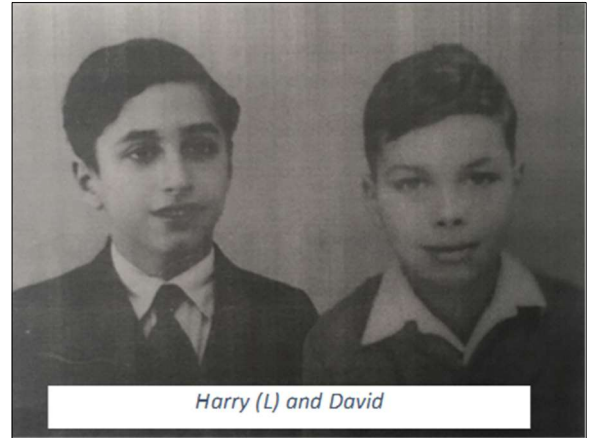


In May 2022 author Leah Garrett, gave an X-Troop book talk by Zoom in Toronto for a local synagogue. The woman who scheduled it said a local elderly care home contacted her as one of their residents is a former X-Trooper.

This turned out to be David Dunn, formerly Abraham David Mastbaum. Here is his story as told to Dave Carson in September 2022.

David was born in Muenster, Westphalia and grew up in Berlin; he had a brother, Harry, who was sickly, and his parents could not take care of David as well, so David was placed in an children's home at #92 Fehrbellinerstrasse in Berlin.

Aged 12 in November 1938 he, and five other children from the home were sent via Kindertransport to England. He thinks he may have been chosen because he was wild and "uncontrollable". The entry card given to him, shown below, gives his arrival date as 2<sup>nd</sup> December 1938. [The Holocaust Encyclopedia](#) on Kindertransport state this was the date of the first arrivals. Note the second stamp dated 2<sup>nd</sup> July 1942 from the Aliens Registrations Department of the Glasgow Police. This was his 16<sup>th</sup> birthday.



5 42623 51

This document of identity is issued with the approval of His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom to young persons to be admitted to the United Kingdom for educational purposes under the care of the Inter-Aid Committee for children.

THIS DOCUMENT REQUIRES NO VISA.

PERSONAL PARTICULARS.

Name MASTBAUM, David

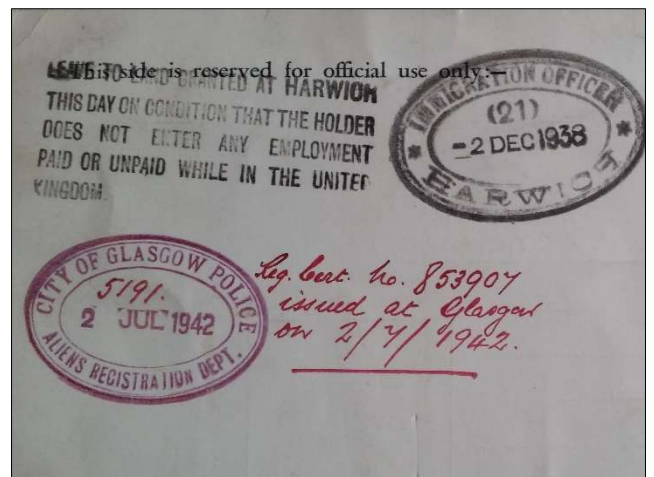
Sex male Date of Birth 7.7.26

Place Muenster/Westfalen

Full Names and Address of Parents MASTBAUM, Chonja, Berlin-Wilmersdorf, 29 Hertzstrasse

*The full name and date of birth of the holder of this document should also be Abraham David Mastbaum, born 2.7.26. Home Office, Alien Dept. 5.8.42.*

#6547435



He travelled by train through Holland and had a rough boat trip across the North Sea to Harwich. After a short stay at a "very cold" Dovercourt reception centre (in summertime a Butlins Holiday Camp in Harwich) David was sent to a London reception centre and then to Glasgow. First a Navy Officer took him into his family for a short time and then another family, the Shenkins, took him in (David subsequently met a family member in Canada). David then became a resident at the Boy's Hostel which had been opened next door to the Garnethill synagogue.

He was evacuated from Glasgow due to bombing – evacuees were not all refugees - and lived in Perthshire and a farm in Ayrshire. Around 14 years old he started working in several odd jobs in Glasgow - a furniture factory, a leather store and then he landed a job with the Underwood Typewriter Company where he became proficient in fixing their equipment – typewriters and adding machines.

At aged 16, he was registered as an alien, as shown below.

