lieutenant in a tank regiment. The war seemed to get closer to us because it affected us and people we knew.



I was unable to go to university before I had spent a year in the Land Army. I was sent to a camp near the town of Dresden, in Saxony. Here I stayed with 50 to 60 other young women. After an introduction we were sent to farmers to help on the land. Since a lot of farmers were engaged in the war, the women carried on the work and they had to have help. This was a good experience for me and I became very confident and independent.

One day I had to chop wood and when I wrote home about it, my mother said, “Oh, the poor girl, she has never had an axe in her hand in her whole life.”



At the end of the land army year, I returned to my home and prepared to go to university.

## 10 Adulthood

In 1944, at the end of the land army year I returned to my home and prepared to go to university to study dentistry. I would have preferred to have read medicine, but it took many years to graduate as a doctor. I went to Breslau, the capital of Silesia. I had a nice rented room and got on very well with my landlady. It was a beautiful town with lots of sights worth seeing and visiting. An aunt lived also in this town and I often joined her and her daughter (my cousin). It was a lovely happy time with lots of friends, but it was all too short.

Wroclaw originated in the 10th century as a crossroads of various trade routes. It was fortified by King Boleslaw I who also established a Cathedral on Ostrów Tumski ("Cathedral Island").

In 1138 Wroclaw, as it had become known, became the first capital of Silesia. This part of central Europe had a turbulent history and by 1871 had become part of the German Empire. At some point it took on its German name of Breslau.

Following the First World War, in 1919, Breslau became the capital of the newly created Prussian Province of Lower Silesia. Up to the beginning of World War II, Breslau was the largest city in Germany east of Berlin. Whilst renowned as a stronghold of left-wing liberalism during the German Empire, Breslau became one of the strongest support bases of the Nazi Party. In the 1932 elections The Nazi party received 44% of the city's vote, their third-highest total in all Germany. The following year, KZ Dürrgoy, one of the first concentration camps in the Third Reich, was set up in the city. Thousands of forced labourers were imprisoned there and in other camps subsequently set up in the area.

The war had not touched Silesia, it was the north and west of Germany which suffered most. After a few months we all had to cease our studies and help in the war effort. I was sent into a factory where I had to pack items. It became known that I was able to use a typewriter, I had often practiced in my father's office, and so I was sent into the office instead of the factory floor. Later I was sent to work at the Labour Exchange. By now, we were experiencing some bomb attacks from the east (the Russians).

Christmas 1944 and I went home. It was nice, as always, but the mood was strange everywhere. These were my last days at home and the future looked uncertain. On the 27<sup>th</sup> December 1944 I returned to Breslau and spent New Year's Eve alone in my comfortable room.

And that was when any connection with my parents, be it by post, rail, road or phone, was severed. I had no idea what happened to them and they had heard nothing from me.

My landlady had left her flat in order to be with her husband and left me to take what I wanted should I want to leave. Russian troops were advancing and there were air raid warnings.

In the middle of January, the Russians came closer and Breslau was declared a stronghold. All women and children had to leave. I saw my aunt but she refused to leave her home.

I packed my suitcase with clothes and left the flat. I was on my own. After some time, my case seemed too heavy. There was deep snow. I returned to my room, took a deep drawer and packed everything in that. I tied some string to one end and now I could pull my "sledge" easily. Then I thought again. The snow will not always be there and one does not get very far with a "drawer". Back again.

So, I emptied most of the things and apart from a few essential clothes I took a lot of photos and all my official papers. I thought I can always get some clothes but if I never returned, I shall lose my papers and my photos which at least will remind me of home. The thought of perhaps never returning was unreal. I still hoped that one day I would. But this seemed the most sensible thing to do and turned out to be of great help to me later. I found it hard to leave my accommodation not knowing whether I would ever see it again.

On the approach to the station there were thousands of people who all wanted to travel westwards by train. The queue moved very slowly. One tried to get on any train as long as it went west. The trains were chock-a-block. It would soon be my turn. The noise of the Russian gun shots was getting closer.

The next train, which I managed to squeeze into, went to Dresden.

The Battle of Breslau took place from February to May and during this time, half of the city was destroyed. Breslau capitulated to the Red Army on 6 May 1945, two days before the end of the war. Dubbed 'Festung Breslau' ('Breslau Fortress') by Hitler, it was the scene of a brutal three-month siege that cost the lives of up to 170,000 civilians, 6,000 German troops and 7,000 Russian soldiers.

The town's German inhabitants, who had not fled, were expelled between 1945 and 1949 in accordance to the Potsdam Agreement which saw Breslau and Silesia become part of Poland. Breslau's name changed back to its Polish one of Wrocław.

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The next train, which I managed to squeeze into, went to Dresden.

Dresden was a wonderful baroque city in the county of Sachsen (Saxony) and which had not suffered any war or bomb damage.



As 1944 turned into 1945, that was the case. Dresden was known as the “Florence on the Elbe”, a reference to the beautiful Italian city.

In 1694, when Augustus II came to the Saxony throne, Dresden had largely been destroyed by a great fire. But unlike other cities that were destroyed by fire, such as London where medieval chaos was replaced by Renaissance chaos, Dresden developed strict planning rules in its reconstruction, and the landmarks we know today were created.

The Zwinger was a pleasure palace that housed the royal art collection. There was the Opera House and the Royal Palace, known as Dresden Castle. The Catholic Court Church, the city’s cathedral, was connected to the palace/castle by an arched bridge. It is a bit like the Bridge of Sighs in Venice but without the canal.

The masterpiece was the Frauenkirche (Church of Our Lady). Because of the decline in Catholicism at the time, it became Dresden’s Protestant Cathedral. The acoustics were superb and in 1736, Johann Sebastian Bach gave his first public performance on the church’s organ. The dome is considered an architectural masterpiece and has been compared with other domed buildings such as Florence Cathedral and St. Peter’s Basilica in Rome. Like St Paul’s Cathedral in London, the Frauenkirche dominated Dresden’s skyline.

Dresden’s fame spread and it became an essential stop in the European Grand Tours of the time. The city was also famed for its Meissen porcelain, known also as Dresden China.

After the First World War, there was a revival of tourism in Dresden. Whilst the city traded on its past, its manufacturing industries were more modern with the manufacture of cameras, optical instruments, typewriters, sewing machines and the like. The social and economic depression in Germany hit Dresden and it was at this time in Germany’s history that the Nazi Party and Hitler came to power. In the German elections of 1932, the size of the Nazi vote in Dresden was second only to Breslau, for many years a refuge of the far right in Germany.



During the Nazi era from 1933 to 1945, the Jewish community of Dresden was reduced from over 6,000 to less than 100. The history of this time is quite fascinating and Frederick Taylor's book 'Dresden' sets it out in quite some detail.

But, as Irmgard said, Dresden had not suffered any war or bomb damage. The distance from the USAAF and RAF airfields in East Anglia made airstrikes difficult – until February 1945.

I carried 2 addresses with me. One was in Berlin, that of my landlady's sister. The other one was of a friend of my father in Dresden, Herr Weitalla and his wife Liesel. When I finally found their address I was welcomed with open arms and made very comfortable.

The papers I had from the employment office in Breslau I presented after a few days to a similar place in Dresden. (If you did not work you got no ration cards). I was sent to an office in the main street in the city and had to do clerical work.

A friend from the university days in Breslau gave me his parent's telephone number and said I should visit them should I ever be in Dresden. So, I gave them a ring and asked if I could see them on the 13<sup>th</sup> February. They could not make it that day and we arranged a meeting for the following day. But it was not to be.

Fate was on my side for I shall never forget the giant bombing of Dresden on the night of the 13<sup>th</sup> February 1945. Had I visited them on that night I would not be alive. The friends I was staying with lived in a suburb outside Dresden and we watched the raid from their garden.

Dresden was totally destroyed on that night.

Had this happened during the day I would have been burnt or asphyxiated. The street where I worked was very narrow and people went to the cellars to escape the bombing. But the fires were so fierce that they took up all the oxygen and people could not breathe. The town was burning for several days.

According to the RAF at the time, Dresden was Germany's seventh-largest city and the largest remaining built-up area that had not been bombed. The USAAF suggested that two of Dresden's traffic routes were of military importance. The city was at the junction of the north-south Berlin-Prague-Vienna railway line, as well as the east-west Munich-Breslau, and Hamburg-Leipzig lines.

On 13 February 1945, bad weather over Europe prevented any American operations, and it was left to RAF Bomber Command to carry out the first raid. It had been decided that the raid would be a double strike, in which a second wave of bombers would attack three hours after the first, just as the rescue teams were trying to put out the fires.

The first of the British aircraft took off from airfields in East Anglia in the late afternoon for the 700-mile round trip. This was a group of Lancaster Bombers which acted as Pathfinders.

Their job was to find Dresden and drop magnesium parachute flares, known to the Germans as "Christmas trees", to light up the area for the bombers. The next set of aircraft to leave England were twin-engine Mosquito marker planes, which would identify target areas and drop target indicators. These created a red glow for the bombers to aim at.

The attack was to centre on the sports stadium which is next to the city's medieval old town, with its congested and highly combustible timbered buildings.

The main bomber force took off shortly after the Pathfinders. This group of 254 Lancaster Bombers carried 500 tons of high explosives and 375 tons of incendiaries. The high explosives were intended to rupture water mains and blow off roofs, doors, and windows. The aim was to create an air flow to feed the fires caused by the incendiaries that followed.

The sirens started sounding in Dresden at 21:51

At 22:03 the first marker group started to get to work – these Lancaster Bombers crisscrossed the city, dropping green marker flares followed by white magnesium flares, the "Christmas Trees". Once these were on their way down, the Mosquitoes dropped their red markers.

The first bombs were released at 22:13, the last at 22:28. The high explosive bombs punched holes in the roofs, blew out doors and windows. This was followed by the incendiaries which started fires with whatever fuel it could find – roof beams, furniture etc. These small fires grew and the draft created by the high explosives encouraged the small fires and created the perfect firestorm.

The second attack came three hours later. By now, the thousands of fires from the burning city could be seen more than 60 miles away on the ground, and 500 miles away in the air, with smoke rising to 15,000 ft. The Pathfinders decided to expand the target, dropping flares on either side of the firestorm, including the main railway station.

