

# GO THERE AND REMEMBER 2020

April 1945: Death Marches from Mauthausen-Gusen to Gunskirchen

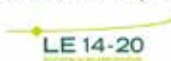


Places and stories along  
the routes of the death marches

Mit Unterstützung von Bund, Land und Europäischer Union



Bundesministerium  
Nachhaltigkeit und  
Tourismus



### Impressum and notes of thanks

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**VOGB** VERBAND ÖSTERREICHISCHER  
GEWERKSCHAFTLICHER BILDUNG



Orte und Geschichten entlang  
der Todesmarschrouten.

**GEH DENK SPUREN**

Todesmärsche von Mauthausen-Gusen nach Gunkskirchen

**Mauthausen Komitee**  
= Österreich

**MAUTHAUSEN**  
MEMORIAL | KZ-GEDENKSTÄTTE



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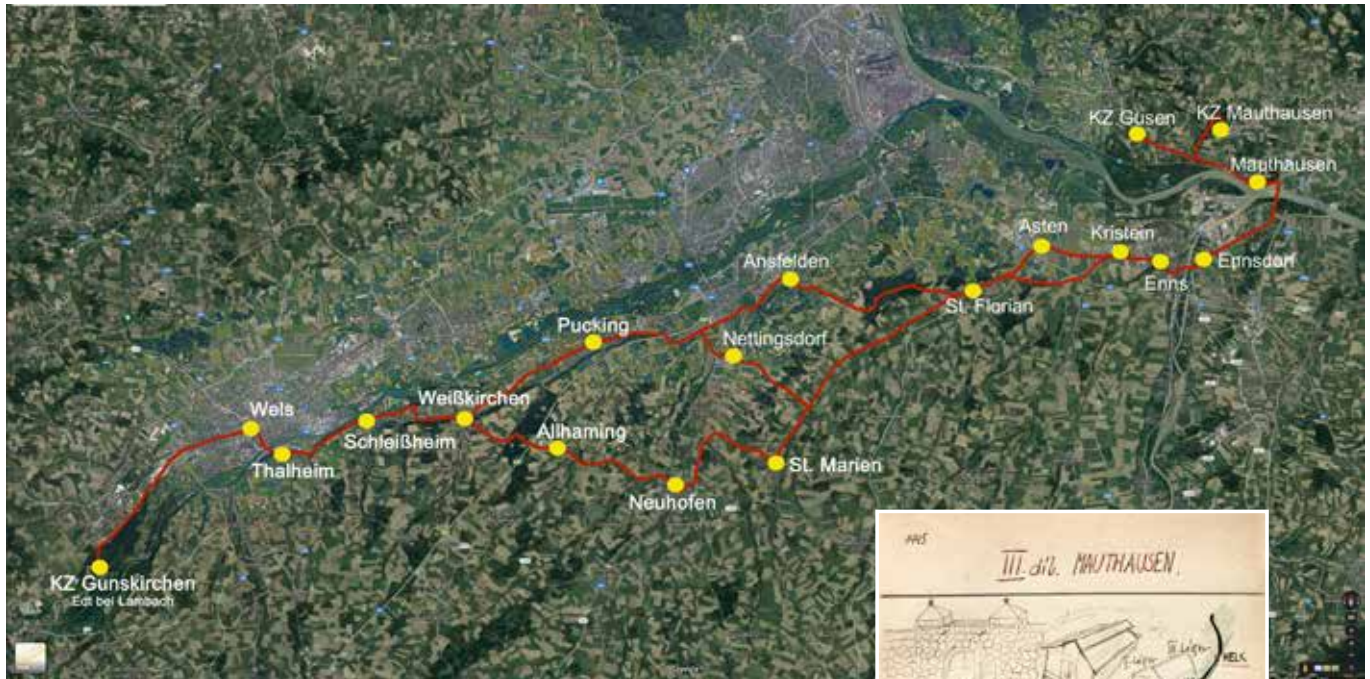
Europäische  
Landwirtschaftsforschung für  
die Entwicklung des  
ländlichen Raums  
und Ernährungssicherheit  
in der Welt





# GO THERE AND REMEMBER 2020

April 1945: Death Marches from Mauthausen-Gusen to Gunskirchen



## Death march routes from March to April 1945

Graphics: Angelika Schlackl 2019

## Stations of the captivity of a 15-year old

From: Michael Kraus, Diary 1942-1945.

Memories of a 15-year old during the Holocaust. Berlin 2015.

