

# INTRODUCTION

February 2020 – the month with the extra day.

If I don't finish this pamphlet on this particular day, I still have one more before my heading becomes obsolete. Life has its generous moments.

As most of you know, Rob and I are lucky enough to own a house in a stunningly beautiful part of the British Lake District. Sometimes life is generous for decades. Our favorite time here is deepest winter – no-one much around, leaves off the trees which increases access to the views, and what views!! The last few days have given us mountains in a wide range of snow coverings from none, through a dusting through deep layers.

We arrived here a couple of weeks ago, right after Storm Ciara and just before Storm Dennis. Britain in this time of climate change is massively prone to floods and gales, hence the storm warnings. Storm Ciara had such strong winds it sent an ordinary British Airways 747 across the Atlantic in record time. Neither of the named storms left unusual traces behind up in the Lakes. The impact was much more intense in the Severn Valley, where Britain's second biggest, and most intensely tidal river wends its ways through the Welsh borderlands.

For us in the Lakes the intense effect came the day the snow left an inch on the ground right here in the garden. Suddenly the Crake valley fells were pouring water across a lane that runs from us to the main road. We gave up on a trip to town for shopping. A new flooded area, one I'd never seen before, looked too deep. We didn't run out of food and by the next day there was plenty of road surface to be seen.

In a profoundly local way climate change has become a big issue.

The Lake District is also the place that our family keeps many of its important papers. Not the ones that need to be in the lawyer's safe, but the more personal ones. As rain and snow have been coming down I've been perched at my desk and on the sofa reading letters from refugees.

Which refugees? Why my mother and her entire family. This too is a story many of you know. My grandfather was a politician, visibly and actively opposed to Hitler even before the man became Chancellor in 1933. So my teenager mother and her younger siblings were sent out of Germany as refugees that very year, my grandfather staying on until the very last minute in 1939, doing what he could to forestall the impact of the fearsome tsunami he could tell was approaching.

Equally profoundly local, refugees are a big issue these days as well.

Buried in the country though we may be, concerns in the wider world reach us here too.

Coronavirus of course: A few weeks ago a June Asia/Pacific conference I considered attending in Japan was cancelled. When, last week, his firm's Milan office closed and all the schools in Milan closed, our son Alex asked us to lay in extra supplies up here in case the same happens in London.

Much less obviously local but deeply connected to my own sense of history and purpose — Putin be damned, the US Republican Party remains committed to tainting the results of the 2020 elections in a fanatical attempt to prevent African Americans from voting.

I don't kid myself, there is such a long history of aggressive discrimination against Americans who have African ancestry that no-one in power can be held up as untainted. Certainly not the police nor prosecutors, nor America's juries.

Each of us will have particular ways we see the disgrace that is devastating the lives of too many African Americans. My lens is shaped by the holocaust, by the dehumanization of a people, the holocaust's people being my people. Americans whose ancestors are African are my neighbors and colleagues, among my dearest friends, my cousin, my niece. This too is local.

These four topics: Climate catastrophe, refugees and the urgent need to migrate, Coronavirus with its prohibition on migration and the tainting of the upcoming election come together in my own thinking as matters where any future successes depend on using our capacity to REPAIR.

## REPAIR STORIES

I have been thinking about repair, as a scholar, for years — it's part of understanding the injury and damage of war time. What should happen to whom and to this place as a consequence of the awful things that were done in the name of our own nation or some other nation?<sup>1</sup>

Here, I will skip over my decades of research and instead start with a look at the Lake District and my own family's refugee story both of which, I believe, illuminate the intriguing features of actual repairs, features that are encouraging in the hard times upon us.

Many people write about improvements after injuries and damage in the language of disease and healing. I prefer the idea of repair. To discuss this further would take me down a fairly extended scholastic and theoretical path. Not today. Perhaps another time.

Pictures. Descriptions. Aspirations. Those are the guiding standards for this particular piece.