There were few public air raid shelters in Dresden. The largest, beneath the main railway station, housed 6,000 refugees. As a result, most people took shelter in cellars. However, one of the air raid precautions the city had taken was to remove thick cellar walls between rows of buildings and replace them with thin partitions that could be knocked through in an emergency. The idea was that, as one building collapsed or filled with smoke, those sheltering in the basements could knock walls down and move into adjoining buildings. With the city on fire everywhere, those fleeing from one burning cellar simply ran into another. Most died from asphyxiation, the fires consuming what oxygen there was.

And that wasn't quite the end. To finish the job, the USAAF bombed the remains later that morning. Ironically the 14 February 1945 was Ash Wednesday!

I can't imagine what my mother thought or felt at that time. At just 20 years old she watched the whole horror unfold from a suburb, but what an experience.

A couple of days later my "aunt" and I walked into the ruined town to see if we could find my other friend's parent's home.

But it was a sad picture. Nothing but rubble and in some places, notes pinned to the rubble asking for people or saying, where they were. I don't know what happened to the people I was to visit. I was devastated.

It was estimated that 25,000 died that night, both residents and some of the many refugees fleeing the advancing Soviet forces from the east. Irmgard was one of those refugees, although lucky to be staying with family friends rather than sheltering in the city.

A few days later, my father's friend received a postcard from Mutti asking if he had heard from me. Mutti, together with my sisters, Karola and Helga, had been transported with thousands of other refugees from our hometown to Austria, where they were given some sparse accommodation. Mutti wrote her address on that card.

I did not even bother to reply. I packed a carton with my things (I had lost my suitcase in the bomb attacks) and hoped to get to that little place called Goisern in the salt mine area in Austria. I caught a train that went via Prague in Czechoslovakia to Austria. Many times, we had to leave the train because airplanes flew low and shot at the train. After a lot of enquiries and changes I finally got onto a local train which took me to Goisern. And there was a very tearful reunion.

She was one of the lucky ones – escaping the firestorm and finally reunited with her mother and sisters.

It has always amazed me that despite the destruction in Dresden, the postal service still seemed to function, as did some kind of rail service.

Four days after Berlin's fall, Dresden became the last German city to capitulate, on May 6, 1945. By then it was in ruins, with an estimated 70 per cent of its infrastructure destroyed. A day later, Germany surrendered.

Irmgard revisited Dresden in the 1980's and her reflections on that visit are set out in chapter 14.

## 11 Post War Germany

Parts of this chapter is written by Des Shepherd, based in Helga's recollection of the time.

Christmas 1944 was the last time Irmgard was at home on Oberglogau before returning to Breslau and her studies. The rest of the family, Karl, Angela, Karola and Helga went for a break in the mountains – there was a lot of snow. When they returned, in February 1945, the whole house was full of soldiers. They stayed in the house for two nights before leaving Oberglogau on one of the last trains. All women and children had to leave the town. Karl had to stay.

Helga recalls that when they returned from the mountains, she knew the family had to leave Oberglogau. Their parents had told the girls beforehand and when they returned home all their things had gone and the soldiers were living there as though it belonged to them. They had left everything where it was but when they came back there were only their bedrooms. When they left it was Mutti, Karola, Helga together with Inga, Jochen and Mutti's parents. Their destination, Austria.

When they left in 1945, they could not take any of their possessions – no toys or dolls. Karola took the family photographs which we now have. But when they left it was something new and not as terrible for Helga as it was the rest of the family. At 7 years old, she was too young to understand but for once she was able to spend time with her mother.

Karl owned the property and when the rest of the family left, he got all the papers to do with the house, property deeds etc. and put them in a metal case and buried them in the yard at the back. Later these documents were retrieved and Karl managed to get some compensation from the German Government. Although not a large amount, it was used for the girl's schooling and Angela bought a sewing machine.

The journey itself was rather eventful. Helga recalls that the train was crowded *"and there was a terrible thing when we passed through Vienna. The driver of the train passed over a damaged bridge that he wasn't allowed to pass as in some places the line was almost suspended in mid-air. People were standing and watching because they thought the train would come down. The driver got a medal because nobody believed he could pass."*

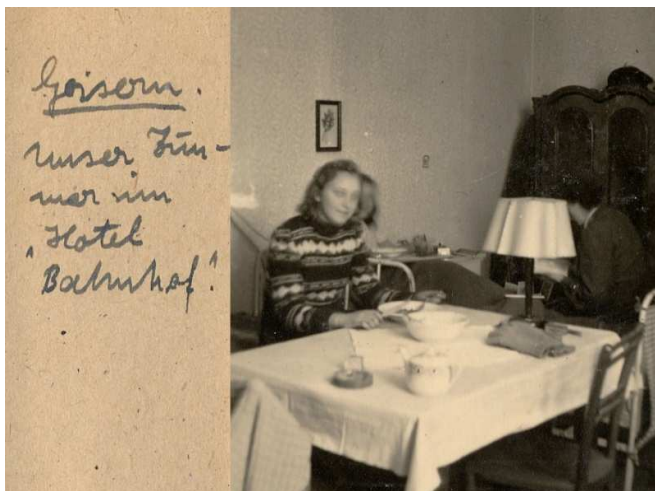
*"The train went really slowly and he told us please don't talk – keep quiet – stand up – don't move. Karola was by the window and she could see how people watched us looking frightened that we would come down."*

They eventually made it to Goisern and once there got a message to Irmgard, who at that time was in Dresden. She travelled to Austria to join them.

Back now to Irmgard's account. She has recounted her journey from Dresden via Prague in Czechoslovakia to Austria.

A few hours before I arrived, Mutti's parents had also arrived. Having seen the misery of refugee's accommodation they decided to try to go back home. But they did not get there. They were put into a Czech camp, which was worse. They decided to return to Austria. Then I arrived! You can imagine the buckets of tears that were shed on this re-union. Since the accommodation was inadequate, I got a little room in a neighbour's house. I then tried to get some work, as without work, there were no ration cards.

There was a German military hospital in the locality that had a separate dental centre. I went to see the Chief Dental Officer, told him that I was a dental student but had to interrupt my studies and that a job as a dental assistant should be of benefit to me. He was very kind (his wife also came from Silesia) and employed me instantly as his assistant. I gained a lot of practical experience in contrast to the formal theory I learned at university. I soon made friends with some other young people and enjoyed life. One girl in particular, about my age became my best friend. Laura came from Upper Austria and stayed in a neighbouring house. After the war (June 1945), she went back home and I never saw her again. When I enquired her mother wrote to me telling me that she had been shot dead by the Russians, after a dance.



There were still some bombing raids and I remember one occasion where a horse drawn column with provisions was attacked very nearby. It came to a halt; some horses were killed and there were a lot of provisions to be had. Nobody was in charge. The soldiers tried to make their way home. I and many others took some bags and went to see what we could salvage. I came back with tins with meat and other food, which was very welcome in our diminished store cupboard. Someone saw to the horses and I think that was the only time I ever ate horsemeat.

The war ended in May 1945 and the Americans occupied the part of Austria where we stayed. The Austrians who were keen to become Germans before the war now wanted to be Austrians again and evict the German refugees from their country. Mutti and my sisters were transported to Germany. I was still working at the dental centre and stayed on as we now treated the people who came out of the concentration camps and our work became important.

I shared a room in the Bahnhofs Hotel with a nurse and a girl from Berlin who was the interpreter to the Americans. Before my family left, I arranged with Mutti a contact address so that we did not lose each other again.

Vati's brother, Sepp, lived in Braunschweig and we agreed on his address as a point of contact. Vati had to stay in Silesia. All the men were kept back and were not allowed to leave so we had no news of him.

Helga recalls her journey from Austria to North Germany:

*"When we left Austria, we weren't in a carriage but in cattle trucks – we had to sleep on the floor and we were locked in and there was only a bucket for toilet for all the people in the truck. And in the morning, they came and unlocked. From Bad Krozingen to Baden Baden and back – no town would take us. I don't know how long we were on this train and at many places we stopped – one wagon was emptied and officials told the people where they could go – what families would take them in."*

Helga travelled with just Karola and Angela. Angela's parents had managed to get back to Oberglogau and were able to move back into their house.

*"We finally got off the train at Bad Mergentheim and went to nearby village called Schwaigern. Mutti had to work there in this place in a big mill – sewing sacks. We stayed there until autumn 1945 – we heard Vatti was in Braunschweig and he wanted us to come as he had accommodation for us."*

*"We travelled again and ended up in a small village, Harsum, near Braunschweig where we lived for 8 years. I went to school there and we lived on a farm with two other families. We had money from labour office. Vatti tried to get work. He worked for a while for an architect whilst we tried to sell items, soap, chocolate etc. but it didn't work out and we had no money. By then Vatti was over 50 years old and to get a job at that age was impossible in such a small village."*

Talking about the immediate post war experience, Helga recalls:

*"I was just a little child but Karola understood more and was frightened about what would happen and she was always arguing with my father – why don't you get work, get money. That journey in the train – we didn't stop anywhere I don't know how long it took – it took some days – Karola doesn't speak to me about this time."*

After the war some part of the country would not take people from the East, especially the French districts but in British controlled areas they tried to integrate Germans from the east with local residents. But as there was no work near Braunschweig – there was no industry just farming, the family moved south to Reutlingen. The council in Braunschweig gave money to councils in Baden-Wurttemberg to build houses and flats, hence this move to Reutlingen.



Back to Irmgard's account.

In January 1946 those of us who had stayed behind in Austria now had to leave as well. A bus was made available and we were taken to our destinations. On the first evening we arrived in Nuremberg, which was badly damaged. There were no hotels or hostels for us to sleep in. We were not allowed to travel during the night as a curfew was in force. The driver went to the police station for instructions. The police did not have any idea what to do with us until someone mentioned that there was plenty of room in the cells. We slept on straw mattresses, itched like mad and were glad when we could carry on the next day. But I can say that I have slept in Nuremberg's jail.

The next day I arrived in Braunschweig. I went to my uncle's house but it was full with relations. Mutti and the children had been sent to a small village where they found some accommodation in a farmer's house. Because there were so many refugees coming from the east, the people in the west who still had homes had to give shelter. The accommodation was very cramped.

At about the same time, Silesia was occupied by the advancing allied army from the east. My father had to stay put, at least pro tem. Eventually he made the long and hazardous journey from Silesia to Braunschweig, mainly on foot, and often moving by night. In the near anarchy and utter confusion of the early post war months, being an adult German male presented a danger to life. Not without difficulty, he made it and was eventually reunited with Mutti and his two daughters Helga and Karola.