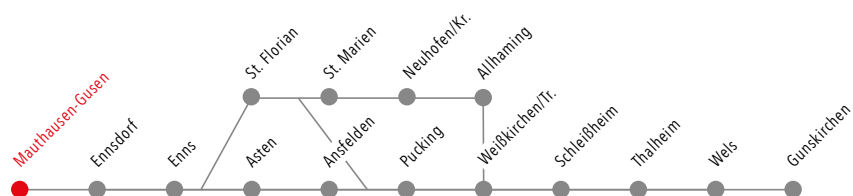
## Death marches of the Jews from the concentration camp Mauthausen to the extermination camp Gunskirchen

In March and April 1945 approximately 22.000 Jewish men, women and children who were named "dangerous criminals" by the NS-propaganda had to walk heavily guarded 55 kilometres in only three days from the concentration camp Mauthausen to the unfinished shack camp in the "Hochholz in Gunskirchen", Municipality Edt near Lambach. They did not only come from Hungary, but from many European nations. The SS, Hitler's elite corps, called the transfer "evacuation." The captives however called it "death marches", because the exhausted people who stayed behind or broke down were

struck dead or shot mercilessly. Today memorials at the mass graves along the routes of the death marches demonstrate the extent of the extermination of Jews in the final period of the NS terror regime.

*"The march in misery was a scene of horror. We have to be ashamed. Which crime did these miserable people commit? In most of the cases their crime was only to have been born by Jewish parents. For that they were sentenced to a slow death."*

Alois Nikolussi, convent priest in St. Florian, 1945



**Aerial photograph of the concentration camp Mauthausen with the tent camp in March 1945**

Photo: Luftbilddatenbank Dr. Carls

**View from the Marbacher Linde on the camp area today with a historical photo of the tent camp**

Photo: Národní archive Prag SPB, carton31-35, Photomontage: Angelika Schlackl

## The tent camp in Mauthausen

The starting point of the death marches to Gunskirchen was the provisional tent camp, which was put up in the autumn of 1944. North of the main camp Mauthausen Jews who were not able to work anymore were imprisoned. A great number of them died of hunger, frostbite and diseases or were killed by merciless guards.

In 1945 the tent camp became the collecting point for thousands of Jews who were deported from former satellite or sub camps of Mauthausen. In January 10 000 Jews came from the "evacuated" Auschwitz, later Jewish people came from Melk, from working camps of the building of the South East Embankment, from Graz-Liebenau etc. Again and again the captives accidentally met a relative or an acquaintance in the tent camp.

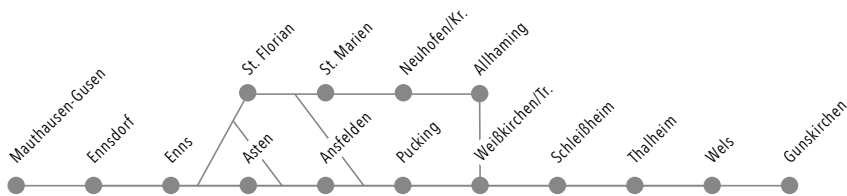
*Jewish captives were also deported into the tent camp Gunskirchen from Gusen. Joseph Fisher reports, "We came to Mauthausen, [...] a field with a high barbed wire fence and watchtowers around it. It was a gigantic tent camp resembling a circus tent."*

Source: Joseph Fischer, Die Himmel waren vermauert. Wien 2018

The 15-year-old Miša Kraus describes the circumstances: *"It was worse than anything before. At night we were lying on muddy earth, covered by a thin tarpaulin – about eight people of us. The tent that was poorly attached to the ground did not protect us from wind or rain."*

Source: Michael Kraus, Tagebuch 1942-1945.  
A 15-year old remembers the Holocaust.