The aspirations are framed by a wonderful book The Roosevelt I Knew, by Frances Perkins, Roosevelt's Labor Secretary and the first woman to hold a Cabinet level office in the USA. The repairs the US faced boggle the mind. This particular President's way of setting the work in motion is intriguing. Not a man of plans, unlike my favorite Elizabeth Warren, he asked his advisors for proposals and selected among them. All those acronyms: WPA, NRA, . . . those were inventions in real time, adapted and modified in wide consultation. There are many who say WWII saved the US economy. Perhaps, but nearly a decade before the US entered the fighting, economic aspirations and hopes began to turn the corner.

Climate change — that's our global depression. The right leader can now begin to turn us around.

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One of the first books I read on peacemaking was Fred Iklé's Every War Must End. It's not a great book but its title stuck and left me working on wars' endings with optimism.

If, when this document arrives on your doorstep you, dear reader, find the prospect of a hopeful look ahead foolishly naive, stop right here. Hopeful is where I plan to go. Years of scholarly work on repair bolster my professional confidence that this is not naive.

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<sup>1</sup> Those are questions which still bedevil Korea/Japan relations even though World War II ended over 75 years ago. Much of the world believes that Germans did a great job dealing with the what it did during that war. I am not so sure. The stories behind the Iron Curtain and in Austria entangled with "denazification" in the western part of the country are worth at least a complex look.

## ECOLOGICAL CATASTROPHE: THE LAKE DISTRICT, MY HOME



The stunning views of lakes and mountains which, in 2017 earned the Lakes recognition as a UNESCO World Heritage Site, are in part a result of ecological disasters 500 million years ago. Dramatic changes resulted from the eruption of the volcanos which once dominated this region. Much more recently an ice age carved remnants of the volcanos into the radial pattern of lakes and mountains, the landscape we see today. The Lake District National Park provides a brief sketch of this

geology at <https://www.lakedistrict.gov.uk/learning/geology>.

The World Heritage designation was bestowed on the Lake District because of ways this region is a co-creation of nature and human action. Eco-fanatics might think humans in the Lakes in the 19th century should never be seen as a benign influence and yet they played and still play a role in the particular ways the region charms and delights to this day.

Stark hillsides with grass and rock and startling stone walls running steeply up the sides were stripped of their forests to make the charcoal that fueled early stages of the industrial revolution. Stone walls were built to keep sheep confined on the newly grass-covered fells, so sheep wouldn't stray too far from the farm. Hillsides were covered in charcoal burners' fires, glowing through the night. The quay at our place was the launching point for industrial boats traveling up the lake to Coniston. What were they carrying? Why Salt Peter, stored in a barn we now own. What's that? The explosive used to blow out the slate in the hills for easier quarrying and house-building.

Though industry means towns in most people's minds, it also means natural resources and the Lake District was full of them. The village of Askam was neighbor to Britain's second biggest iron mine. The mountains in the picture above were mined for slate and also for copper. Coniston village has rows of "cute" workers cottages and Coniston's Ruskin Museum celebrates traditional housing, much of it built with slate blasted out of the hills above. Local rivers sprouted water mills powering industrial sites. In the village next to ours water powered a small lumber mill, the yard still working when I was a child, though the water mill was not.

I heard a quarry boom just yesterday. Over time grazing sheep learned to stay in place, no longer needing walls. They became "hefted" flocks that knew which parts were their terrain, so sheep from different farms could and still do graze side by side. Those very same sheep are a prime reason the trees still cannot reestablish themselves. Our friend Owen uses a nearby woodland to get "coppiced" wood

from which he makes traditional baskets. Traditional oak and hazel-nut coppicing prevents the trees growing to full size, though not from living on from year to year. Coniston has just installed a large, wheel shaped, "memorial" honoring the copper mines. The fell paths and roadways which used to transport industrial goods are used nowadays by bikers and 4 by 4s for rough terrain thrills. World



Heritage is getting mobilized to act against the destruction these particular vehicles leave behind, though the National Park so far is disinclined to act and hikers have been using them for centuries to get started on their climbs to the peaks. The railway lines we use (this one beside Askam used yesterday to get the car to a repair) were installed originally for industrial use. Today they carry commuters and college students as well as the tourists. Though tourism this year is likely to shrivel, excited groups from China and Japan heading for the Windemere train are a sight to see.