After a few years in temporary accommodation near Braunschweig, Vati, Mutti and my two sisters were housed by the German government in a local authority flat in Reutlingen in Baden Wuerttemberg (1955). My other sister, Inge and her family also relocated in the west and ended up near Frankfurt am Main, where they settled permanently.

After I arrived in Braunschweig, I went to the local accommodation office and was fortunate to get a single room in a house with a very nice family. I tried to find work with a local German dentist but they were busy re-constructing their own lives and businesses and there were no vacancies. However, on my walks I noticed a sign saying: "54 Field Dental Centre"

I thought that this would be similar to what I had done in Austria, but in English. I had learnt English at school but now when it came to the test, it was sparse. I went to the centre and spoke to the head dental officer, Major Norman. He said, "Yes, I do need someone, but I have advertised and this afternoon I am interviewing several young ladies for the job. If you could come back tomorrow morning, I shall tell you what the outcome is." I went back there the next day.

"Yes", he said, "You can start tomorrow". "Oh, thank you, but I cannot start tomorrow" I told him "As I have to discharge an obligation first for a friend of mine".

### A post war good turn

When I was in Austria, all the German people had to be “de-nazified” according to American law. We had to fill in questionnaires about what office we held during Hitler’s regime. Apart from the Hitler Youth and the Land Army I was not involved in anything and got the OK.



A friend of mine, Karl Franke, who was drafted into the SS, was not so lucky. He was interned by the Americans, I don’t know for how long. Before he left, he gave me his watch, his papers, his father’s address and asked me to deliver these items. That was why I did not start my work immediately.

I travelled to Schleswig-Holstein (In the very north of Germany) where his father lived and practiced as a vet in Husum.

The railway system was very bad. A lot of railway carriages were lost through bomb damage. I did find a train, which went north to Hamburg. It was a cattle train, without a roof and many people squeezed in.

I did eventually get to Hotzum, I can’t remember all the details, but I enjoyed the few days I had there. My friend’s father took me in his little car on visits to the farmers in the area.

Food was very scarce in Germany after the war. The average amount of calories eaten was 800 per person (the normal average amount being 2800). Because this man worked with farmers, he had no difficulty in obtaining food. It was a very difficult time. Many people took a rucksack or bags and went either on foot or by train to the country to exchange anything they had for food. The farmers were getting fed up with them, but managed to get a nice collection of all sorts of things. (Jewelry, linen, and anything you could think of). That was all right for people who had lived in the west and had not lost their homes, but all the refugees who had nothing left had to help themselves.

I remember going out at night in Austria with a bag and taking 2 or 3 pieces of wood from various houses where they were stacked. Some people went to the station and took coal. There was nothing in the shops. You could only buy your rations (butter, meat, potatoes etc.) and on occasion, not always that. If some goods had come in which were not rationed everybody queued up for them. Whenever you saw a queue you joined it, even if you did not know what was for sale.

Back now to Major Norman, the dental officer who took me on. I started working there, and that was when I really got to grips with my English. I soon learned the names of all the instruments and to react to requests from the boss. At lunchtime I was allowed to join the British staff in another house. That was very useful and saved my own rations somewhat. The British soldiers were all very nice and helpful and would not take liberties with me once I made my position clear.

The British Army requisitioned the house in which I had my room, and I was once again homeless. However, when I mentioned this to Major Norman, he got wheels turning, a letter was written to the German Head of the Council as urgent and hey presto! I was accommodated in another part of the town. As I was single, it was comparatively easy to find a room, rather than several rooms a family would need. After some time, the dental centre closed and I was transferred to the dental department in 121 British Military Hospital.



It was a very nice German built hospital, which the British had taken over. My new boss was Captain Howse and we got on very well together. He was very sympathetic and often helped me. For instance, one Friday I was going to visit a friend in Göttingen after my work. I already had my train ticket, ration book and some money in my handbag. While sitting in the bus going to work, I suddenly realised that my handbag was missing. Someone had stolen it on leaving at the last stop. I had no hope of finding it again.

When I told Capt. Howse about it, he “organised” some food for me (bread, etc) and smuggled out of the hospital a large amount of cigarettes, which I could then sell for food (on the black market). It was strictly forbidden to take any goods out of the hospital (that is for the Germans who worked there) and often one’s bags were searched. So that was a great help for 2 or 3 weeks’ worth of ration cards had been stolen, apart from the money I could ill afford to lose.



My work consisted of assisting my boss in his work, i.e. handing him the right instruments, mixing fillings and sometimes carrying out the work of a dental hygienist as well as keeping the record of work in the books, arranging appointments, answering the phone etc.

All the patients were from British serving units who were stationed in the area. From time to time, British soldiers were sent to help us. There were dental mechanics, corporals and privates who were doing clerical work, kept the appointment book up to date and assisted the dentist at his work.



One day a nice-looking corporal appeared Philip Shepherd. I liked him, because he was kind and very polite and when we conversed a little, we found we had lots in

common. He read a lot of books. We became very friendly and enjoyed each other's company. He was posted to another part of Germany but after a time he came to visit me over the Easter holidays and we had a pleasant time.

Then that year (1948) the dental department closed and I was transferred to another unit but this too was threatened with closure and I looked around for something else. I went to the Labour Office and made inquiries. I was asked whether I would be interested in training as a nurse in England. I agreed but was soon informed that there was no longer a vacancy. Disappointed I went back to my room. However, three days later I received a letter telling me that a few women had withdrawn from the scheme. I think their mothers did not like to be so far away from their darlings!

In June 1948, the National Health Service was born. Two months later, a contingent of 50 'well educated' German girls came to the UK to train as nurses. This was part of an initiative to help staff the new NHS. The following excerpt is from an article that appeared in The Times on 5 August 1948,

*"In view of the increasing demand for nurses, the Ministry of Labour is bringing over as an experiment 50 German women who have volunteered to train as nurses."*

And on 19 August 1948, an article in The Times said,

*"The first party of German women to arrive in this country for training as nurses left London yesterday for a three weeks' course at the reception centre set up by the Ministry of Labour at Colwyn Bay. This party numbers 50, and if the experiment is successful, many more may be brought over to ease the increasing shortage of nurses. After the course they will be assigned as student nurses to hospitals which have agreed to cooperate in this scheme."*

And so it was that on 15 August 1948 we arrived at Harwich.

We first spent three days in a hostel at Hyde Park Corner in London and with £1 pocket money and the West End shops within easy reach the world was our oyster.

After three weeks at Colwyn Bay, we were divided into groups and sent to four different hospitals. 15 went to Manchester, 10 to Dartford (Kent), 10 to Joyce Green near Dartford and 15 came to Oldchurch Hospital in Romford.

We were to draw our destination out of a hat.

I had Phil's address in Romford and he was demobbed at around the same time. I asked if I could go to Romford, since I have "distant relations" living there. That was a white lie that paid off.

The organisers were only too pleased to have some nurses sorted out and offered that I could take 2 friends with me, Sybille and Angela. That was a great help and I did not feel as homesick as I would have been otherwise.





These were hard times, but also very happy ones. We made many friends and Oldchurch Hospital become our home. The training was very strict but we were proud to have stayed there. After three years, many left for Germany and “the world” but some of us remained.

Of the 15 who came to Romford, seven married and settled in England, one moved to America and the rest returned home to Germany.

In 1988, Irmgard organised a reunion and she was joined by five former Oldchurch nurses. They were Sybille Sutcliffe, Angela Kay, Erika Ellis, Irmgard Aszkenasy and Gundy Decker. The latter, Gundy was the former nurse who moved to America and came back to the UK for the reunion from Tulsa, Oklahoma. The reunion was covered in the local press.



*The 1988 reunion.*



In 1998, Irmgard organised a further reunion, this one being the 50th anniversary of the nurses coming to England.

On Saturday/Sunday 15/16 August 1998, six of us German nurses got together and we celebrated in style the 50th anniversary of our coming to England. We visited Oldchurch Hospital in Romford where we trained as nurses, and on the Sunday our menfolk joined us and we all had lunch at the Artichoke in Brentwood.

On the Saturday they visited Oldchurch Hospital and taken on a tour by the hospital trust's Director of Nursing, Christine Bullock. The group revisited some of the wards where they worked 50 years before and also the nurse's home before attending a reception for tea and a special anniversary cake. They also had a slap up meal at the Marygreen Manor in Brentwood.

The reunion went very well. It was lovely. One or two of the ladies hadn't seen each other for 47 years. There was a lot of reminiscing and catching up on old times.

The following day, Irmgard hosted four of the former nurses at Thorndales: Angela Kay, Lotte Wadeln, Sybille Sutcliffe and Gundy Decker. One other attended the Saturday event, Ilse Grant.

Again, Irmgard organised coverage in the local press and BBC Essex.



Sybille, Angela, Ilse Grant, Lotte, Irmgard and Gundy.



Irmgard, Angela, Lotte, Sybille and Gundy.



Romford Recorder  
21 August 1998

Recorder, Friday, August 21, 1998

## German nurses together again at hospital

● Then – Four of the original 50 nurses in 1948. (From left) Sybil Sutcliffe, Angela Way, Lotte Wadean and Irmgard Shepherd.

# Reunion joy for health pioneers

FIFTY-YEARS AGO, both Great Britain and Germany were recovering from the ravages and devastation of the Second World War.

Faith Germany had been bought to its knees, the country had been divided into east and west, and unemployment was rife.

Things were little better over here, but a new beginning was dawning in the provision of healthcare for the nation.

In June, 1948, the National Health Service was born and just two months later, a contingent of 50 German girls came to the UK to train as nurses as part of an initiative to staff the fledgling NHS and help ease the dire unemployment situation in Germany.

They were the first of many who left their homes to start new lives in a foreign country, which only a few years before, had been at war with them.

But, they were welcomed with open arms and after a three-day introductory course in Colwyn Bay, North Wales, they were sent to various hospitals across the country.

And last weekend, to commemorate the 50th anniversary of their arrival in this country, five of those nurses took part in a special reunion at the Romford hospital.

They were taken on a tour of the hospital by Director of Nursing for Havering, Christine Bullock, who were at Oldchurch some of them couldn't come and some have died, but it was nice to get back together again with old friends and colleagues.

Commenting on the visit, Mrs Bullock said: "The morning was most enjoyable and I was delighted to be able to meet with these ladies and share their memories."

