

Dr Michael Tennenhaus 1901-1986

German Teacher PJGS 1943-1955

Biographical Notes

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Michael Tennenhaus was born to a Jewish family in 1901 and grew up in the Duchy of Bukovina, eastern outpost of the Austro-Hungarian Empire (now in Romania). He was displaced by both major European traumas of the twentieth century. After WWI he moved from Romania to Vienna and, on the Nazi Anschluss of Austria (1938) he fled to Britain. His six-year-old son and his second wife were lost to the atrocities, whilst his ten-year-old daughter Ruth was saved by the Red Cross and taken as a refugee to Norway and later to Sweden.

On arrival in Britain, he was first detained as an enemy alien. On clearance he joined the Pioneer Corps, served in France in 1940, and was evacuated from Dunkirk.



Pioneer Corps 1940

In 1943 he secured a post as teacher of German at the Percy Jackson Grammar School, where he stayed until 1955. Later in 1943 he was reunited with his daughter Ruth, who returned from Sweden courtesy of the RAF, and she promptly enrolled as a pupil at PJGS. In the 1944 School Magazine she published a report of fleeing from Norway into Sweden to escape deportation to a Nazi concentration camp.

In 1946 he married another refugee from Germany, also called Ruth, with whom he had two children and they moved to live in Sheffield whilst he continued work at PJGS.

In 1953 and 1954 Dr Tennenhaus was instrumental in organising school exchanges between PJGS and the Freiherr vom Stein Grammar School in Lünen, Westphalia, Germany.



PJGS Staff Photo 1955

In 1955 he moved to North London to teach at Woodberry Down School, Manor House, a purpose-built comprehensive, and stayed there for the remainder of his working career.

In later life, with his wife Ruth, he made several academic publications based on brass rubbings of mediaeval memorials in England and in Germany. He died in Tottenham, London, in 1986 and is survived by his children Shula and Maurice.



Catalogue of Tennenhaus brass rubbings exhibition 1981.

The full biography has been lodged with the Imperial War Museum.