BROUGHT UP UNDER PARAGRAPH 14(a) of P.O. ORDER OF 29. 3. 40.  
REGIONAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

APPEAL DECISION REFUGEE—MALE

(1) Surname (Block capitals) MASTBAUM  
Forenames Abraham David  
Alias \_\_\_\_\_

(2) Date and place of birth 5. 7. 1926; Munster, Westfalen, Germany.

(3) Nationality German.

(4) Police Regn. Cert. No. 858907 Home Office reference, if known \_\_\_\_\_  
Special Procedure Card Number, if known 51.

(5) Address c/o Jewish Refugee Hostel, 105 Hill Street, Glasgow.

(6) Normal occupation Apprentice Cabinet Maker.

(7) Present Occupation do.

(8) Decision of Tribunal Left-subject to 6a & 6a } Strike out which do not apply.  
Left-subject to 7a }  
Respect from 6a & 6a }

(9) Decision of Advisory Committee Exempted from 6a & 6a } Strike out which does not apply.  
Left-subject to 6a & 6a }

\*22m (3 sets) 2/40—(8208) 1000/007 30m 4/40 4070 G & S 704

Reasons for Decision.

This boy has been registered on attaining the age of 16 years. He arrived in the United Kingdom on 2nd December, 1938, as a refugee from Nazi oppression. Satisfactory reports regarding his conduct have been received and he has been placed in Category "C".

Regional Advisory Committee (No. 11)  
Signature Mastbaum Date 28th August, 1942.

Aged 17, he first applied to join the Jewish Brigade but was told he was too young. Then In July 1944, at aged 18, he joined the Pioneer Corps in Buxton, still as an enemy alien.

While David was in the Pioneers people from the War Office showed up, looking for people with foreign language skills. He was interviewed and told to come back in half an hour with a new name. He thought he would choose a short name, looked in a telephone book and saw a lot of Dunns; he chose David Dunn, dropping Abraham because that would give him away as Jewish. He was instructed to tell no one of this change.

Shortly after, he was told to report to the front gate with a few other similar soldiers and taken to the train station. On the train they were told to strip off their existing uniforms and give up any identifying papers, given new uniform and their new id. (David also noted that he had a Post Office savings account in his German name and special arrangements had to be made for him to access this now he was David Dunn).



David in 1944. copyright, Scottish Jewish Archives Centre, reproduced with permission.

He joined 3-Troop (known as X-Troop) No. 10 Inter Allied Commando and trained in Eastbourne



*David Dunn No. 10 Commando*

and other places in southern England. He undertook the usual rigorous training, recalls speed-rock climbing, being dropped 30 miles from base and making the way back by any means, be it stealing bicycles or cars, being told to break into a Royal Marines barracks and bring back evidence – which they did in the form of rifles, to the horror of their officers. His training also included learning about German regiments, insignia, weaponry, and interrogation techniques.

He was assigned to a Regiment (Queen's Own Royal West Kent) which he never visited, though wearing their cap badge.

(The list of X-Troop members compiled by Martin Sugarman of Association of Jewish Ex-Servicemen shows David as Army Number 6387046, born 2<sup>nd</sup> July 1926. He would have been just 18 when he joined up in 1944).

The war was almost over when he was sent to Holland. He states they were pushing back Dutch Nazis, who soon gave up their weapons, when they learned the war was over. "We did hear some shooting, but I didn't have any fighting really. There was a humorous situation, we were all Jewish soldiers – we didn't know the war was over, and a priest came and said "let us pray" but of course we did not want to kneel down".

The Allies established P.o.W. camps for German soldiers and David's role was to interrogate them.

David notes – It was the summer of 1945, very hot and the Recklinghausen PoW camp, where he was assigned, had 100,000 prisoners – all ranks; while the British guards lived in tents, there was no accommodation for prisoners.

Using details from their army paybooks, which revealed things like their rank, their officer, their weapons training and through questioning, they separated out drafted soldiers from SS, SD and Gestapo. The main goal was to discharge regular soldiers from the army. PoW's had to get a Release Certificate that David signed once he was satisfied they were not SS/SD/Gestapo. Those were sent to other camps for further assessment.



*Sgt. David Dunn (R) and Swiss colleague, "escapee from the Foreign Legion" Here David has a West Kents cap badge*

He says he did not enjoy this and after 4 to 6 weeks he was reassigned to different towns in Germany and ended up in Berlin. (As an aside he said, "when I was 12, Nazi kids would beat me. 8 years later the same sort was in the German Army at 20 years old. I let them go home, they had been drafted.") In September 1945, when 3-Troop was disbanded, David was on leave in Glasgow. He was told to report to the West Kents, his supposed regiment; they tried to give him soldiers to train to which he replied, "it was not his thing". He was required to change his uniform and kit

list; he recounts he lost his tommy-gun but could keep his Combined Ops badge. They suggested he tried for OCTU but he stated, "my job requires three stripes and I have to be in Germany; this is more important than being an officer". He was posted there again, signing up six months at a time, ending in 1948.