"I was particularly pleased to learn that they all remember their time here with fondness and that they felt the training they received at Oldchurch was of great value."

And now – together again after 50 years.

● Old habits die hard as two of the ex-nurses show how they made hospital beds during the NHS' fledgling years.

By NEIL ANDERSON

'British' way of life, the first contingent of 50 girls was dispatched to hospitals around the country, with 5 of them being sent to Oldchurch.

And last weekend, to commemorate the 50th anniversary of their arrival in this country, five of those nurses took part in a special reunion at the Romford hospital.

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"I was particularly pleased to learn that they all remember their time here with fondness and that they felt the training they received at Oldchurch was of great value."

But back to Irmgard's story from 1951.



## 12 Family Life

Phil and I decided to get married and we had a very nice wedding service at St. Edward's Church in the market place in Romford on 10 May 1951.



Philip commented (audio Sept 2021): *"My mum didn't want me to marry Irmgard, a German. She had a pact with somebody up the road who had a daughter and they'd already fixed up me and this Freda Heslop – I couldn't stand the woman."*

*"Irmgard had a bit of a difficult time with my mother – I don't think my mother was ever fully reconciled to the fact that I married someone she didn't think was worthy of me."*

However, Irmgard's family were pleased with the match but disappointed they were not able to come to England for the wedding. In a letter dated 7 May 1951, the Hampf family (Angela, Karl and Helga) wrote:

*"Dear Bridal Parents Shepherd. The day has come on which our children say 'I will' to each other. We also give a daughter in order to win a son. 'Irmgard wrote a lot of dear and good things about you, that we are sorry that we can't thank you personally for everything. 'Normally it would have been my task to do all this (arranging the wedding and reception)."*

And in a further letter dated 22 July, they wrote:

*"We would have liked to be present at her wedding day. We were thinking a lot of you. The photos show that Irmgard was a happy bride."*

And in a message to Joan, Philip's sister:

*"Dear Joan, you were a lovely little bridesmaid. Helga would have liked to be a bridesmaid as well. She will write to you."*

These extracts show that the Hampf family were disappointed not to be present but pleased that Irmgard was happy.

Our wedding reception was plain. Rationing was still in force but some neighbours did some baking and prepared a nice reception.

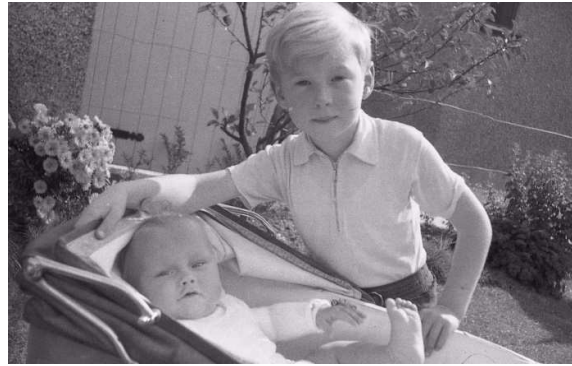
Following the wedding, the couple had their honeymoon on the Isle of Wight.

Since we could not buy a house and flats were scarce, Phil's parents kindly offered us accommodation in their house. We shared the kitchen, but otherwise all was done in the one upstairs room. It was bedroom (a put-u-up), dining room (in the alcove), office and later a nursery. On 28 February 1952 our first son Desmond was born.



In 1955 we managed to buy a small bungalow built in Rayleigh (for £1500!) and we enjoyed 5 idyllic years there.

On 27 April 1957 our second son, Gordon, was born at home. The delivery was straightforward but I had complications immediately afterwards. Fortunately, these were recognised by the midwife, Nurse Millard, who called our GP, Doctor Nicholls, and even though it was a Saturday evening, was able to come round, and possibly saved my life.



On another occasion while still at Rayleigh, Desmond fell ill. I took him to the doctor; a less experienced GP, and he diagnosed a tummy upset. However, Desmond's condition worsened and I summoned Doctor Nicholls. He looked at Desmond and said, "That is no tummy upset, it is pneumonia."

I became very worried and he gave me a prescription for Desmond. As Desmond was very ill in bed and baby Gordon was in a pram in the next room, and being alone in the house, I could not leave them unattended. Dr. Nicholls very kindly offered to stay with them while I ran to the chemist for the prescription. That same evening, we could see a big improvement in Desmond's condition. I am forever grateful to Dr. Nicholls for all that he did.



As the bungalow was rather small, in 1960 we moved into a 3 bed-roomed house in Chadwell Heath. This was our home for the next 16 years.





The garden backed onto the A12, a very busy and increasingly noisy trunk road. In 1976, we moved to Brentwood. We are still here, 30 years on (2006).

Our time in Brentwood seems to have gone faster than ever, due possibly because I have been even busier.

In 1967 I had started work as a translator in the Customs & Excise Translation Service. Soon after that I also began teaching in a language club in London and at evening colleges in Dagenham, Redbridge and Brentwood. In 2006, I still had 2 small classes at home, one in the afternoon, the other in the evening.



Phil and I have had many nice holidays. First with the children in England and in Germany, where my parents still lived. Later Phil and I had walking holidays in the Lake District and elsewhere with the Holiday Fellowship.

However, my favourite holidays were spent in Austria, in the winter to go cross-country skiing. For Phil, that was a new experience. We went there every January for over 20 years.





When Michael (our elder grandson) was old enough we took him to Austria. He enjoyed it. A few years later it was his brother's turn. Richard too enjoyed the skiing and charmed all the ladies with his German phrases.

We stopped our skiing holidays in 2001, being well into our seventies by that time. This meant that Emily, being so much younger, unfortunately has not had the alpine experience, which her older brothers have enjoyed. But no doubt she will have other pleasures in life.



Before I finish, I just want to say something more. When one learns anything new there are normally plenty of instructions to follow. Unfortunately, there are no instructions about how to bring up children and it is a case of learning as one goes along. I might have made some mistakes. If so, I hope that Desmond and Gordon will overlook them. I have always tried my best and love them dearly.

And that is where we leave Irmgard's story. Her married life was relatively uneventful but she kept herself busy with her family and work.

Irmgard died peacefully after a long illness on 16 January 2011, aged 86. Her husband Philip lived on at the family home until 2024. At 96 years old, he died in his sleep on 20 October 2024 after a short illness.

Apart from Phil, she left behind two sons, Desmond and Gordon, together with three grandchildren, Michael, Richard and Emily. Unfortunately, she missed both Michael and Richard's weddings (2012 and 2021 respectively) and has not met her latest grandchild, Joel (born 2022), nor her great grandchildren, Henry, Genevieve and Adam.

Of the Hampf family, her father, Karl Hampf died on 19 August 1976 (aged 84) and Angela, her step mother, died on 24 April 1993 (aged 89).

Of her sisters, there is just one survivor, Helga who at 86 years old, is still in reasonable health and lives in Bad Worishofen, in Bavaria, close enough to see the splendour of the Austrian Alps. Like Irmgard, she lives an active life with many friends; often going to concerts and until recently took bike rides in nearby woods.

Karola died in Austria in August 2019 (aged 84), Inge in June 2003 (age 82) and her husband Bobi two or three years later. And Inge & Bobi's children?

The younger, Peter died in the late 2000's following problems with depression. The fact that his wife cheated on him didn't help the situation. Jochen and his wife Utta have gone their own way and all contact is lost with them. He had made it known that he doesn't want to keep in contact with Helga, much to her disappointment. They don't have any children.

The Hampf name currently lives on through Gordon, who added it to his name some years ago. Irmgard was touched by this thought. However, the Hampf genes live on through Desmond's children and grandchildren.

Irmgard Shepherd (2006)

With additional material added by Desmond Shepherd (2024)

## Part 3 – Other Recollections

### 13 The Hampf family in later years (by Des Shepherd)

This account is based on the written testimony of Inga and recorded recollections from Helga.

After the war the family went their different ways. Inge had married Bobbie, Irmgard had moved to England, Karola also married and Karl and Angela together with their youngest daughter, Helga, eventually moved south to Reutlingen.

First of all, a look at how Karl and Angela fared after the war. As outlined in previous pages, after the family were evacuated from Oberglogau, Karl, as a male had to remain. After the war ended and with Russian troops moving into the area from the East, he made the long and hazardous journey from Silesia to Braunschweig, mainly on foot, and often moving by night. In the near anarchy and utter confusion of the early post war months, being an adult German male presented a danger to life. Not without difficulty, he made it and was eventually reunited with Angela and their two daughters Helga and Karola.

The family had lost their home, he lost his business and was at an age (around 50 years old) where getting decent employment was very difficult. Karola was frustrated with this situation and according to Helga, went on at him about getting a job. As Helga put it to me: *“Karola was bothering him - You have to work, and do this and do that but he was of an age where he couldn't just get a job (too old) and he had no money to start a new business and he couldn't even get credit from a bank because he had no collateral. It was over for him.”*

This experience of being poor was not to Karola's liking and she was determined to move on from this and following her two marriages, became quite wealthy.

Whilst Angela was a devout Catholic, Karl wasn't interested. After the war he initially attended church with Angela, but more to keep her happy. She was much more religious than him and, in this respect, they didn't understand each other. Karl spent time in Switzerland and he had other interests. It was a time where new ideas came up and he was always interested. He didn't want to get old and he did everything to live a healthy life, also becoming a vegetarian.

I recall on one of my visits to Reutlingen in the 1970's, Karl was very passionate about the two parts of Germany being reunited. He saw this as the way forward for the country. Unfortunately, he didn't get to see this dream come to reality.

Whilst Karl was more forward looking, in contrast, Angela was more conventional. She looked back at the old things and didn't care much for the youth and modern things. Helga explained that many things she did in her life were done in her father's name. As she put it, *“I lived but he only wanted to live.”*

Helga also recalled that Karl wanted to leave his wife but Angela kept him: *“You have to care for the children and so on. My father wanted to be on his own, enjoy his life, travel around. He was a very individual person.”*

*He wanted to enjoy his life but she wouldn't let him. For him it was a very hard time because everybody wants something from him but he just wanted to live his own life."*

Helga lived at home with her parents after they moved to Reutlingen. She told me what life was like between them.

