

Birthday celebrated

Jewish Museum Creglingen gives stories a face

Permanent exhibition “Roots and Destinations” has been running for 20 years. Almost 25,000 visitors recorded. Celebration in the Romschloss

By Arno Boas



The permanent exhibition “Roots and Destinations” at the Creglingen Jewish Museum celebrated its 20th birthday. Guests at the celebration in the Romschlössle included (from left) the Chairwoman of the Foundation Advisory Board, Diana Romen, keynote speaker Thomas Stöckle (Director of the Grafeneck Memorial), Foundation Chairwoman Sabine Kutterolf-Ammon, Mayor Uwe Hehn and the couple Claudia and Martin Heuwinkel. Archivist Claudia Heuwinkel laid the foundations for the museum with her research, Martin Heuwinkel is Managing Director of the foundation. © Arno Boas

Creglingen. The Jewish Museum in Badgasse in Creglingen is a place of meeting, dialog and remembrance. The importance of the museum for Creglingen and the wider region was highlighted at the 20th anniversary celebrations for the permanent exhibition “Roots and Paths”. Chairwoman of the foundation Sabine Kutterolf-Ammon also pointed out to numerous guests that the work is not finished yet.

In the Romschlössle on Monday, representatives of the foundation and their guests looked back on the history of the museum, which was opened on November 19, 2000. Four years later, on November 19, 2004, the permanent exhibition “Roots and Destinations” was opened. The museum and the exhibition are a symbol of remembrance, understanding and reconciliation, said Sabine Kutterolf-Ammon. The exhibition arose from a deep desire to preserve and pass on the region's Jewish heritage. For the chairwoman of the foundation, the

exhibition is a “valuable means of giving a face to the history and fate of Jewish families from Creglingen”.

The exhibition helps to integrate the memory of the people who once lived here into the present. “It shows us the diversity and richness of Jewish life, which we must never forget, especially in times like these,” said the foundation chairwoman. We are proud of what we have achieved, but the work is not yet done. Especially in times when anti-Semitic tendencies are becoming stronger again and the social climate is becoming polarized. This makes open doors and the promotion of dialog all the more important.

With the help and support of many people, the museum has become a lively part of the town of Creglingen and it is impossible to imagine life in the town without it, said Sabine Kutterolf-Ammon, praising the efforts of her fellow volunteers. The work of volunteers ensures that the museum can be opened every Sunday from March to November every year

Mayor Uwe Hehn referred to the “charisma” of the museum, which is something to be rightly proud of. “The fire of the volunteers never fades,” said the mayor, who also remembered the project's main initiator, the late American Arthur S. Obermayer. Obermayer had left a lasting legacy. It was important to him to present Jewish life in all its width and diversity, pointed out the mayor. Arthur S. Obermayer had achieved this impressively.

Former Creglingen mayor Hartmut Holzwarth, during whose term of office the museum was established, joined in via video message. He saw the museum “in good hands” and underlined the great importance of the topic for society.

Deep connection

A letter from the wife and son of Arthur S. Obermayer, Judy and Joel Obermayer, was then read by Martin Heuwinkel, Managing Director of the Jewish Museum Foundation. According to the letter, the family has a deep and meaningful connection to the museum and the permanent exhibition. Arthur S. Obermayer had a special relationship with the town of Creglingen and the museum, which he had built up with the help of locals. The museum preserves the history of the Jewish community of Creglingen and the surrounding area and shows the vitality of Jewish culture, which had been part of Creglingen for 300 years. The management of the museum over the last 20 years is a “true act of reconciliation”. The Obermayer family was convinced that the founder of the museum would have welcomed the development of the institution. They wrote: “Arthur would have liked the way you have managed the museum. And he would also have appreciated the additions of recent years, such as the audio guides.”

The director of the Grafeneck memorial, Thomas Stöckle, gave the keynote speech on “The memorial landscape in Baden-Württemberg”. Stöckle previously paid tribute to the “impressive” commitment of many people to the Creglingen Jewish Museum. Baden-Württemberg has a “unique memorial landscape” with around 80 locations. They represent an important aspect of the culture of remembrance, underlined Thomas Stöckle, who is also a member of the Speakers' Council of the State Working Group of Memorials and Memorial Initiatives in Baden-Württemberg (LAGG). The LAGG has been in existence since 1995 and at the turn of the millennium the state stepped in to provide support and a memorial concept was also developed.

The longstanding consensus on remembrance policy is increasingly being called into question, and from different directions, criticized the speaker. One side criticized what they saw as the “rigid” form of the memorials and their “overly victim-oriented” focus. The other side, on the other hand, spoke of “stupid remembrance politics”. According to Thomas Stöckle, he considers all memorials to be places of democracy. Because, he concludes, “places like Grafeneck or the Obere Kuhberg near Ulm could only exist because democracy had been eliminated”. In the Grafeneck killing center, the Nazis murdered thousands of people who, in their opinion, were “not worth living”. Fort Oberer Kuhberg, part of the federal fortress of Ulm on the western outskirts of the city, was the site of a concentration camp run by the state of Württemberg from November 1933 to July 1935.

The variety of work carried out by those responsible for the foundation over the past 20 years became clear from the posters on display in the Romschloss, which impressively documented the work of the museum. The museum has recorded a total of 24,660 visitors to date. There have been 27 temporary exhibitions and 104 events, such as readings, lectures and concerts. Music was also an integral part of the anniversary celebrations. Andreas Berge (violin) and Peter Ruppert (piano) framed the event with Yiddish songs.

The Jewish Museum in Creglingen

The Creglingen Jewish Museum Foundation was established on November 5, 1999.

The founders were Dr. Arthur S. Obermayer, Prof. Dr. Reinhold Würth, Mayor Hartmut Holzwarth, Udo Wirthwein, Prof. Dr. Horst F. Rupp, Barbara Pfundt-Tittelbach, Kultur- und Heimatverein Creglingen, Ulrich Schönberger, Georg Kellermann, Dr. Paul Nachman and Fritz Danner.

The museum was inaugurated on November 19, 2000. The permanent exhibition “Roots and Paths” followed on November 8, 2004.

The media station “Jewish Festivals and Customs” was inaugurated on November 24, 2014, the media station “Portrait Frieze of Creglingen Jews” on February 10, 2017.

A bilingual audio guide was launched in 2021, JMC-virtuell has been available since June 2022.

Chairmen of the foundation; 1999 - 2010 Hartmut Holzwarth, 2010 - 2012 Dr. Frithjof Sperling, 2012 - 2018 Dr. Christoph Bittel, since 2018 Sabine Kutterolf-Ammon. abo



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