(Capt. Hilton-Jones, commander of X-Troop, wrote in his 1946 history of the troop "it officially ceased to exist on disbandment of No.10 Commando in September 1945 and the members are dispersed from the pool of interpreters with the B.A.O.R, through the Control Commission, to other regular troops of the army")

Another of his postings, close to the Russian border was assessing prisoners sent from Russia; they were frequently infected with TB - they were interviewed "6 feet away".

He also was involved in unannounced raids and searches ("razzias") for members of Werewolf groups (short lived Nazi resistance post war).

In Rotenbusch he supervised PoWs to destroy searchlight equipment.

He recounted at one time he was close to the Russian border, was captured and locked up for the weekend.

David had no news of his brother or parents until he served in post-war Berlin. There he learned the fate of his brother Harry, who was in France trying to get to Israel. Sadly, he was interned in Beaune-la-Rolande. On 8<sup>th</sup> August 1942, along with 1400 others, he was shipped to Auschwitz in cattle cars; only a few survived the 5-day journey; Harry died in Auschwitz 18<sup>th</sup> August 1942. David has installed a stolperstein commemorating him



David Dunn TA Paratrooper

where his family lived. Apart from the 5 children on Kindertransport, the remaining orphanage children did not survive.

His parents were hidden and survived. David's mother, Emma Pankow was a Protestant and converted to Judaism, his father Chemje / Karl, a very devout Jew who came from a shtetl in Galicia. His mother was not Jewish, having a mixed marriage she was vulnerable to deportation, but her time did not come. After his father died in the 1970's, David brought his mother to Canada, though she found this difficult so late in life.



Harry's stolperstein, Wexstrasse, Berlin

After the war David joined the Territorial Army in the 15<sup>th</sup> Scottish Parachute Regiment as a paratrooper and served on NATO exercises, flying to Germany at weekends and holidays. He did over 100 parachute jumps.

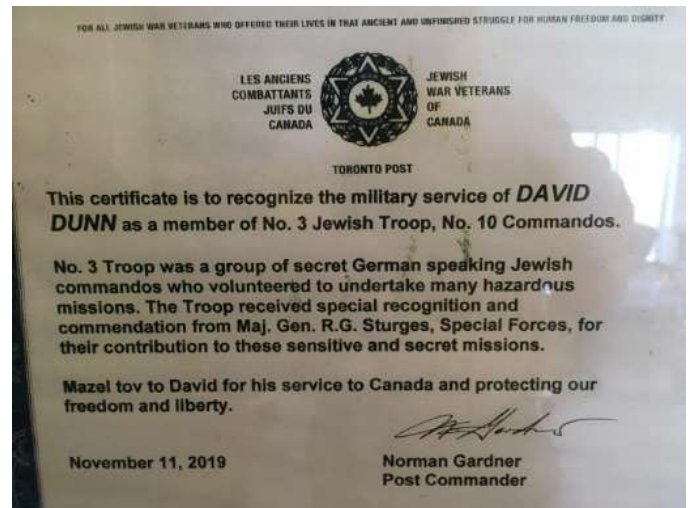
In 1955 he emigrated to Canada, started a printing company and then an automotive business and had considerable success in early days of the rust-proofing business, having got sole importing rights for the spraying equipment and a large contract with Honda.

David summarized his life as a difficult one due to lack of education, but he had a good practical and mechanical aptitude. Following his emigration to Canada – an easy process – he was successful in several businesses and enjoyed his cottage, travel, and winters in the south.

David has one son living in Nova Scotia, but communication is difficult as the son has Asperger's. His wife died in 2021.