*"He (Karl) was a friend of the nature. Every day he was walking, up the Achalm for example and he liked being outside whilst Mutti was sitting at home. She even didn't want to go into the town and my father had to do the shopping – food for dinner and everything. My mother didn't go out. She didn't like the shops or buying things for herself. I bought her dresses and she tried them on and I had to go back and return those she didn't want.*

*"Why? She was frustrated and fed up with everything – she couldn't start a new life after the war. She couldn't get on with it – she had lost everything. In Oberglogau she was a 'lady' and she was well known in the town but now she was in a town where she didn't know anyone, didn't understand the language (dialect)."*

After the post war move from Austria to north Germany, *"She had to work in the village in the fields and later sewing things for other people whilst Vatti did the shopping and the cooking. It was for her horrible – she had never worked in her life. In those days a daughter was brought up and married – and that was it – no job or anything."*



*A 1950 picture of Irmi, Karl and a 12 year-old Helga*

### **War injuries**

As recounted earlier, Karl fought in the First World War where he survived being shot in his lung. To a large extent, this injury excused him from being called up to fight in the Second World War, but he was fit enough to live to the ripe old age of 84.

Inge's boyfriend Valentine (known as Bobbie) was also injured. As she recalls in her memoirs:

*"An Aunt of Bobbie's visited and informed me that Valentine (who I called Bobbie) was very badly wounded. I was very frightened. He was injured on 6 June 1940 in France. He was flown to a big hospital in Brussels where he stayed for over a year.*

*"In the evening, I went on my bicycle with a lot of beating of my heart and a big bunch of chrysanthemums to his parents who lived in a nearby village. I decided especially to visit his mother who he loved immensely. The Janetzko mother was very pleased about my visit.*

*"A few days later, Bobbie wrote a letter to me saying that he was in Brussels and that a professor doctor and well-known surgeon had treated him. So, for the time being he was in good hands. The professor doctor managed to keep Bobbie's arm. It did not have to be amputated. He also had a lung injury. The bad arm is rather limited but it was important that they try to keep it. Bobbie was very hopeful. Four cm of connecting bone was missing. His watch was shot to bits and the splinters tore his left under arm."*

Soon after, "Bobbie came home on leave as a very smart soldier with his iron cross, second class." After a break of a few days, Bobbie once again had to go away. "When the fatherland called, one had to obey."

### Inge's family



Inge married Bobbie in 1942 and had two children, Jochen and Peter. The family ended up living near Frankfurt. Inge died in June 2003 (age 82) and her husband Bobbie two or three years later.

So, what of their two sons? Jochen was the older of the two boys. He trained and became a teacher and went on to be a head teacher. He married Utta but they didn't have any children. Helga is disappointed that she hears nothing from him as he's not interested in keeping in touch.



The younger son, Peter, was really ill with depression and according to Helga, neither Inge nor Bobbie could cope with this. However, Peter did confide in her.

*"When I visited, he told me about therapy he having but Inge said he never told her. He only asked her for money as he never had money.*

*"He shouldn't have lived alone and he needed therapy and he told me he didn't take his medicines or go to therapist so he just let things go. In the end he was only drinking beer he didn't eat well – he only had tinned food. It was terrible when they found him. I think Jochen should have looked out for him. He needed someone to make decisions for him as he couldn't manage alone, but nobody helped or cared about this situation. Jochen was the intelligent one in the family and should have known what to do but he didn't do anything. They were not very good brothers together. But I felt Peter kind of trusted me."*

What didn't help was that Peter's wife cheated on him pretty soon after their wedding. So sad.

Set out below is a true story which Bobbie wrote in response to a German local Newspaper on 13 December 1995.

#### **Christmas 1945 – Who Remembers?**

As a young family when our son Jochen had just become 2 years old, we had to leave our hometown Oberglogau. This was in February 1945, the last month of the war, and became poor overnight. After many journeys and searchings, we finished up in emergency accommodation, a sports hall, in a small town not far from Fulda. It was not until November that year that we found shelter with a retired couple in a small village in that area. Christmas was not far off. In a nearby forest a small Christmas tree was obtained and decorated with tin foil strips in place of normal decorations.

In our room the emptiness was yawning and the Christmas tree stood all alone and lost. Darkness set in. There was a knock at our door and in the frame stood a 7-year-old boy with a large loaf of bread in his hand. He wished us a peaceful Christmas, gave the bread to my wife and said, "So that Jochen will not go hungry at Christmas"

Our room only dimly lit by a 25-watt bulb suddenly became bright. This was the poorest but also the loveliest Christmas. In hindsight it also became the saddest of all because a few days later, this boy was caught stealing bread. According to his mother, "The boy came from the poorest family of the village". He could not bear the shame of having been caught and hanged himself in his mother's house.

So our thoughts at Christmas every year go to that small village, and to the boy who made our Christmas so lovely when our need was at its greatest. Every year we hear his words, "So that Jochen will not go hungry at Christmas".

This is our lasting memory of Christmas 1945.



## Karola

Karola had two husbands, the second an Austrian. Helga didn't like either of them.

The first husband has been described as a 'bit of a nazi'. After he died, Karola remarried. Helga recalls that she had not been invited and only heard about it from her mother (Angela). But, as she told me: *"I went anyway with Mutti and my boyfriend (who drove us to Austria) and there was only a small room for the post wedding meal and they had to try and find room for us. But I thought she can't get married and nobody from her family is there."*

*"Karola didn't invite me to her first wedding and that bothered me, so we went to her second wedding and Karola, well it was a bit against her will but I didn't care. I went also for my mother so that she should be there. We stayed in hotel near Innsbruck and during the visit Mutti didn't speak to my friend even though he did so much for her, driving her to Austria several times. All this because we were not married."*

Helga went on to tell me that *"When I see Karola and what she's thinking about her whole life she says she doesn't have enough money. I can tell you she has so much money. She has this feeling that she was poor once, immediately post war – and she doesn't want to be poor again."*



*Left: Karola with Irmgard in 1968.  
Above: Helga with Des in 2019.*

## Helga

Initially Helga lived with her parents in Reutlingen before moving on. She spent some time in Scotland where her grasp of English really improved. She was a frequent visitor to Irmgard and Philip's from the late 1950's up until well after Irmgard's death.

She didn't get married but from my recollection, lived life to the full. A little unorthodox to some (such as her mother, Angela).

Karl once told Helga that he wanted to get out of the church but didn't because his own relatives were very religious, particularly his sisters. But in his heart, he had already left. Helga also was not a church goer. *"I can't believe all that they tell me – I changed my whole interests and I see myself as a part of humanity – I am a tiny bit of the whole and I get my energy from nature. Irmgard said she had a difficult time when she went to a Catholic nursery and in this we were always of the same mind. She was like me."*

My recollection is that Irmgard was not particularly religious, at one time joining the Humanist Association. However, she occasionally attended church with Philip, more, as she once told me, to keep him happy!

Helga recalls: *"Karola was always watching the religious programmes on television. My mother and Karola didn't change in their life but I did – I had so many experiences, met people from all over the world – talked to them and heard so many different ideas."*

#### **German Church Tax**

In Germany, at baptism, children become enrolled as members of one of the two main churches, or a handful of other Christian or Jewish communities that have signed up to the scheme for the tax. Once children reach working age each German state deducts between eight and nine percent of their income and transfers it to church leaders. A sort of church tax.

One may not have a choice being enrolled (as a young child) but it is possible to leave the church, a process known as *Kirchenaustritt* for a fee of around €30 fee.

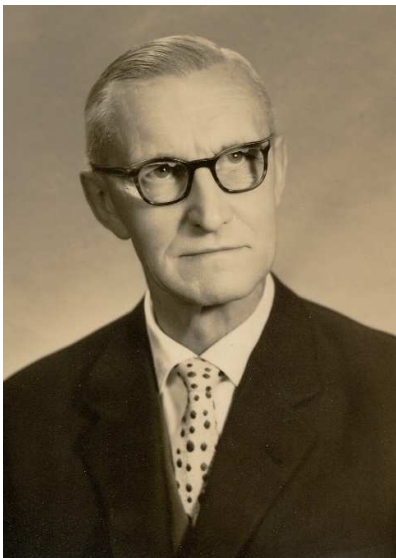
Older generations felt more inclined to pay the tax for cultural reasons but a new, more secular generation in has no qualms opting out, and saving money.

When Helga talks about leaving the church, this is the process she went through and which Karl would have liked to have done.

Finally, some of family pictures.



On the left, Hampf Senior (Karl's father) and on the right Angela with her parents. What is noticeable is how stern they all look, something reflected in so many of the old family pictures.



The pictures above are of Karl Hampf, and the Marcinek family. Angela with her parents and brother and sister. Again, how stiff they looked. As Helga said, that generation were not 'touchy feely' even in private moments one didn't show their emotions.

## 14 Breslau, Dresden and Oberglogau Revisited (by Des Shepherd)

### Wroclaw (Breslau) Revisited

I visited Wroclaw in 2018 as part of my pilgrimage to visit places associated with Irmgard's childhood and youth.

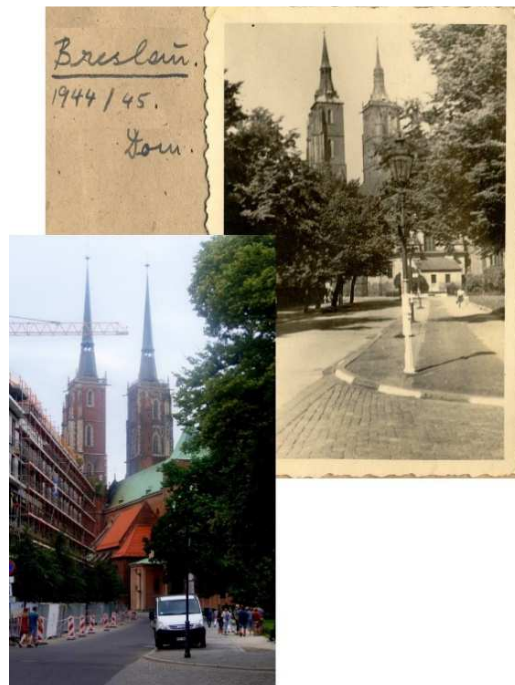


Wroclaw / Breslau Cathedral pre-war and in 2018

My impression of the city was one that was very vibrant and confident. I visited the area around the Cathedral which was where Irmgard's student digs were. Irmgard has a number of pictures taken during her time in Breslau and I revisited the locations to get present day images of the 1944/45 shots.







Two particular places I visited reminded me of Irmgard's time here. Walking through the corridors of the university, it was strange to think that my mother probably walked down the same corridors some 73 years beforehand on her way to or from lectures.