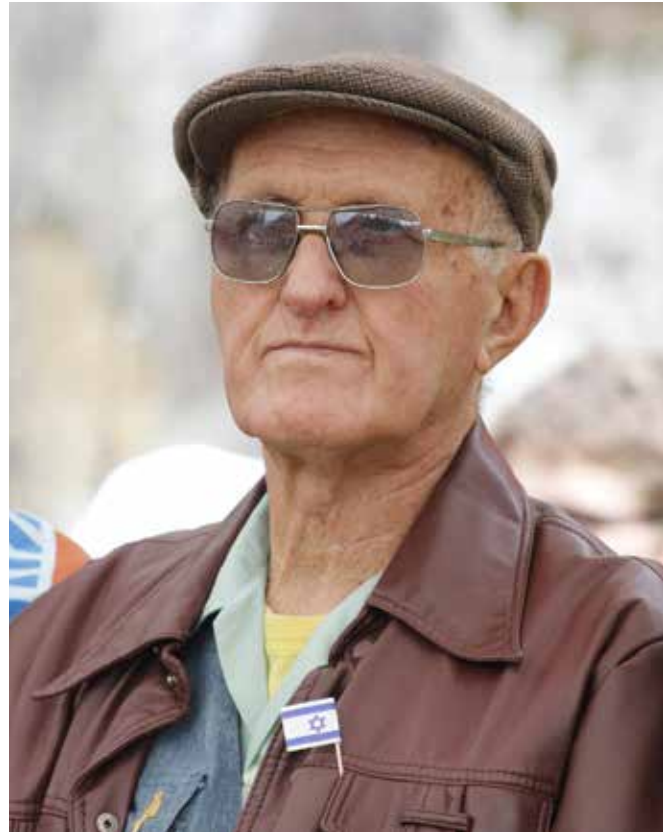
**Rabbi Sinai Adler**

Photo: Johannes Neuhauser 2019



**Jehuda Bacon**

Photo: Kurt Schlackl 2016



**Yechiel Aleksander**

Photo: Ruth Longodor 2014

## Jewish children, teenagers, ... survived and witness

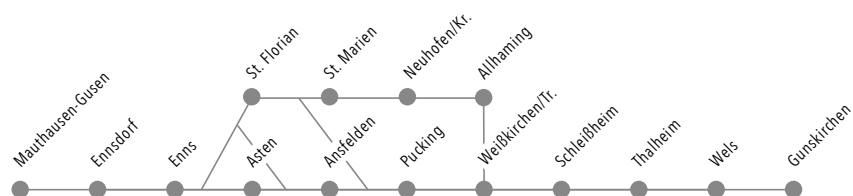
They came from Czechoslovakia, Poland, Lithuania, Romania, Ukraine, Austria, Hungary,... In 1945 they were between 12 and 19 years old. They came alone because many family members were murdered in Auschwitz and other places. Their final destination was "Guns kirchen". Their stories of survival are extraordinary and unique ...

**Wolfgang**, later **Sinai Adler** (then 17 years old), born on 11 July, 1928 in Prague/Czechoslovakia, 1943 Ghetto Theresienstadt, afterwards Auschwitz, parents were murdered, stable boy of the SS in the concentration camp Plawy, came to Mauthausen in 1945, camp III, freed in Guns kirchen, hospital in Steyr, orphanage Stirin/Prague, lives in Mevasseret Zion/Jerusalem.

**Jehuda Bacon** (then 16 years old), born on 28 July, 1929 in Ostrawa/Czechoslovakia, 1942 Ghetto Theresienstadt, 1943 Auschwitz, father gassed, mother and sister starved to death in KZ-Stutthof. 30 January, 1945 arrival at Mauthausen, freed in Guns kirchen, went to Jerusalem in 1947, studied arts, 1961 witness at the Eichmann trial. Once Jehuda said, "If I hated, Hitler would have won!"



**Heniek**, later **Yechiel Aleksander** (then 18 years old), born on 19 March, 1927 in Sulejow, Poland. 1940 ghetto in Lodz, where his parents starved. In 1944 he came to Auschwitz I as a "bricklayer apprentice." January 1945 death march to Gleiwitz, was transported in a cattle train. 25 January, 1945 arrival at Mauthausen, Melk. He was a locksmith in the arms repair workshop in Gusen I, was freed in Guns kirchen, lives in Israel.



**Itzhak Bronstein**

Photo: Ruth Longodor 2014

**Daniel Chanoch left and Uri Chanoch, Daniel Chanoch**

Photos: Yad Vashem, Kurt Schlackl

**Itzhak Bronstein** (then 17 years old), born on 11 February, 1928 in Iszka in today's Ukraine, parents were murdered in Auschwitz, labour camp near Vienna, on 8 January, 1945 he came to Mauthausen, freed in Günskirchen, lives in Tel Aviv/Israel.

**Daniel Chanoch** (then 13 years old), born on 2 February 1932 in Kaunas/Lithuania, 1941 ghetto, 1944 Dachau, together with 131 children from Kaunas to Auschwitz, January 1945 death march, then transport in a cattle train.  
30 January 1945: Arrival at Mauthausen, camp III, tent camp, freed in Günskirchen, typhus in the US-military hospital Hörsching/Neubau, found his brother Uri in Italy, lives in Israel.

**Joseph Fischer**

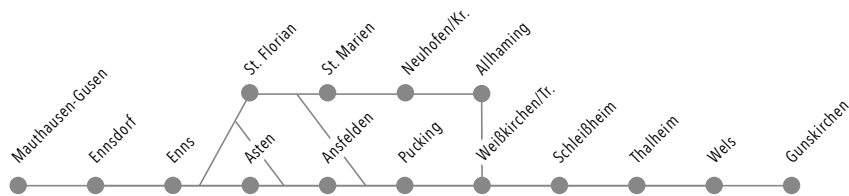
Photo: Family Fisher, privat

**Andor Noah Grosz**

Photo: Ariel Gross, privat

**Joseph Fischer** (then 17 years old), born on 27 October, 1928 in Felsövisó, Transilvania/Romania, 1944 ghetto, on 20 May 1944 he came to Mauthausen via Auschwitz, Gusen II, in the autumn of 1944 tidying up in hospital block no. 33, the infamous "railway station" of Gusen I, came to the tent camp in March 1945, freed in Günskirchen, construction worker in Israel, died on 5 January, 1998.

**Andor Noah Grosz** (then 18 years old), born on 18 January, 1927 in Kisvarda/Hungary, 1944 ghetto, deportation to Auschwitz-Birkenau, came to Mauthausen on 30 January, 1945, camp III, tent camp, where he met his father Rabbi Alexander Zisha and his brother Yitzhak. His father was murdered on the death march on 28 April, 1945 in Weißkirchen, together with his brother Andor he was freed in Günskirchen, both suffered from typhus in the hospital Alpenjägerkaserne Wels. Noah died in Kvar Saba/Israel in 2007.