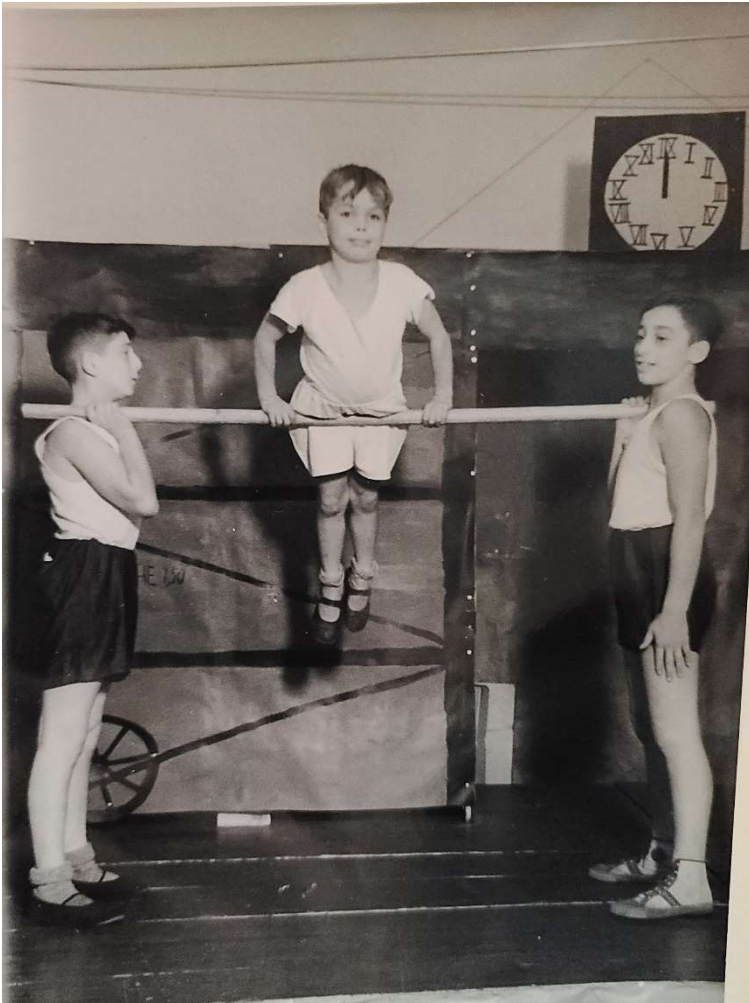


David Dunn



*Jewish War Veterans Appreciation*

See overleaf for some further photos from David and internet articles on places mentioned in David's story.



David (centre) exercising at the children's home; he says the Rothschilds, sponsors, would visit the home and the children would put on demonstrations.



David (l) and brother Harry



A camp leader rings the dinner bell for refugees at the Dovercourt holiday camp, 1939. (Photo by Reg Speller).



*Refugees at their accommodations in England. 1938.*

Garnethill Hebrew Congregation in Glasgow was important in helping refugees who came over from Europe. Next door is a house which was given over by the Congregation to turn into a Boys' Hostel in 1938, which offered sanctuary to around 175 refugee children in its 10 years. They attended the Garnetbank School across the road, which welcomes children today.

*Boys outside the Boys' Hostel in 1939*



<https://www.glasgowlive.co.uk/news/history/heritage-trail-jewish-kindertransport-23000665>

(photograph copyright of Scottish Jewish Archives Centre and not to be reproduced without permission)

### **The Garnethill Hostel for Nazi-Era Refugees 1939-1948, in Glasgow**

The Scottish Jewish Archives Centre is currently focused on collecting material relating to the refugees who fled to Scotland from Nazi-occupied Europe. Among the artifacts acquired by the Centre thus far is the original register of the Garnethill Boys' Hostel, created and operated by the Congregation from 1939 to 1948 in a house adjoining its synagogue.

Given the Congregation's early role in the rescue of Nazi-era refugees such as those arriving on the Kindertransport, it is therefore fitting that the Scottish Holocaust-era Study Centre is located within its synagogue as an adjunct of the Archives Centre and the Scottish Jewish Heritage Centre.

The Congregation's serious intent to take a role in the rescue of European Jewry is reflected in the minutes of its general meeting of 11 December 1938, when it was resolved:

*That this meeting recommends that every male Seat holder of the Congregation agrees to contribute a minimum sum of 1/6 per week for the Appeal Committee of the Council for German Jewry and that a Committee of 12 be formed to supervise the ingathering of the contributions.*

Thereafter, the *Jewish Echo* of 24 February 1939 reported on the active preparation of the new hostel: *Rapid strides are being made in the redecoration and reconstruction of the house at 125 Hill Street, which is to become Glasgow's first hostel for German refugee children. The house has been cleaned from top to*



*bottom...already the rooms have taken on a new air of smartness and comfort.... With 15 rooms, each of them large, well-lit and solidly built, the hostel is expected to accommodate 30 children and a small household staff.... boys between the ages of 12 and 16.*

<https://avotaynuonline.com/2015/04/the-garnethill-hostel-for-nazi-era-refugees-1939-1948-in-glasgow/>

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