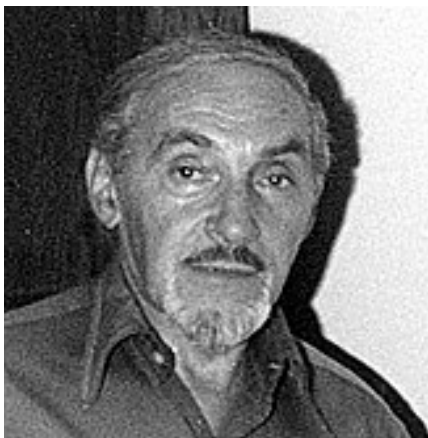


Jussi Brainin 1919-2008

As his name shows, Jussi was an unusual resident of the Wychwoods; a Jewish refugee from Hitler, who had lived only in cities until he came here. But he spent the last third of his life in Ascott, and they were amongst his happiest years.



Jussi was born in Vienna, Austria, and came to Britain in 1937 to train in the textile trade. Thus, by great good fortune, he escaped the Holocaust to come. In 1939 he met Liesl Kelsen, also a Viennese refugee in England. She was a rich girl, he a poor boy; in Vienna their paths would never have crossed. Here their paths not only crossed, but in July 1940 they married. A week later Jussi was interned on the Isle of Man as an ‘enemy alien’, with a German invasion expected at any moment, no one stopped to distinguish Jews from Nazis. But three months later he and most of his fellow-internees were allowed out to join the British Army. Jussi moved up (a bit) through the ranks, and ended as a Staff Sergeant, working in Intelligence.

After the war he was offered the opportunity of working as a translator at the Nuremberg Trials, but felt he couldn’t take his wife and small daughter to postwar Germany. Instead, in 1948, he took them to Canada. There he built up a successful career as an insurance broker,

and added two more children to the family.

In the 1970s, however, history again intervened in his life, when Quebec separatism blighted his business. He and his wife decided to sell up and return to the UK, arriving in Ascott in 1978, where I’d been

living for several years.

Here, at nearly 60, Jussi founded a whole new career as a management consultant to insurance brokers. He worked until he was over 80, finally retiring in 2000. In retirement he was busier than ever, writing his memoirs, and working as a volunteer driver for Wychwood Surgery, a volunteer worker in Ascott Shop, and during the years of the Ascott Toad Watch, a doughty protector of toads. He was a keen member of the Ascott Discussion Group, and gave one of its most memorable talks, about his early experiences as a refugee. He loved to talk about history and politics, his favourite subjects, even, or especially, with those who didn’t agree with him. And he loved to walk up London Lane, or Chippy Hill, and stop and chat with everyone.

By the end he was a well-known and well-loved character in the village, having come, both literally and figuratively, a very long way.

Carole Angier