Nature in Britain is never untouched by human hand. The glories of the Lake District today are geological in age but human at the visible surface. All of us who have walked a stone trail, who have arrived by train, who love the wide open distant views and the stone buildings are beneficiaries of industrialization on a large scale, perhaps as many as 3000 distinct sites 150 years ago.

My take from this: That climate changes and human ecological catastrophes do not bring life to an end. They set new standards and parameters within which life, having adapted, goes on. Britain now is a wetter country than the one I grew up in. Not that it was actually very dry but this is much much wetter. There will be many people around the world, including those who live around us in our new California home, who would love to share some of the excess water here. It cannot be done of course, not directly, but the earth is an interlocking system. And it is a system with an enormous potential to make and support life.

I am now old enough to realize that the leaders in framing the changes we need in the climate arena are mostly astoundingly young,

Were I deeply confused about what to do, I would ask my 15 year old great niece Sophia. I am not confused. I will continue to fly because my family is dispersed. I will continue my lifetime's practice of growing food. In California I will store water and be frugal about drawing on grid power which is relatively easy because we have some solar on the roof.

Above all I will listen to the young. Sweet Honey and the Rock sang about this decades ago:

Your children are not your children;  
They are the sons and daughters of  
Life's longing for itself.  
They come through you  
but they are not from you  
And though they are with you  
They belong not to you.

You may give them your love  
but not your thoughts,  
They have their own thoughts.  
They have their own thoughts.  
You can house their bodies but  
not their souls,  
For their souls dwell in a place of  
tomorrow,  
Which you cannot visit,  
not even in your dreams ...

## HUMANS AND MIGRATION — REFUGEES

Last year this photo was considered likely to become as iconic as the 1972 image of the Vietnamese child running, burning from Napalm, which in 1972 seemed to illuminate all the reasons the US role in Vietnam was discreditable and perhaps also doomed.



Valeria, 23-months-old, and her father, Óscar Alberto Martínez Ramírez, drowned trying to cross the border from Mexico into the United States. June 24 2019. Photo by Julia Le Duc.

Sadly the refugee image has faded from view and discussion of US policy on the Mexican border is being drowned out once more by Trumpian bluster about walls and now even about how perhaps the virus is both Chinese and an immigration problem, soluble by building that wall.

Another [NY Times](#) photo a few days ago echoed the river. Seen from above, a roadway streamed with trucks and cars, each one loaded with “essential” possessions of an entire family fleeing violence in Syria.

I have to say that I understand these people are all fleeing violence but I cannot enter into the ambitions that make the violence itself worthwhile. Why are killers making normal life impossible in Syria and in Honduras? Oh I understood Syria a few years ago — overthrow a dictator — but now? Based on the definition I finally came to for the nature of warfare, I assume Honduras is similar to today’s Syria— in both groups of men have decided that violence is the way to contest for their local territory and powers. Their ambitions are local while the consequences are vast: nothing less than to dictate an entire community’s social and economic system. To gain that power it seems worth destroying the very society each group wants to control.

Meanwhile, on the US/Mexican border, and on the Turkish/Syrian border, thousands, even millions of refugees wait, wait to return home or to settle in a place that's never engulfed. This year the Turkish army entered into the Syrian fighting. With Russians on the other side in that particular war, it has begun to resemble confrontations the imperialists of the 19th century used to call The Great Game. I kid you not. It was a game for Brits and Russians to confront each other across the southern edge of the Russian Empire to determine which Empire would win. In Europe, for two hundred years or so, nations “played” power politics against each other, using wars to determine who was or could become the greatest power in the world.