**Edith Eva Eger**

Photo: Guideposts 2017

**Michael Kraus**

Photo: brezniakrodman.com

**Dugo Leitner**

Photo: Kurt Schlackl 2017

**Shaul Spielmann**

Photo: Der Standard, Newald

**Edith Eva Eger** (then 18 years old), born on 29 September, 1927 in Kopsice/Hungary. Before her deportation she was a ballerina in Budapest, 1944 Auschwitz, parents were murdered, in 1945 she was on a death march to Mauthausen for weeks, freed in Gunskirchen, psychologist in San Diego/California.

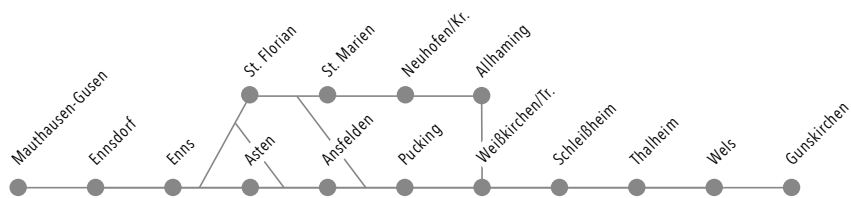
**Miša**, later **Michael Kraus** (then 15 years old), born on 28 June, 1930 in Trutnow/Czechoslovakia, 1942 Ghetto Theresienstadt, 1943 Auschwitz-Birkenau, 1944 father gassed, mother starved to death in the concentration camp Stutthof, at -30 degrees Celsius on a death march, he arrived at Mauthausen in an open cattle train on 25 January, 1945, Melk, tent camp, freed in Gunskirchen, typhus in the military hospital in Hörsching/Neubau, orphanage Stirin/Prague when he wrote and illustrated his memoirs, architect in New York, died in Boston/USA in December 2018.



**Deszö**, later **David (Dugo) Leitner** (then 17 years old), born on 1 May, 1928 in Nyiregyhaza/Hungary, 1944 ghetto, gypsy camp in Auschwitz-Birkenau, latrine commando, after a selection concentration camp doctor Mengele took five strong boys from the gas chamber for special tasks, Dugo was one of them. Death march to the loading station Althammer near Katowitz, transportation to Mauthausen, arrival on 30 January, 1945, camp III, tent camp, freed in Gunskirchen, typhus in the US military hospital Hörsching/Neubau, lives on Kibbuz Nir Galim/Israel.

**Paul**, later **Shaul Spielmann** (then 14 years old), born on 1 July, 1931 in Vienna/Austria, arrested on 2 October, 1942, Ghetto Theresienstadt, 1943 Auschwitz-Birkenau, parents were murdered, 25 January, 1945 arrival at Mauthausen, Melk, tent camp, freed in Gunskirchen, lives in Ashkelon/Israel.





#### **Yitzhak Livnat**

Photo: Privat

#### **Frank Grunwald**

Photos: Frank Grunwald, privat, Kurt Schlackl 2015,

**Sándor Weiss**, later **Yitzhak Livnat** (then 16 years old), born on 12 March, 1929 in Nagyszollos/Hungary, today Ukraine, 1944 collection camp for Jewish German Transylvanians, concentration camp in Auschwitz, in a block with 700 children, convict number 125039, January 1945 death march to Mauthausen, where he met his father Wilmos Wolf Weiss, both were freed in Gunskirchen, Yitzhak died in March 2017 in Haifa/Israel.

**Frank Grunwald** (then 13 years old), born on 30 September, 1932 in Olmütz/Czechoslovakia, 1942 Ghetto Theresienstadt, 1943 Auschwitz-Birkenau, mother and brother were murdered, father was a forced labourer in the concentration camp Ohrdruf, came to Mauthausen, arrival on 25 January, 1945, Melk, tent camp, freed in Gunskirchen, professor for fine arts in Indianapolis/USA.

#### **David Hersch**

Photos: Peter Kammerstätter, Materialsammlung 1972, Shoah Foundation 1993

#### **Jehuda Gurvic**

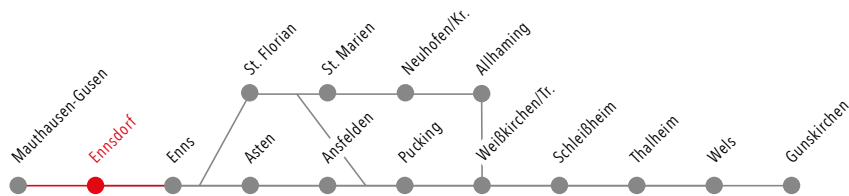
Photo: Mauthausen Komitee Österreich

**David Hersch** (then 19 years old), born on 13 June, 1925 in Dej/Romania. 1944 ghetto, came to Mauthausen via Auschwitz-Birkenau, came to Gusen II, then to Gusen I. At the end of March 1945 death march to Gunskirchen, escaped in Enns/Kristein, was caught again and taken back to Mauthausen. In the middle of April he came back to Gunskirchen, fled again in Kristein, was hidden by Barbara and Franz Friedmann, tuberculosis, spent one and a half years in the sanatorium for lung patients in Kohlbruck near Passau. With the help from Alijah he went to Netanja/Israel, later he lived in New York/USA, he died in 2003.