*Wrocław / Breslau University 2018*

### **Breslau/Wroclaw University**

The oldest mention of a university in Wroclaw was recorded in 1505. On 15 November 1702, the university finally opened. After Silesia passed to Prussia, the university lost its ideological character but remained a religious institution for the education of Catholic clergy in Prussia.

After Napoleon defeated Prussia, Wroclaw University was merged with the Protestant Viadrina University, previously located in Frankfurt.

There were five faculties: philosophy, medicine, law, Protestant theology, and Catholic theology.

During the Siege of Breslau, 70% of the university buildings were destroyed. In May 1945, Breslau, now known as Wroclaw, became part of the Republic of Poland. The first Polish team of academics arrived that month and the University of Wroclaw was re-established as a Polish state university.

The other place was Wroclaw railway station. In recent years it has been wonderfully restored to its former glory but I tried to imagine the crowds of women and children, all trying to board trains travelling to the west as they fled from the oncoming Russian Army.



*Wroclaw station and the area inside where the many thousand women and children all tried to board trains travelling west.*

## Oberglogau Revisited

During my visit to Wrocław, I took the opportunity to visit Głogówek or Oberglogau as it was known. I arrived by train at what is now an unmanned wayside halt but still in the shadow of the imposing station buildings. A short walk along the footpath took me to my hotel, the station was about half a mile from the actual town. This footpath would have been the same one used on winter Sunday mornings when Irmgard and her father and sisters went on their weekly ski trips and which the family used when fleeing their home in February 1945.

As Inga wrote, it was a small town, and today's population is 5,600 so relatively unchanged in the intervening years. A short walk took me to the market square and the imposing town hall, still used today by the City Council.



I found the cemetery where by grandmother, Marie Hampf is buried, along with Erika and Vera. However since the town was taken over by the current largely Polish population, all traces of pre-war German graves have disappeared.



*The Catholic Church seen from the town's graveyard.*



Apart from the Town Hall, the other imposing building is the Catholic church, located just off the market square. My visit in 2018 coincided with the Feast of Corpus Christie, so whilst it was a public holiday, that morning was a hive of activity with a street procession to the church and the church bells dominating the sounds of this otherwise quiet town. It seems most of the population were out for this religious festival.

Leading off the market square, the other side from the church was Castle Street. Here were the former home and shop of Hampf Senior, now a pizza restaurant, and no. 4, the 'Jewish House'.



*Castle Street looking towards the market square with no. 4 the large house on the left in the distance and the Hampf Senior house to my left. The castle is located on the right behind the trees.*

Further down the street was the castle, closed when I visited and undergoing some building, restoration work.



My impressions? Despite the Polish population which displaced most German families, it still had that small town feel. I found it a friendly place, despite my not speaking Polish. Somehow it all felt very familiar and it felt like home, possibly because I had read quite a bit about the town and life during the pre-war period.

### Reunions

Irmgard seemed to like reunions. Although she was not that keen to revisit Oberglogau, she kept in touch with some of her childhood friends. In her later years there were some reunions, often hosted by nuns at a monastery in Germany near the Dutch border.



Ulla, the daughter of one of Irmgard's school friends married Thomas Matussek who went on to be the German Ambassador in London. Below is a picture of one of her visits to the rather magnificent German Ambassador's Residence.



## **Dresden**

I wanted to visit Dresden and decided that the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary would be an appropriate time.

Before that, my mother made a visit, with Philip, in August 1987. This was before the fall of the Berlin Wall and Dresden was still part of the German Democratic Republic. Irmgard wrote:

“Months before this trip I corresponded with Frau Liesel Woitalla, who lived in an old people’s home near Dresden. We were determined to meet again after 42 years. When I left Silesia in 1945 I came to Dresden and found refuge in Aunt Liesel’s and her husband’s house. Her husband was an old friend of my father and theirs was the only address in Dresden I had with me.

“We agreed we would meet at the hotel where Phil and I were staying. She joined us for dinner and afterwards sat in the foyer and looked at photos and talked until quite late. Apart from a few gifts, I had also brought oranges and bananas and that my aunt seemed to enjoy especially since they cannot get anything like that.

“For me, it was a very emotional meeting, for I always had to remember that it would not have been possible had they not taken me in at that time, for on the 13 February 1945 when Dresden was destroyed, their home was outside the city and not damaged.

“The next morning, I went on a sightseeing tour of Dresden and that event again moved me deeply. I saw the main railway station at which I arrived 42 years earlier with all my worldly goods (1 suitcase) and the town which was totally destroyed and has now been skillfully reconstructed for the most part.

“The Zwinger was and again is beautiful. Unfortunately, the opera season was closed and we could not visit the opera house (Semper) which I would have loved to have seen. But I saw many other buildings either faithfully rebuilt or in the process of reconstruction, or left as ruins as a reminder of Dresden’s destruction (for example the Frauenkirche).

“The narrow Prager Street, where I worked at the time was unrecognizable. It is now wide and has modern fountains, flower beds, places to sit awhile, restaurants and cafes.”

## **Post War Dresden**

A few buildings survived the attacks, the Frauenkirche being one of them. Amidst the ruins this building stood as if in defiance. But, two days later, on the morning of the 15 February, it finally collapsed. The foundations supporting the pillars had shifted due to the explosions and ultimately could not continue to hold the spectacular roof.





However, there was one building that survived. On the outer wall of the Stables Courtyard of Dresden Castle, there is the 102-metre long historical mural, painted on 23,000 porcelain tiles from Meissen. It is a panorama of the 35 rulers of Saxony from 1127 to 1904. The Procession of Princes that you can see today is not a replica. It is the real thing, having survived the bombing.



After the war, Germany was partitioned and two new countries developed side by side, East and West Germany. From 1945, Dresden was inside Communist East Germany, the German Democratic Republic.

Rebuilding a city that summed up western decadence was not a priority for the communist government. Some historic buildings, such as the Zwinger palace and Semper Opera House, were rebuilt to match their former glory. But large sections of the city centre were cleared to make room for new complexes built in the Socialist Modern style.

The Frauenkirche was left untouched, its scorched ruins serving as a memorial against war. It was seen as a direct counterpart to the ruins of Coventry Cathedral, which was destroyed by German bombing in 1940 and also serves as a war memorial. Nearby the huge concrete Palace of Culture was built. Moves for reconciliation between Britain and Dresden were limited to small-scale initiatives by the people of Coventry.

### **Irmgard's Visit to East Germany, 1987**

Set out below is her account of a second visit to East Germany, again before the fall of the Berlin Wall:

"All the hotels we stayed at were 5 star Interhotels which could only be paid for in hard currency. And since the Democratic Republic has an insatiable appetite for hard currency a kind of "apartheid" developed. Their citizens do not spend their scarce hard currency (if they are able to get some from relations or friends) on Interhotels, but usually in "Intershops" in which one can buy anything for hard currency. This, we felt was a pity.

"We went into one café and soon got talking to some pensioners. They all talked very openly for or against (the current communist regime). Although many things are not good, there are many things which are good and one must not forget this. I saw queues in all food shops for a very limited choice of goods, which reminded me of the war years.

"In a shop we bought some cakes and rolls. The rolls were still 5 pfennig, just as they were 45 years ago, only now there was no bag or wrapping paper. In a public lavatory I was asked if I wanted one or two sheets of paper!

"In a bar we got into conversation with five soldiers. Very nice young men whose worries and aspirations were the same as in most countries. Glad when military service is over, worries about families etc. There is a smaller difference in the wages between various jobs.

"All essentials are very cheap. Monthly rents are so cheap; they are a fraction of their weekly pay. Coal is very cheap but all non-essentials such as leather shoes and woollen clothing very expensive. If one orders a car it takes about 10 years to be delivered (one has time to save up for it) and the waiting list for skilled workmen is also very long unless one can bribe them.

"As I said before, it all reminded me of those war years. The general regret especially by the younger people was that they cannot travel west."

After the East German Communist regime collapsed and Germany re-united in 1990, the way cleared for the British to make amends in Dresden for 1945. The united Germany adopted democracy and its leaders acknowledged collective German responsibility for World War II. There was a meeting of minds between Germany and Britain.



In 1992, Dresden City Council decided to proceed with the reconstruction of the Frauenkirche. A rubble-sorting ceremony started the event in January 1993 with the foundation stone laid in 1994. This was followed by the crypt in 1996 and the inner part of the domed roof or cupola, in 2000.

Seven new bells were cast for the church and rang for the first time for the Pentecost celebration in 2003. The exterior was completed ahead of schedule in 2004 and the painted interior completed the rebuilding in 2005. Evidence of the destruction can be clearly seen with the blackened old stone in contract to the new masonry.

Back in 1993, and in response to a “Call from Dresden” asking the world to help rebuild the Frauenkirche, Dr Alan Russell, a former civil servant, founded The Dresden Trust. The charity’s aims were to heal the wounds of war and develop harmonious relations between the people of Britain and the German city of Dresden. Over the next 10 years, the trust’s fundraising efforts secured over £1 million.

The Trust commissioned a golden orb and cross from a London goldsmith Grant Macdonald Silversmiths to replace the fire damaged original. It was constructed by Alan Smith whose father, ironically, was a member of one of the aircrews who took part in the bombing of Dresden. Before travelling to Dresden, the cross was exhibited at a number of churches in the UK including Coventry Cathedral, Liverpool Cathedral and St Paul's Cathedral in London.

In February 2000, the cross was ceremonially handed over by the Trust’s patron, HRH The Duke of Kent and it was eventually placed on the top of the dome in 2004. The original cross that once topped the dome, now twisted and charred, is on display inside near the new altar.



*Creative Commons license*

## February 2020

And so, my visit to Dresden in February 2020, 75 years to the day of its destruction. I arrived on the evening of the 12 February and left for Berlin at lunchtime on the 14<sup>th</sup>. It wasn't long but without hordes of tourists, it enabled me to get a feel for the city and the events on the evening of 13 February. The day started clear and sunny although it became overcast during the afternoon.

I spent hours wandering around the city visiting such sites as the Zwinger, the Opera House, castle and took a stroll on the north bank of the Elbe to take in the panoramic view of the city.

Irmgard had some pictures taken in Dresden in 1945 before the bombing. One of my aims during the visit was to retake them, 75 years on.

The pictures below show the castle stables in 1945 and the rather clean, neat and tidy restoration job in 2020 and two sets of pictures of the Zwinger Palace.