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My teenage mother and her siblings became refugees as that 19th century Imperial Game entered its last innings: Hitler’s attempt to become the greatest and most enduring power of them all. The young in

my family were “deported” in 1933 by their own parents, my grandfather being a well known politician and banker whose opposition to Hitler had been spoken out loud on the floor of the Reichstag. The kids went to Switzerland, the younger ones to school and my university student mother to secretarial college to get herself a marketable skill. My Granny hid money in the rail carriage cushions and jewelry in her underwear. Her mother, her children’s Granny, was already in Switzerland, a mighty softener to the start of their exile.

Soon after the war ended my aunt Mia headed to the USA to finish her studies to live out the rest of her life there alongside her twin sister. Their older siblings were in the UK, both married and settled. Their parents lived in London too. They have all died now, and up here in Lake End I have been building anew a picture of what the status REFUGEE means.

Clearly there is a big difference between my family of refugees and most Hondurans and Syrians – my family was on Hitler’s list. My grandfather was arrested on fabricated charges right away and my mother was quickly told that she was no longer welcome in the Chemistry Lab at Freiburg University. There will be people similarly at risk who are fleeing today but most migrants now are leaving intolerable violence.

Most people in World War II couldn’t and didn’t leave their intolerable violence though urban Brits sent children off to be “evacuees” in the countryside away from the bombs. My oldest sister Jessica and her cousin Richard lived up here at Lake End for a small number of months, cared for by Richard’s mother and their grandmothers up here one after the other. I presume but known for sure, that evacuation happened to German children once the USA and Britain began their devastating urban bombing raids. In the UK it was suggested my mother stop her war work to be a “good” mother but she refused. It seems pretty clear that the nature of today’s violence – from the air in Syria and from armed locals in Honduras, is so inescapable that “life’s longing for itself” means millions have to flee.

Family letters here at Lake End tell the stories. Today I consider the most important to be about language. My family, privileged and cosmopolitan, set off with strong foreign language skills. They wrote and wrote, all of them. Letters every few days. And all of them, even my grandfather who finally fled Germany aged 70, wrote in English. Opa reverted sometimes, the others virtually never. Mother was a fanatic that we learn languages. German through a nanny who was a refugee, school French and Latin of course. We were all sent to France to immerse in French. I lived in Italy for several months. Jessica took up Chinese in the 1960s. We, Rob and I, began doing Japanese 20 years ago. I am entirely with my mother on this. Safety depends on knowing more than one language even if one’s natal tongue has global currency at a given moment.

And then one faces troubles with visas, right of entry, nationality etc. issues which have come back to haunt us just recently. The Nazi government had stripped my entire family of its citizenship.

WEBER	MARIA	26	F	S	TEACHER	YES	ENGLISH	YES	STATELESS	GERMAN
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My aunt Mia’s arrival records in New York describe her as “stateless.” In time, through marriage and

naturalization they all acquired a nationality once again. Finally, around 1995, the German government began funding a pension for my mother, £56 a month, to do some repair for this act.

Though my mother would be 105 if alive today, her birth certificate has always mattered, at first in her own right and now on our right to stay, to move, to live, to prove that one exists in a lineage where the lineage itself has certain rights. I often noted, teaching at Evergreen that students could not trace their ancestry confidently, even back to their grandparent's birthplace. All refugees need papers and they need the originals not just digital copies. I fear this must be desperate for all those with no money and no standing who have fled Honduras and Syria. They may well not have the papers they need either. And yes, we still know where our family papers are. Do you?<sup>2</sup>

Who looks at the papers? Why bureaucrats and border guards and customs inspectors. They look, and make decisions based on the guidelines laid out by politicians. But each person gets their own decision. One of my mother's friends, George Mosse, a pivotal historian of the holocaust, always claimed he was among the last people allowed across the Swiss frontier with the yellow star of Judaism in his passport. Mother responded that George had plenty of money and in Switzerland that would have been a help no matter the official rules set by politicians.