**Jehuda Gurvic** (then 16 years old), born on 20 March, 1929 in Kaunas/Lithuania, 1943 ghetto, 1944 Dachau, with 131 children from Kaunas to Auschwitz, January 1945 death march, 30 January, 1945 arrival at Mauthausen, convict number 124861, camp III, tent camp, freed in Gunskirchen, lives in Haifa/Israel.





**Plaque** attached to the side wall of the chapel.

**Commemorative journey of the Rhema community 2015**  
Photos: Christian Rad 2015

## ... grass has grown over it ...

In the last weeks of the war prisoners of the concentration camp Mauthausen were deported to the sub camp Günskirchen and that way led from Mauthausen, over the Danube railway bridge, through Ennsdorf and finally to Enns.

33 Jews were murdered at Ennsdorf and buried there. After the end of the war they were exhumed. The victims got their own grave near the wayside shrine at the crossing Bäckerstraße-Westbahnstraße after Mayor Matthias Pölzl had intervened. The first time there was a tomb where you could read, »This is the last place of rest of 33 unknown Israelites and 5 unknown German soldiers.«

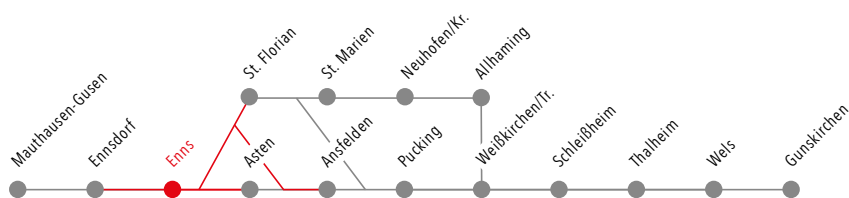
The Ministry of the Interior, precisely the department that looked after war graves, decided to shut down the tomb and the



mortal remains were taken to the city cemetery of Linz-Süd/ St. Martin. Furthermore a new plaque was attached to the side wall of the chapel.

Mrs. Maria Plöderl, who has meanwhile died and who looked after the tomb, thought that these were not all people who were killed on the march down from Mauthausen. *"Some people were dug in in the meadows and fields, the grass grew over it and so this was forgotten. The march of the captives of the concentration camps was horrible, I am never going to forget that. How were these poor devils treated?"*

Source: BM.I Kriegsgräberfürsorge, Akte Ennsdorf; Peter Kammerstätter, Todesmarsch der ungarischen Juden, Materialsammlung 1972. 30.



**The Friedmann-House**

Photo: Ing. Ernst Samide

**Ignaz and Barbara Friedmann**

Photos: P. Florian Friedmann, privat



## Humanity in inhumane times



**David Hersch 1943**

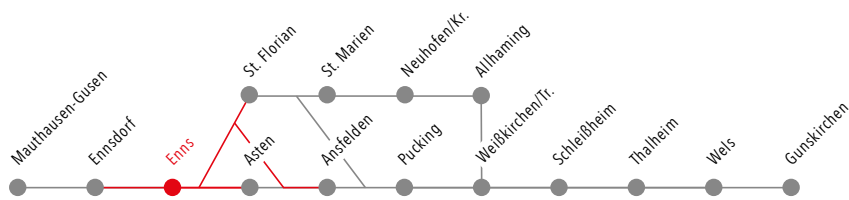
While thousands of Jewish captives were being driven through Enns, the 19-year-old David Hersch was able to escape. He felt the cold of a barrel of a rifle and a pistol in his neck. The young man, who was 1.80 metres tall, weighed just 36 kilogrammes when he escaped from the death march. After working heavily in the quarry in Gusen he fell ill and spent weeks of hunger in the sanitary camp Mauthausen. Barbara Friedmann found him at the Kristeiner brook. At night Ignaz Friedmann came on his horse and cart and took David, who was hidden under a pig's trough, to the barn. The danger was great because on the first floor of the house the SS had moved in. The friends in need told a

befriended assistant policeman, who listened to the forbidden "enemy transmitter" at their place, about their secret. He advised them to hide David outside the house. So Ignaz and Barbara Friedmann sent him to the haystack. In the pocket of his coat he had eight potatoes. In the darkness David lost his way and spent uncertain days and nights under the bushes of the bank of the Kristeiner brook.

After days a neighbour told Mrs. Friedmann that children had wanted to push an almost dead concentration camp inmate into the brook. The Friedmans secretly took David back to their house. In the loft he experienced the liberation from the Nazi dictatorship at the beginning of May 1945.

Source: Peter Kammerstätter, Interview Barbara Friedmann, Kristein 1970. In: Todesmarsch der ungarischen Juden, Materialsammlung 1972. 44-48; Shoah Foundation, Interview David Hersch, New York 1993.