The citizens of Dresden hold events every 13 February to remember the night of the bombings. As 2020 marked the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary, something a little more comprehensive was planned.

There were local memorials around the city and various events based at the Frauenkirche. These included a conciliation liturgy with words and organ music "Remembrance, reconciliation shaping the future." There was a concert of Brahms' "A German Requiem" at the Palace of Culture and a panel discussion "Just a blink of an eye in terms of history?" Many of the events were organized in partnership with Coventry and Wroclaw (Breslau).

The main focus of events took place in the Neumarkt, beside the Frauenkirche. Organised by the Frauenkirche's Support Society it's their "Silent remembrance" with an opportunity for citizens to light a candle and come together in conversation.

At 5pm there was the creation of a human chain. Crowds of people filled the Neumarkt where there were speeches from HRH Duke of Kent, Michael Kretschmer, the Prime Minister of Saxony and the German Federal President, Frank-Walter Steinmeier who urged Germans to defend democracy.

What the President said was particularly poignant with the rise of the far right AfD party who had a counter demonstration in the Altmarkt. The heavy police presence kept them from gate crashing the memorial event.



*The paper birds. The text reads "For The Peace. Remembering the victims of the bomb attack on 13 February 1945"*





*Remembering the fallen*



*President Steinmeier (picture from Daily Mail)*



*The small but vocal AfD protest*



*Human Chain in the Neumarkt (picture from Daily Mail)*



*Looking to the sky whilst the city's church bells rang.*



After the speeches, at around 5.30, the crowd dispersed to locations around the city in advance of the 'human chain'. At this time there was the joint ringing of all Dresden's church bells and what a wonderfully random cacophony of sound! At 6pm the bells stopped and everyone held hands with those next to them. I had wanted to get pictures of this but got caught up in the moment and joined the chain, I guess with my mother very much in my thoughts.

After a while, the bells started up again and the crowd dispersed, many returning to the Neumarkt for their own moments of remembrance. The city bells again rang from 21:51 – the time the sirens started sounding in Dresden in 1945. The bells abruptly stopped at 22:03 the moment the first marker planes started to get to work dropping the flares.



At the same time, the 'Night of silence' started in the Frauenkirche. This annual late night event traditionally follows the ringing of the city's church bells.

I attended part of this service which consisted of intercessory prayers, a choir and organ music. In between the prayers and music there was a hush where we were invited to listen to the silence in the church and reflect. I stayed a little while before discretely leaving to walk through the deserted streets.

My mother was very much in my thoughts and how lucky she was to have survived. At the time I recorded my thoughts:

"It's now 25 to 11 in Dresden. It is raining but very quiet in the New Market. Various stalls are being packed up. The candles are still alight. The service in the church is continuing until midnight.

"75 years ago today the RAF were doing their best. The big bombs had been dropped and the incendiary ones followed causing this area where I'm standing to become a huge firestorm.

"75 years ago it was a very clear night which made it an easy target for the initial bombers who came with the markers. Today they would not have had such an easy task because of the cloud and the rain although 75 years on technology has moved on and they would have used other methods to pinpoint the targets. But fortunately for the last 75 years we have had peace in Europe and long may that continue."



*Human Chain along the banks of the Elbe (picture from Daily Mail)*



*The deserted Neumarkt 13 February 2020*

## 15 My German Heritage (by Des Shepherd)

I have often been asked why I am so interested in my family history, particularly my German side. It is not an easy question to answer but events in my life have generated an interest in the Hampf side of my family. I can't quite put my finger on it, but it's an emotional thing that somehow struck a chord or sparked my curiosity. To put this into some kind context, I will relate specific incidences that sparked that curiosity.

I first became aware of my German heritage when I lived in Rayleigh. In 1953, when I was around 15 months old, I made my first visit to Germany. We went to Hotzum and Bremen, where I met my Grandparents and Helga for the first time. They were living in North Germany and this was before their move to Reutlingen. I was too young to remember this visit.



*Germany 1953 with Angela (Mutti 2), Karl (Opa) holding me, my father and Helga.*

My first visit to Reutlingen was in 1956. I stayed at my Grandparents council flat. This is my first recollection of Germany and I remember the trams, the statue outside the station and the flat. I recall that fresh bread and rolls were delivered every morning along with the milk. It was the smell of freshly baked, what we would call 'Continental rolls', that still sticks in my mind.

I also remember a drink called Himbeersaft. It is a sort of raspberry syrup which I had mixed with water – a bit like squash you can buy today. When I say I remember it, it's the name that stuck rather than the taste.



**Note**

Raspberries have a special place in the food traditions of central Europe. One of the most common uses for them is in syrup form. It was particularly popular within the Jewish communities in Germany at the time.

One generous teaspoon of the thick red syrup would flavour a whole glass of water and emit an aroma of raspberry. This raspberry syrup can also be added to iced tea or lemonade. Or, to a glass of white wine to make a Kir, (or sparkling wine for a Kir Royale) – or any other cocktail, for that matter. In Berlin, it is often added to “*Berliner Weisse*”, a regionally brewed wheat beer.

I think my interest in transport was developed here as I remember being transfixed by the Straßenbahn or trams. So much so I remember getting a broom and pretending to be a tram. I used the broom as a pantograph and the communal washing lines as the overhead wires. Ah, childhood imagination!



*The tram in 1956 and the washing lines outside the flats in 2017.*

But back home when I started primary school, the delightfully named Love Lane Primary School in Rayleigh, I was aware I was different from other children. One giveaway factor was that I wore a pair of lederhosen - leather shorts - which I soon hated!



*Wearing my lederhosen*

Three instances come to mind at primary school. It was just 15 years after the end of the second world war and many of my classmates would have had close relatives who were killed in the fighting.

In the playground they didn't play Cowboys and Indians but Brits and Nazis. Guess which side I was made to be on. I distinctly remember when my mother and Helga, who was visiting at the time, met me from school. The other children pointed and yelled out “Look, the Germans are here – oh yuk”.

And the third instance was the last day of term one year. To fill the time, the teacher had a quiz – capital cities of the world. And when Germany came up I proudly stuck my hand up and said Bonn. I was told no, it was Berlin and that I should know better. Berlin was the capital until after the war when Germany was divided and the capital of West Germany was Bonn and I had passed through this city on my trip to Reutlingen. As far as I was concerned, I was right and that incident upset me at the time.



From a very early age I had learned to speak German but with the difficulties at school, I soon decided I didn't want to know. A shame really.

It would be another 11 years before I visited Germany again but Helga and Karola were frequent visitors to our home.

### **Travelling to Germany**

My trips to Reutlingen were made using trains and boats. There was no EasyJet from Gatwick in those days! It was a 24-hour journey starting at London's Liverpool Street station on the evening 'Hook Continental' boat train to Parkeston Quay. I can remember on the 1956 visit, seeing the steam engine at the front of the train out of the window as we went round the junction at Manningtree. (It was probably a B1 locomotive).

At Parkeston Quay we had a berth on a large boat which took us on the overnight journey to the Hook of Holland. Here we caught an early morning inter-continental express which ran directly to Stuttgart.





*The docks and train at the Hook of Holland in 1967*



This train would have a Dutch electric locomotive to Venlo where we had a somewhat lengthy stop to deal with customs at the border with Germany. From here a German electric engine took over.

The journey went through Cologne and Bonn before following the River Rheine, the most spectacular part of the journey. There were railway lines on both banks of the river. We would travel on the west bank and I can remember long freight trains trundling along on the other bank. The hills on either side of the river had vineyards and castles and an almost fairy-tale appearance in places. It's a journey I want to do one more time, this time stopping off on the way to visit some of the sights.



After arrival at Stuttgart, we took a local train to Reutlingen and then a tram to my Grandparents flat on the outskirts of the town.

My next visit to Reutlingen was in July 1967. The occasion was Karl's 75<sup>th</sup> birthday. All four of his daughters were present, with their families and it was the first time I met my German cousins Jochen and Peter.



By this time, I was in my teens and quite proud that I was 'half German'. I was different! This is a contrast to my younger years when I was embarrassed to be different.

Over the years as I grew up, we often had friends and relatives of my mother coming to stay and having a 'foreign' side to the family felt normal.

The 1967 trip saw my introduction to German steam engines, I spent many a happy day on the line side with my rather basic Kodak Instamatic camera at Tübingen. That year we had a day trip to Bodensee, a town on Lake Constance and on the border with Switzerland. This excursion train left Reutlingen early in the morning and was pulled in both directions by a large German Class 50 steam engine. A magical day and another rail journey I would like to repeat one day.

I also recall visiting Freudenstadt in the heart of the Black Forest, Lichtenstein Castle and climbing the local mountain, the Achalm. I think these first two trips to Reutlingen had the biggest impact.



*The Achalm, which dominates the town, and Lichtenstein Castle*

My third visit to Reutlingen was over Christmas/New Year 1971/72. There was snow on the ground and the use of steam engines from Tübingen was in its last few months. My father and I made time with our cameras to photograph and ride behind the ancient Prussian class 38 locomotives to Horb. But despite these trips, I was very aware of my German grandparents who I rarely saw during my childhood. I remember my step grandmother, who was devoutly Catholic, introducing me to a young Catholic teenager. She seemed keen but I was not interested. I remember she was not very attractive and had facial hair!





My final visit to Reutlingen to see my Grandparents was in August 1974 when my then girlfriend, Toni, joined me on a trip around Germany, staying in youth hostels.

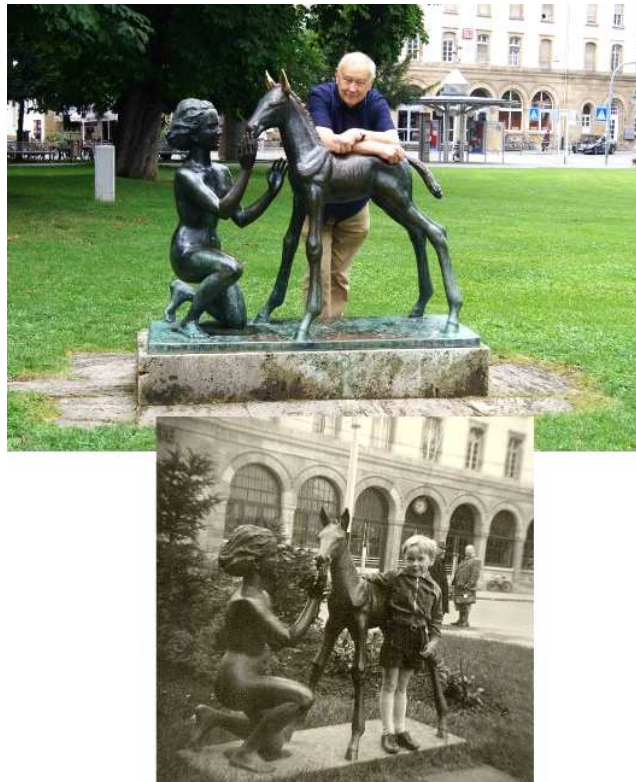
It was the last time I saw my Grandfather, who by then was 82 years old. He died a couple of years later in 1976.

