

## Ansprache von Eva McDonald am Grotiusweg 36 am Sonntag, 17. Juli 2011

Thank you for allowing me, the granddaughter of Olga Babette Arnthal, to speak to you in English today. I am Mrs. Eva McDonald, geb. Arnthal and I live in Scotland.

My cousin, Irmgard Andrae discovered Viermalleben and this annual ceremony when she was researching family history. Olga Arnthal was the very much younger sister of her great grandmother. It is thanks to Irmgard that I and my eldest daughter, Skye, are here today. We are just so sorry that we did not know about Viermalleben when my father was still alive. He died in 1998, aged 93.

My father was Dr. Ernst Heinz Karl Arnthal, younger son of Olga Babette Arnthal, geb. Wallach and Justizrat Dr. Ernst Julius Arnthal of Kassel. Olga Arnthal was one of the last residents of this house to be transported, in her case to Theresienstadt. (My husband and I paid a very moving visit to Theresienstadt two years ago during a cycling holiday along the Elbe).

Amongst my parents' papers I found my grandmother's last letter, written for us, but addressed to a Frau Popper who lived in Sweden because communication was only possible through a neutral country at that time. She wrote that she was being 'moved', probably to Altona, but that another elderly lady in the house would be moving with her, so she would have company. I heard very little German spoken in those days, but I do recall my parents saying "Sie wird verschleppt". She must have known the fate which awaited her and she would know that we would understand the message.

We received news of Oma Kassel's death through the Red Cross and I remember my mother telling me that Daddy was very sad because his mother had died and that I should go up and sit on his lap and give him a hug to comfort him. I was 6 at the time.

Also among my parents' papers I found a letter from my grandfather, Opa Kassel to my father, dated 1923 in which he already mentions Hitler and writes that he has too high an opinion of the intelligence of the German people to think they would ever be influenced by such a scoundrel. My father was relieved that his father died in 1930 and never suffered the heartbreak of discovering just how mistaken he was.

Olga Babette Arnthal was born in Kassel on 1st October, 1873 to Martin Wallach and his wife Ida, geb. Bing. In the history of Kassel it is written:

„in 1848 beginnt Martin Wallach mit dem Großhandel von Gummi- und Guttapercha-Waren sowie der Fabrikation von Instrumenten und Bedarfsartikeln aus Hartgummi für Medizin und Pharmazie. Damit gehört er zu den ersten in Deutschland in dieser Branche. Später kommt der Vertrieb ärztlicher Instrumente aus Metall hinzu.“

Unfortunately I have no memory of my Oma Kassel because I was only two years old in Jan. 1939 when we left Germany. My brother, Ernest, who also lives in Scotland now, was 6 and he remembers that she introduced him to the pleasure of gardening and that they would go out each day to see if the seeds had sprouted and how they were growing. She took him to see the aeroplanes at Fuhlsbüttel and spent a lot of time with him. He remembers her with great affection. From the letters I have read it is clear that the relationship between my grandparents

and their own two sons was an exceptionally close and loving one. My father was Gerichtsassessor in, I think, Wildungen – a small town near Kassel and lost his job by command of the „Reichsführer“. Just after the birth of my brother Ernest in 1933 the family moved to Hamburg, my mother's home town. My father found employment with a friend of my mother's family, Karl Dobbertin who owned a shipping line. My father's older brother, Rolf, was also working in Hamburg so when my grandmother had to forfeit her house in Kassel to the Third Reich it was natural that she would move nearer to her sons.

My father and my Uncle Rolf were both married to aryan women. My father had 2 children and Rolf had a daughter. We simply had to leave Germany. Yet they delayed until the last moment. They were desperately trying to find a sponsor for their mother, so that she could accompany them. This proved impossible and Oma Kassel insisted she was a harmless old lady, no threat to anyone. The authorities would have more important things to think about than bother with her. But, as we all know, no Jewish person was too innocent or too harmless to escape persecution in those fearful times.

Rolf and his family emigrated to America where they were sponsored by the Quakers. My cousin Doris now lives in California. Our own war years in England were not without their problems, but we survived. We were a very small but strong, united little family - without grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins. We had no relations around us

at all. We were enemy aliens in a country at war, fighting for its survival. Despite that, with very few exceptions, we were sensitively treated with understanding and with kindness.

After the war we were invited to return to this country, my father to be promoted to Oberlandesgerichtsrat. I remember we had a family council. Even I, aged 9 was allowed to give my opinion and Germany was a foreign and frightening land to me. For the others there were too many extremely unpleasant memories to make a return a tempting proposition. Instead we accepted the invitation to become British citizens and to make our contribution to the country which had so graciously given us refuge in our time of greatest need.

I am very grateful to have had this opportunity to put my Oma Kassel before you in context. I hope that, in the sad history of this house, she can now become a more real and integrated part of the brave little community which lived here under such terrible threat.

Finally I would like to ask my cousin Irmgard to read a few verses of a poem which I found, written for the occasion of our Farewell Family Gathering in Hamburg in Jan. 1939.

Ihr Jungen zieht jetzt fort, Gott sei es geklagt.  
Daheim nur verbleiben wir Alten.  
Doch wenn uns die Sache auch wenig behagt,  
Den Kopf wir doch oben behalten.

Auf mutige Söhne mit vollstem Vertrau'n  
Als Mütter, als stolze, wir blicken  
Und ahnen's - das Leben von neuem zu bau'n,  
Das wird mit der Zeit ihnen glücken.

Schwer ist es am Anfang John Bull zu versteh'n.  
Oft spleenig erscheint sein Gebaren.  
Doch wird es Euch grad wie den andern ergeh'n,  
Die heimisch im Lande bald waren.

und wenn uns'ren Söhnen es schließlich gelingt  
Behaglich und sesshaft zu wohnen, -  
Ein jeder von ihnen mit Liebe umschlingt  
Und festhält diverse Millionen, -

Dann kommen wir Mütter wohl über das Meer.  
Kein Gott an der Fahrt soll uns hindern!  
Und stillen der Sehnsucht gar mächtig Begeh'r  
Nach Kindern und Kinderes Kindern.