**Commemorative meeting in 2018**

Photo: Karl Riedl

**Old memorial at the church of Lorch/Enns**

Photo: Pfarrarchiv Enns



## Witnesses report from Enns

In Enns the routes of the death march led over the Ennsberg, along the former federal street via Kristein to Asten or St. Florian.

*"There was a pile of corpses of concentration camp inmates in the cemetery again. At the examination of the deceased I tried to draw Medical Consultant Dr. Groß's attention to a 'dead' inmate who was groaning. Dr. Groß explained that something had to be done. When the SS-guard had gone away, we took to the 'dead' person from the pile and carried him to my flat. Unfortunately he died of typhus after three days."* Recordings by Peter Kammerstätter with wife Maria Aigner. She lived at the gravedigger house in Enns, today's Severinhaus next to the cemetery.

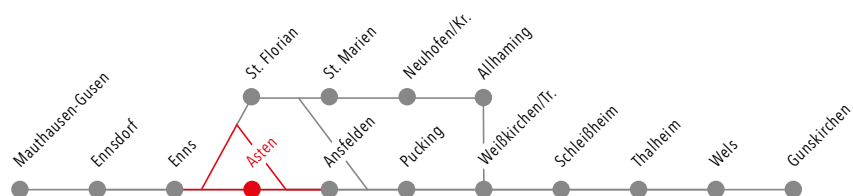
*"Many meters of the rape seed field of the company Eisenbeiss*

*were devoured by the concentration camp captives on their death marches,"* a witness tells us.

*"In the name of humanity and with regard to the reputation of the German people I ask once more that all suitable steps are made to treat these humans humanely at these transports and that the human corpses are treated with respect to some extent."* Dean Josef Leitner from Enns in his letter to the diocesan authorities in Linz on 18 April, 1945. At stairs of the basilica in Lorch/Enns there was a mass grave for 87 murdered Jews from 1945 to 1965, whose names are unknown. Since 2017 there has been an annual commemorative service in April. Source: Peter Kammerstätter, Interview mit Maria Aigner 1970, Zeitzeugengespräch 2019, Pfarrarchiv Enns.

[www.facebook.com/mauthausenkomitee.enns](https://www.facebook.com/mauthausenkomitee.enns)





**Memorial at the cemetery of Asten** Photo: Wolfgang Mairinger 2020

#### **Military situation in April/May 1945**

The 65<sup>th</sup> US infantry division liberated Asten a few days after the death marches occurred there.  
Source: Rauchensteiner, Der Krieg in Österreich 1945



#### **... shot in the ditch ...**

*"In April 1945 Hungarian Jews on their death march from Mauthausen to Gunskirchen were also driven through Asten. [...]"*

*According to the report of the police station in Enns a death march passed through Asten [...]"*

*In the village of Asten at least ten captives died of exhaustion or were simply shot in the ditch. [...] ten dead captives were collected in the village of Asten and buried in a mass grave in the cemetery of Asten. A plaque on the wall of the cemetery commemorates the ten buried captives."*

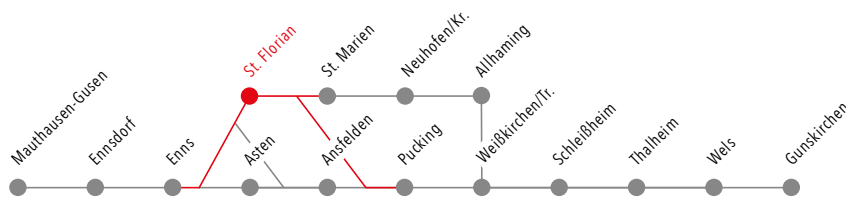
Source: Chronicle of the market town Asten

*"An extremely sad view for Asten were the wearily walking captives of the concentration camp who were guarded strictly by armed SS-men. People who could not continue walking were shot mercilessly."*

Source: Chronicle of the parish Asten.

*"The way how these captives were treated caused the anger and indignation of the local people and the other users of the street so much that the next captives were driven via Tillysburg, St. Florian and Ansfelden."*

Source: Peter Kammerstätter, Todesmarsch der ungarischen Juden, Materialsammlung 1972. 49-52.



**Commemorative journey of of the Rhema community 2015**

Photo: Christian Rad 2015

**Plaque with freshened up inscription**

Photo: Lilly Schuster 2019



## Exploited - nameless - into death

Already in March 1945 an unknown number of Jewish men, women and children from Hungary marched from the railway station at Kleinmünchen to Rohrbach and then to Mauthausen. A witness from St. Florian reported that the strongest of them were already carrying many corpses and that the chief of the SS-guards stopped the march in order to dig a mass grave for 200 corpses. Source: AMM, French report about war victims in Mauthausen. Foreign Ministry Vienna 1956.