Our family benefitted also from the presence in Berlin and then in Oslo of one among the handful of bureaucratic heroes of the holocaust. Frank Foley was his name. He had a Japanese counterpart, Chiune Sugihara (杉原 千畝). Sugihara was enabling Jews in Lithuania to find their way to Japan via Russia, and from Japan via ship to Australia and the Americas. Sugihara wrote literally thousands of visas, each one by hand. Frank Foley provided my Grandfather's papers to leave Germany and land in the UK in mid 1939. By great good chance he did the same for my mother who had fled, with her employer, to Norway at the outbreak of war. Desperate to return to London to my father and her family, she went rather hopelessly to the British Consulate and there he was. What's more, Foley was in need, of an escort for a consular employee who was ill and had to get back to the UK. An astonishing set of coincidences perhaps but vital to bringing us together into family life, the more the more than 30 souls set out below my parents in the family tree.

Judging by this particular collection of papers, the ability to endure as a refugee seems to depend on some combination of luck and unearned merciful behavior exhibited by people with power even if, in an official hierarchy, their position is no more than that of a minor gatekeeper.

I keep using the word "endure" in relation to the word refugee. My aunt Gusti lived a safe and reasonably exotic life at Bennington College and in New York from 1939 onwards, but she too had to endure, endure eight years of loneliness, the only one in her immediate family in New York. Her twin sister endured three years alone in Switzerland after her grandmother died. They all endured life with rather too little

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<sup>2</sup> As Brexit began its dire course, this statelessness has echoed down the decades. The descendants of German men could, by blood-line (Yes, mother was right, in key ways Germans don't change) establish a claim to citizenship. My cousin and her brothers would have no difficulties. My niece, whose professional life requires frequent trips to the European Patent Center in Munich, was told that the female line prevented her from making the claim. Finally in 2019, German law changed so she could apply. Provided she had the original documents that established her place in the family line.

money – much too little if one compares their wartime lives to their family pre 1933. My uncle probably had to endure the most, both physical and mental hardship, first as an internee – suddenly transformed from refugee to enemy alien – and then in the Italian theater of war as a British Intelligence Officer in the Army.

One other feature of their refugee lives stands out for me right now. My German family is made up of a loyal group of stellar communicators. The letters they wrote are, by and large, stoic and steady though Jan clearly suffered in Italy. The letters other people wrote indicate that his internment was a long horror story – on a ship to Australia, locked up in a prison camp, ultimately a return and then into the army. There were other costs. Opa and Granny never did go “home.” Mia and Gusti lived thousands of miles away or, as they saw it, Paula (my mother) and Jan lived thousands of miles away.

In London in 1935, there were cousins to welcome the new arrivals, mother and her brother. Similarly, Gusti found cousins in the USA as well as my mother’s closest friend and my Godmother, Gladys Happer practicing medicine in North Carolina. The family was also embedded in a wider circle of refugees and concerned people. Educated in Germany at Salem, under Kurt Hahn, the founder of Gordonstoun, Jan was able to finish his schooling in Scotland and Hahn gave my mother her first secretarial job in the UK. Gusti’s Bennington years were made possible by an exile from Russia, a sculptor befriended by my grandfather in Berlin. Mother never did get back to university, but with friends and friends of friends, and endless efforts to reach out and to connect, the entire family made good lives. Even Jan’s horrifying internment led to connections, to life long friendships with his cell mates, perhaps even a certain pride that he survived and that his efforts were pivotal to gaining his own and others release.

Life’s longing for itself????HUMANS AND MIGRATION – THE CORONAVIRUS PARADOX

One of the most interesting features of the virus which is flooding our consciousness right now is its paradoxical qualities.

Pressures to deglobalize have been apparent for quite a few years. Nationalist politicians took power in India, China, the USA, Hungary, the Philippines, Italy, the Netherlands, the UK, in Eire, in Brazil, in Israel and Australia, and in Japan and Russia. With the possible exception of Jacinta Arden in New Zealand, it find it hard to name an individual politician whose stance towards the wider world reaches out beyond their own frontiers in ways that are either wise or compassionate.

