

# „Badehaus“ Overwhelming Impressions

By Felicitas Amler, published in German on 20 June 2018 in Süddeutsche Zeitung  
Translation by Christine Groß

72 years ago Shoshana Bellen was born at this place – Waldram-Föhrenwald. Two years ago she experienced that it can become a place reaching out over a long distance but also can be an important place for herself: Föhrenwald , once a settlement for workers of the Nazi (NS) armament factory in the fores of Wolfratshauser, then a homestead for Jewish Survivors of the Holocaust (Displaced Persons), finally transformed into the municipality of Waldram where German displaced persons found a new home. The Badehaus, where now an organization is making a place for documentation and remembrance, stood there through all three phases of history.

The Jewess Shoshana Bellen, who now lives with her family in Israel, is deeply moved by this engagement. That there are honorary, unpaid persons – especially Germans, as she emphasizes – who manage this, has overwhelmed her. And only now, as she has occupied herself absolutely intensively with the history of her family, has she become aware how courageous her parents were, heroes, she says. And the Badehaus is the right place to honour them.



*The Badehaus (here in the photo from behind, in the midst of the residential buildings) documents the history of the area from the end of the 1930s until today. (Photo: Felicitas Amler)*

There are moving scenes which flicker over the screen in the modest hall of the Badehaus. In a members' meeting, the Association shows publicly, for the first time, extracts from talks with contemporary witnesses, as they will be seen from autumn onwards. On 20 and 21 October the house will be opened festively. The Association connected with Sybille Krafft and Wolfgang Saal worked continuously in the past six years in order to transform and present it as a lively and qualified place of learning.

This time again the annual report lists such a fullness of numbers that it would be difficult to show them all: The increase of members to 362 (and even during the assembly 2 more join), the honorary work hours of the documentation and building groups which reached over a thousand hours long ago, the collection of donations and contributions for a project which is planned with €1,8 million.

The Association is optimally linked up, co-operates for example, with the Culture Stage „Hinterhalt“ and the Culture Association KIL, is supported by Penzberg and Geretsried and also by Wolfratshausen and – thanks to the negotiation of the chairwoman Ingrid Schnaller from the „Werbekreis“ (Publicity/Advertising Circle) – it receives the gift of kitchen equipment from an XXXL Lutz (Furniture House).



*Shoshana Bellen was born in 1946 in the camp for Jewish Holocaust Survivors, Displaced Persons.*

*(Photo: Privat/oh)*

Sponsors and supporters for the Badehaus are crucial, whether they give money (almost €28,000 donations last year) or, like the Henschelchen family in Waldram, simply always have an open house for Association Members and Contemporary Witnesses who come for a visit. Robbi Waks from Tel Aviv has given the name „Cafe Henschelchen“ to this, and emphasizes, in spite of the Association's professionalism, how things take place in an informal and friendly way.

Keeping up contacts and intensive research, from the town archives in Wolfratshausen and Geretsried to Washington and Yad Vashem, are the

main tasks of the documentation group, which in the meantime has collected more than 100 objects for the future exhibition, including the poetry album of the author Lea Fleischmann, transport boxes of Germans expelled from their homeland or care packages; also approximately 20 short theme films and 30 interviews with contemporary witnesses. „That is

27 hours of material“, says Krafft, “a treasure of documents for the future „. That this work also awakes the inquisitiveness and engagement of young people makes the chair person especially happy. For instance the 18 year old high school graduate Sebastian d’Huc accompanied Krafft when she undertook a week’s researching journey to Israel. „Fantastically impressive“, the young man says. He says he felt how important it was for the Jewish hosts to see that there is an initiative like the Badehaus Association here in Germany. Photos of the Chanukka Festival, at which Krafft and d’Huc were present, give an impression of the emotions on both sides, of weeping and laughing together. Robbi Waks spoke the concluding words on this evening in the Badehaus. He acknowledged his respect for the work given to research and documentation of Föhrenwald, where he himself lived for nine years. This place is a part of German history, he says, „not only of Jewish history“.

## **What public spirit can achieve**

### **The „Badehaus“ will become a splendid place of memory – A Comment**

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Deeply moving, stimulating and – yes, also: invoking tears through its beauty. Through all the impressions perceivable until now the Badehaus Waldram-Föhrenwald will become a splendid place of remembrance and for meetings. In the past 6 years the supporting association has shown what civil engagement can achieve. It has rescued the house, convinced the Archbishop’s Chair to place it available for working on history and has brought together large sums of contributions from many different sources. Now that the first talks with witnesses of that time can be heard, filmed impressions seen and new recognition won, the meaning of this initiative can be more strongly felt. Yes, as a visitor at the members’ assembly, one might even think: Perhaps in the end it was rather good that the local government did not take up this authentic place of contemporary history. Who knows whether so much heart and soul would have been poured into this project.

Communal and state authorities do support the plan. However one must still maintain: Without the citizens not much would have taken place in the former Föhrenwald. On the contrary. For a long time this place was totally „killed by silence“, is what Maria Mannes from Waldram says in one of the talks with witnesses of that time. And Rachel Salamander, who lived there in her childhood, is glad that at long last Föhrenwald is no longer perceived „only from one side“ – the Jewish.

At the opening ceremony of the ‚Place of Memory Badehaus‘, as the project is now officially named, certainly many people will bear witness. But the Association will need more than idealistic support also in the future. Local politicians, for instance, could come up with the idea of attending to the opening of the house. Because up till now there is no money available for supervisory staff. Or should even this be done by unpaid volunteers, too?