



in turn learn and know their own background.' He recalls that her parents did not speak about their experience very often, as, particularly for his mother, they would become understandably emotional when reminiscing. It was only when World War Two erupted that she would hear her parents discuss the events which happened as they were forcibly removed from their ancestral lands within present-day Turkey. They would speak about the suffering of those in Europe and reminisce in their home in Iran about what had taken place only 24 years beforehand.

It is important to know that the atrocities in Armenia did not begin nor end in 1915 to 1918 and the impact of the massacre and deportation of Armenians from their home lands are still felt today. The Turkish government were so intent on destroying Armenian presence they not only forcibly deported and murdered Armenians but they sought to destroy any evidence of their residence there. Building stones with Armenian markings were defaced or destroyed, and all the towns and villages with Armenian names were re-named with Turkish names. Even today, the many remaining Armenian churches are left to decay with a small handful converted into secular museums.

To find out more about the atrocities in Armenia, we recommend watching *The Betrayed*, by Fergal Keane, available on YouTube. 24/04/1915 marks the date of the deportation of Armenian intellectuals from Istanbul. You can find out information on the events of 1915-17, and read more about the Armenian massacre at <http://hmd.org.uk/content/24041915-deportation-armenian-intellectuals-istanbul> or at <https://www.ushmm.org/search/results/?q=The+Armenian+Genocide#>



The annual marking of Holocaust Memorial Day in the Phoenix programme has been long-standing. Our prime objective is always to bring members good quality, internationally-flavoured films. Thus, unless a film related to the topic is good enough, we just don't show it. Through the years there has always been something that meets the mark for HMD.

Our Chair, Graham Cole, has been an educator for the Holocaust Educational Trust (HET) for many years. It is partly for this reason that he isn't at some of our screenings as he's away hosting groups of mainly college-age students visiting the Auschwitz and Birkenau death camps in Poland, or at pre- and post-visit briefings around the UK.

Most of us are very familiar with the events of the Jewish Holocaust in Europe during WW2. For me, documentary film wasn't quite enough. I still needed to stand on the ground where it happened. Would the nature of the Nazi Final Solution campaign finally sink in? A few weeks ago I joined Graham and the HET groups at the town of Oświęcim (in German, Auschwitz), near Krakow, on a cold Autumn day.

Before seeing the camps, a visit to the town square reinforces the extent of the integration of the local Jewish population prior to the Nazi invasion of Poland on September 1<sup>st</sup> 1939. Before WW2 there was a fine synagogue just a block away, now wasteland. The ex-Polish barracks of the first Auschwitz concentration camp has its familiar 'Arbeit Macht Frei' over-gate sign. It was not built for the Nazis' purposes, but carefully and quickly adapted, notably the conversion of the arsenal into the first gas chamber and crematorium - less than 100m away from the Kommandant's mansion.



Nothing prepares you for the site of Auschwitz-Birkenau to the west of the town. Once the site of a small village, it became a vast prison encampment sliced through by a railway siding, built to service the camp with those mainly Jewish victims from all over Europe, most notably from Hungary in 1944. The camp still has its perimeter fencing, lookout posts and ditches. The site was razed by the Nazis retreating from the oncoming Red Army and most of the men's barrack huts only have their brick stove chimneys left. However, some have been reconstructed from what was left so you can actually stand in the spaces that the prisoners had to endure.

Away in the trees at the end of the railway track are the dynamited remains of the purpose-designed and constructed gas chambers and

crematoria. At their peak even these could not cope with the huge number of Jews that were dealt the 'final solution' by the Nazi guards. The film **Son of Saul**, that the Phoenix showed in January 2017, recreated what it was like from the point of view of a Sonderkommando working in that area of Birkenau.

I watched **Son of Saul** again on my return. The Phoenix audience had mixed feelings about it (85%): perhaps the lead character had a bit more freedom to act than would have been true? Nevertheless, it was an effective recreation of how Auschwitz-Birkenau functioned. I've seen the films and, now, walked the sites: I still can't reconcile that people can do such callous things to others - those that they would otherwise regard as neighbours. Adrian Pickering

The Southampton Holocaust Memorial Day event will take place at The Spark building at Solent University on Thursday January 25<sup>th</sup> at 6 p.m. It is open to the public and there is no entry charge. Details are available at <http://www.hmd.org.uk/events/2016/southampton-holocaust-memorial-day/fri-01122017-1515>