I use both those terms because of course one reason globalization has been under attack is that too few of its advocates have recently been powered by either virtue, energized as most of them have been by a kind of extractive greed. Open borders were more for taking than for giving. Mid-twentieth century history leads me to say that some international institutions which came into being to support globalization came as laudatory attempts at wisdom and compassion. I will probably never write anything about their many agendas. Here suffice it to say that at the end of World War II everyone understood that governments needed to talk more and kill less often. Nationalist fervors have made “not killing” a rather unfashionable stance.

## HUMANS AND MIGRATION —THE CORONAVIRUS PARADOX

One of the ironies of the big new virus is that it, like all viruses, can migrate without intentional human help. And to understand its pathways, to figure out what is to be done to eradicate it or learn to live with it, globalization is a blessing.

The WHO is an agency of and institution which serves as the bane of many leaders — the UN. The CDC which Trump has stripped of funds and powers, cannot do its work without active collaboration with similar centers in other countries. Big pharma, if it hits the jackpot on a vaccine will be longing to sell a single drug world wide and relies on globalized patent rules to prevent the formulation being copied without paying a fee.

But of course globalization in the face of this virus is also a curse. The Lake District's economy relies on tourists from China and Japan. None are coming these days. Airliners, theaters, subways, office towers, cruise ships, hotels, apartment blocks, dorms, barracks, buses, — the list of places we find ourselves sharing airspace and physical space with others in close proximity is unending. Slowly but surely they are emptying out. We are headed to the movies this afternoon in Ulverston. Will we be the only people there? Do people still go to pubs and restaurants? I went to a gastro-pub a week ago and the place was busy. Is it still?

Physical isolation feels the safest strategy for many people. Our kids are delighted we are in Lake End at time when few other people are. HUMANS AND MIGRATION — THE CORONAVIRUS PARADOX Multicultural societies, mass migrations of people, museums filled with the glories of widely differing civilizations, mixed races, ethnicities and religions in marriages, all of these seem perfectly natural to me.

So the idea that we are sharing a virus around the world does is not in itself troubling. Nor am I troubled by the understanding that I am the kind of person most at risk should it come my way — both my age and the chronic heart disease I carry put me squarely into the category likely to face a severe case.

What does any of this mean when it comes to repair?

1) The Chinese government in its seeming commitment to end the trade in wild animals has made a clear statement that the errors of the past will not be repeated in the future. That is helpful though, given deeply ingrained dietary and medical traditions in China this will be hard to establish. Nonetheless, the injury is one officials will try to avoid repeating.

2) To avoid repeating mistakes one needs to learn about how the last one actually occurred. The Chinese government's decision to destroy data from the earliest COVID19 cases walks in exactly the wrong direction. One model here is the JAL 123 museum at Haneda Airport in Tokyo. When that particular JAL plane crashed the company and the government collected the debris. They determined in detail every single thing that happen as the crash got underway. They identified the pivotal human error and even 35 years later they continued to ask every new JAL employee to commit themselves to preventing preventable crashes.

3) In Camus' breathtaking book *The Plague* the doctor asked that no-matter what people wanted to call the illness in the town, they needed to behave as though it was the plague. Naming our new virus was important, having the word pandemic out in public is important, above all we need to behave as though an important new illness has arrive among us. It may well be here to stay.

4) Which leads to my fourth "repair" comment. William H McNeil's book *Plagues and Peoples* offers a provocative image: At certain times, humanity's existence has been sharply redirected by the onset of major illnesses. If you have not read the book, take a look. It's old. It has been superseded by more modern epidemiology but the piece is not history of medicine. It is a history of humanity. Just as the Lake District has gone on to new beauties in its recovery from the Industrial Revolution, even a global scale new illness is not just the end of our world. It is also the beginning of a new one, potentially one which takes a grip on carbon burning with a speed and thoroughness that none of us could ever have imagined.

Regardless, it is quite possible that COVID 19 is with us for the foreseeable future.