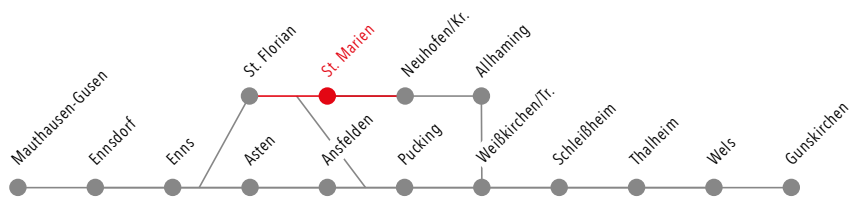
On the days of April more than 20 000 Jews were forced to death marches on a murderous way from Mauthausen to Gunkirchen. They spent the night in the open on the former brickklyn area and at the Rübenspitze near the convent stable. Those who died of exhaustion or the violence used by the SS were dug in various holes in the municipal area.

A witness told that four or five of the people who were marching past jumped out of the crowd, went through the hall and came to the yard, where they rushed at the rubbish dump.

A guard however turned his rifle and beat the poor people. The fact that the SS-guards treated the Jews badly encouraged some people of the village to distribute food although they were threatened to be shot. In 1946 the dead of four holes were buried in the today well-known mass grave by the Search- and Elicitation Committee. The number of 99 cannot be considered certain, but two names are known: LUDWIG KANITZ and Dr. MIHALY KATONA.

They shall remind one that each of the great number of the dead had a name. Source: Pfarrchronik St. Florian. In: Egbert Bernauer, St. Florian in der NS-Zeit, Linz 2009; OÖLA, Sammlung Rödhammer,





**Memorial at the cemetery of St. Marien**

Photo: Angelika Schlackl 2016

**The saved J. Engel's present to say thank you to Mrs. Krška (Krischka)**

Photo: Family Ruprechtsberger, privat

## Inhumanity at its climax

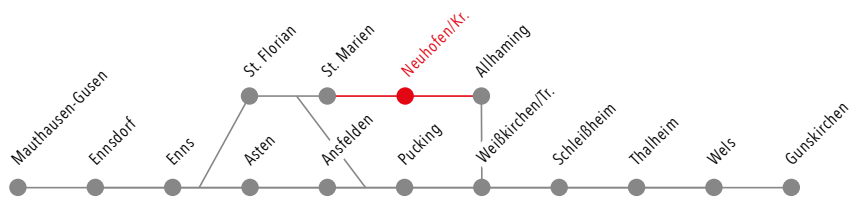
One of the marches of thousands of Jews from the concentration camp Mauthausen to Gunskirchen led through the municipal area of St. Marien on 19 April, 1945. *"A striking rattling and the noise of a march frightened the inhabitants of Kurzenkirchen,"* Mrs. Doppler remembered. A march of 5 000 Jews escorted by SS-men moved from St. Florian to St. Marien. The ones who broke out were immediately shot. *"Like dead animals they were put on farm carts and then buried in a mass grave on the cemetery or dug at once by SS-men. The others were so hungry that they would have eaten up a meadow,"* another witness said, *"to the cows' regret that didn't find any grass any more but things like jackets, belts, caps, knives and razor blades."*



Opposite the Kremsmayr farmhouse farmer Emilie Krška and her married daughter Maria Ruprechtsberger were piling up wood in the »summer house« when one captive ran to them, *"Please, hide me!"* He crawled under a garden bench and the two women covered him with pieces of wood. On 7 May the saved man, a Jewish businessman whose name was J. Engel and came from Budapest left his hiding place and emigrated to Israel. In 1960 he invited his lifesavers to Israel. Emilie's elder daughter Rosa Stummer accepted the invitation and brought her mother a golden bracelet from J. Engel.

Opposite the cemetery the market town Neuhofen/Krems opened the Rosa-Stummer-Park with a memorial in it.





**The President of the IKG-Linz Dr. Charlotte Herman**  
**beim Gedenkstein am Neuhofener Friedhof** Photo: MKÖ Neuhofen/Kr., Franz Lina 2015

**Commemorative Plaque in Rosa-Stummer-Park**  
 Photo: Angelika Schlackl 2017



## "Like cattle"

On 19 April, 1945 5 000 concentration camp captives were deported from the concentration camp Mauthausen to Günskirchen via Neuhofen, for example.

*"The ones who wanted to drink water or who wanted to tear out grass and eat it were beaten. The people who could not walk any more were shot down. Outside the Derndorfer farm between 18 and 20 such shot people were buried in Leitnerholz four."*

Source: Chronicle of the parish, 1945

*"There was a crowd of people. We went there and watched. First we were confused and then horrified."*

Source: Witness

*"There were people who were carrying their mother in the middle. They tried to take some water from the brooklet. They were hit with the rifle butt."* Source: Witness

*"We were not allowed to talk about it. Perhaps they would have taken us with them ..."* Source: Witness

*"On 9 March a funeral service for the 23 victims who were shot on the march through Neuhofen on 19 April, 1945 was held."*

Source: Chronicle of the parish, 1946

*"This made us think for a long time. You do not forget such a thing ..."* Source: Witness



#### Alte Flugaufnahme

Photo: Village of Allhaming

#### Der Gedenkstein am Friedhof in Neuhofen/Kr.

Photo: Mauthausen Komitee Neuhofen/Kr. 2015



## "March of death and silence"

*"[...] on 19 April there happened something very sad that Pater Hildebrand called ›march of death and silence‹."*