During that visit we also stayed with my mother's sister, Inge and spent time with my cousin Peter and his girlfriend, we were of similar ages.

However, the shades of German anti-Semitism showed through when my step grandmother Angela (Mutti 2), a devout Catholic, was distinctly sniffy on meeting Toni – a Jewess. My grandfather Karl heartily accepted and welcomed her for who she was.

I have visited Germany many times since, as part of my work for BFBS (Forces Radio) but this was to north Germany around Hanover. I was very close to Braunschweig, the town where my parents met, but didn't get the chance to visit.

In 2017, I returned to Reutlingen, this time with Tess and Kaden, met Helga and spent a few days revisiting the places I remembered from my childhood and teen visits.



*The statue outside the station in Reutlingen in 1956 and 2017.*



*The flats where my grandparents were relocated in the early 1950's, in the shadow of the Achalm. The two children were family friends, Heidi and Peter, who lived in a neighbouring flat. Heidi, who was a couple of years older than me, would become a regular house guest when we lived in Chadwell Heath.*



*Above, the flats in 2017, brightly painted and with solar panels on the roof.*

People have asked why I am so interested in my family history, particularly my German side. I have set out above the incidents in my life which had an impact. I never really showed much interest in my 20's and 30's as I was busy with my career and raising a family. But I was aware of places like Breslau, Oberglogau and Silesia. I always thought Silesia sounded romantic, a bit like a place in Tolkien's Middle Earth.

I got my first scanner in 2000 and converted my parent's old negatives and prints to my computer. This gave me sight of places I had only ever heard of. As I became older, my curiosity grew about many of the places mentioned when my mother wrote her "Story of Life". It put much of her younger life into context.

She never spoke much about her youth or the war so this was my introduction to her childhood. I just wish now I had more time to have spoken to her in depth as I subsequently did with Helga, not just about her life but about what was happening in Germany at the time. This awareness of interest in her life encouraged me to study the history of the time in more detail.

Today, I am keen to get information and the stories directly from those involved. Hence my getting the recorded stories from Helga and my father together with the written stories from my mother, Irmgard and her elder sister, Inge.

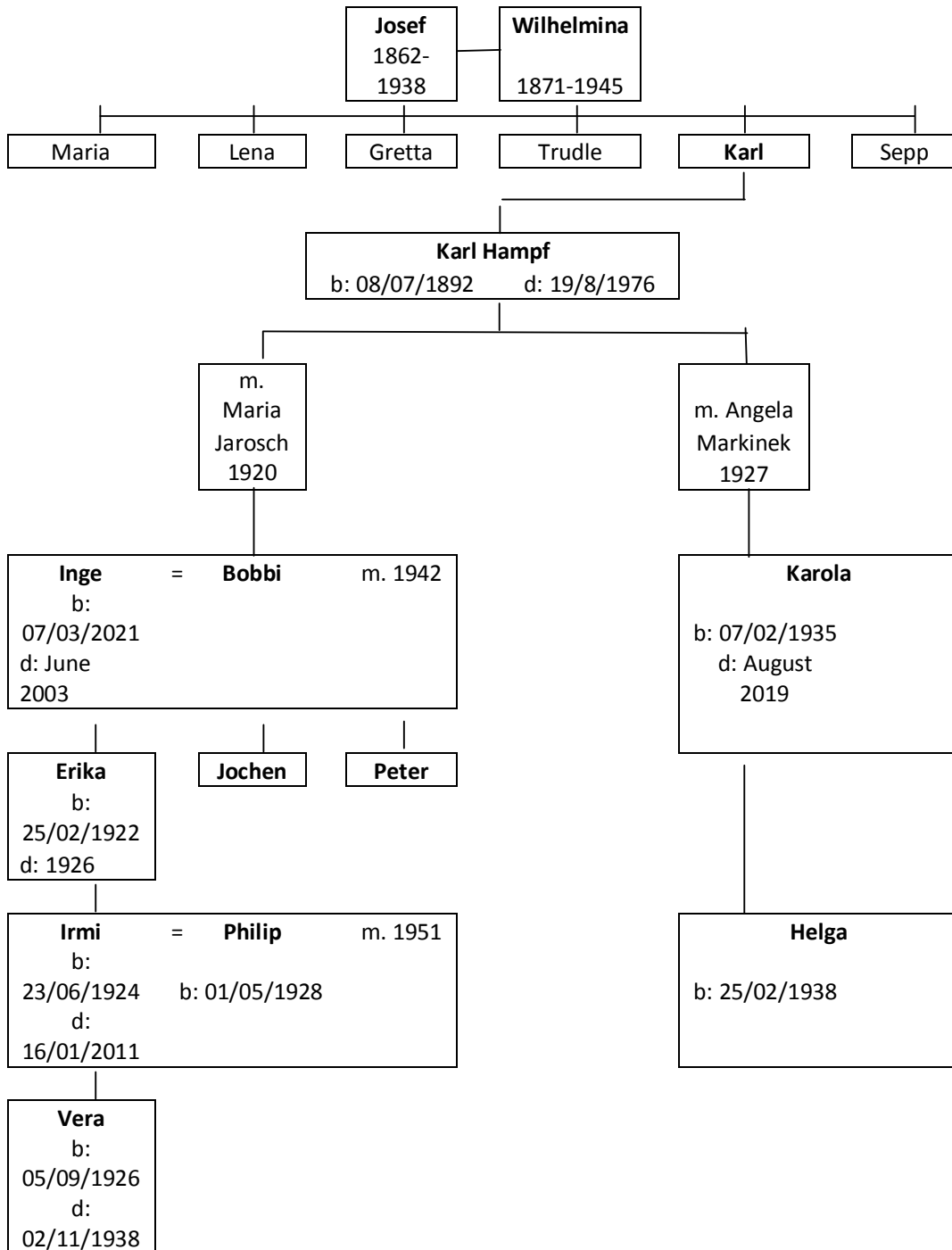
Does this account answer the original question of why I am so interested in my German family history? I don't know, but I hope it sets out some of my influences and thinking.



## Appendix 1 – Family Trees

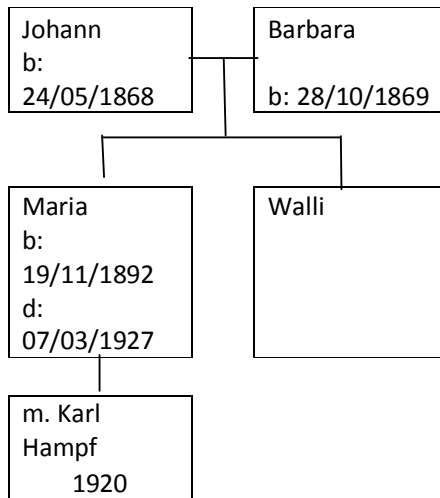
Set out are the family trees for the Hampf, Jarosch and Marcinek families, as far as I can trace it. Under the Nazi regime, German citizens were required to produce a family tree going back two generations to prove they had no Jewish relatives.

### 1. The Hampf Family

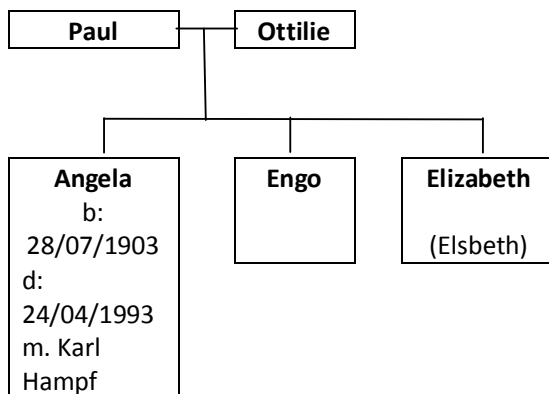


## 2. Jarosch Family

I don't (yet) know how many children Johann and Barbara had other than the two listed below.



## 3. The Marcinek Family



There are a number of unanswered questions here.

Engo lived in Cologne and I understand he was married as his daughter visited our home in Chadwell Heath in the 1960's.

Elizabeth (Elsbeth) was married to a watchmaker and they lived in Bad Mergentheim. Angela moved here after Karl's death and I believe both are buried in this town.

## Appendix 2 – Maps

### Map 1

This map shows the location of key places in Irmgard's childhood.

**Bischofskoppe** (Bishops Mound) is the mountain the family travelled to for their Sunday ski outings.

**Breslau (Wrocław)** The capital of Upper Silesia and where Irmgard went to university. It is also the main town where Marie Hampf went to hospital to have her gall bladder removed and subsequently died.

**Hindenburg** – where Irmgard attended boarding school. The town has now reverted to its original Polish name of Zabrze

**Oberglogau (Głogówek)** – the town where the Hampf family lived until 1945.

**Oswiecim** – the town where the Marcinek family came from and where subsequently the Auschwitz concentration camps were built.

**Riesengebirge** (The Giant Mountains) – where Irmgard went to recover when she had the small shadow on her lung. This mountain range is located on the current Czech-Polish border, to the east of Breslau and are part of the Sudetes Mountain range. It is not marked on this map but is located to the left of the image and is half way between Breslau and Dresden.

Today, the Great Mountains are known by their Polish name as the Karkonosze and are protected as national parks on both the Czech and Polish side. The range has a number of major ski resorts, and is a popular destination for tourists engaging in downhill and cross-country skiing, hiking, cycling and other activities.



## Map 2

This map traces the journey made by Irmgard when she had to flee from Breslau in 1945, first to Goisern in Austria and then on, via Nuremberg Jail to Braunschweig.

This map also traces the journey of Angela, Helga and Karola when they fled from Oberglogau to Goisen and then via Bad Mergentheim to Braunschweig.