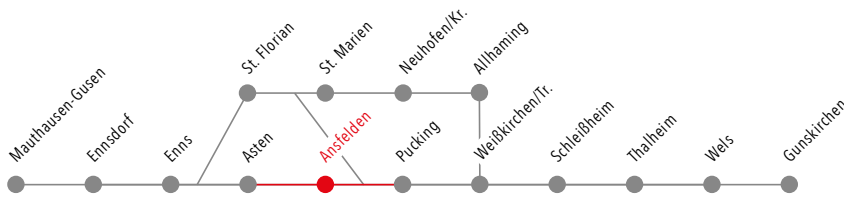
Source: Chronicle of the parish Allhaming

It was the deportation of approximately 5 000 mostly Polish and Hungarian Jews from the concentration camp to the west. Before the evening of 19 April coming from Neuhofen, the marching crowd arrived at the border of the village and camped in the "Leitnerholz" at Guglberg. On 20 April at noon the death candidates were driven through the village. They were walking with difficulty, many of them were praying, they had no power because of hunger anymore and they were dressed in rags.

They were guarded by SS-men. Only along the street from Neuhofen to the campsite at Guglberg twenty corpses were collected and dug in a meadow at Derndorfer's. On the campsite itself it was four corpses.

They were exhumed later on, a memorial on the cemetery in Neuhofen/Kr. commemorates them.





**Gedenktafel auf der neuen Krennsbrücke**

Photo: Gertraud Hoheneder 2015

**Alte hölzerne Krennsbrücke**

Photo: ÖNB; Bildarchiv, United States Information Service, USIS



## Death march through Ansfelden

The route went from St. Florian through the convent forest to Ansfelden. From there it led to Kremsdorf, where a rest was made at the old bridge. After that the march continued towards Pucking.

Witness Leopoldine Grünbart, *"The people were only wearing rags that were hanging on the skeletons, no prison clothing. I remember one picture very well: a woman was carrying a child, she grabbed it at its arm and was pulling it. The child was maybe five year old, haggard and thin, it was finished."*

Witness Ernst Hofmann, *"They ate up the grass – they bit it off and took it in their mouth. [...]"*

*I met a woman – a tall woman who had a wide cloth around her shoulder, there was a dead child in it, it smelled awful also from a distance."*

Witness Philip Kierer (worked at the undertaker Huber), *"My task was it [...] to collect the corpses. [...] I think the first time I put six or seven corpses on the hand cart and took them to the cemetery. At the second time I collected seven or eight corpses. All in all it was probably about 15 corpses."*

The memorial places in Ansfelden are on a fork in the centre of Ansfelden, on the cemetery Ansfelden and on the new bridge over the Krenns.

Source: Alexander Schinko, Talking with witness





**Plaque of the ÖGB Linz-Land with a supplementary 2010**

Photo: Wolfgang Mairinger 2020

**Pucking 1945**

Photo: Market town Pucking



## 109 dead at Pucking

The main route of the death marches also led from Ansfelden to the village of Pucking.

A witness from Pucking remembers the marches very well, "At Pucking near the Fellingner house (today Landstraße 16) we from far saw people creeping along. We walked fast any way and caught up with them. Oh God, what kind of creatures were they? Haggard, covered by rags, they stared at us. One was lying on the ground, the SS-man pushed him with his foot and said, 'Get up!'"

*We walked away fast and heard a shot afterwards. At the back, in the middle and at the front there were SS-men. Later we heard a shot again, we were already near the Fuchsberg."*

Also in Pucking many people lost their lives on the death marches. In three mass graves on the wide meadows 109 dead people were buried.



**Commemoration of the Gross family in Weißkirchen-Bergern**

Photo: Ruth Longodor 2017

**Excerpt from the newspaper Wiener Kurier from 14 April, 1947**

Austrian National Library

## Getting a name and a face

Near the cemetery wall the captives spent the second night in the open on the "Niedermayr meadow". Many were exhausted to death like Rabbi Alexander Zisha Grosz from Hungary. In the tent camp in Mauthausen he met his two sons Yitzhak and Noah, which was like a miracle. The reunion however was only short because the father died at Weißkirchen on 28 April, 1945. Noah dug the grave for his father whom he had to leave behind together with a pile of murdered people. In 1947 Ignac Auspitz and Tibor Wiener, two Hungarian survivors, discovered several mass graves near Weißkirchen, a small one and a big one with totally 158 dead people. A short time after that two daily newspapers reported another one with 300 to 400 victims. Today nobody knows if all these dead people are in the "mass grave of the 119".



In 2017 31 members of the Gross family came to Weißkirchen from Israel. At the commemorative march and the solemn unveiling of a memorial they were accompanied by Mayor Höpoltseider, some inhabitants of the village, former Governor Pühringer, a representative of the Jewish Community and representatives of commemorative initiatives. With Alexander Zisha Grosz one of the many nameless got a face.



Family Gross

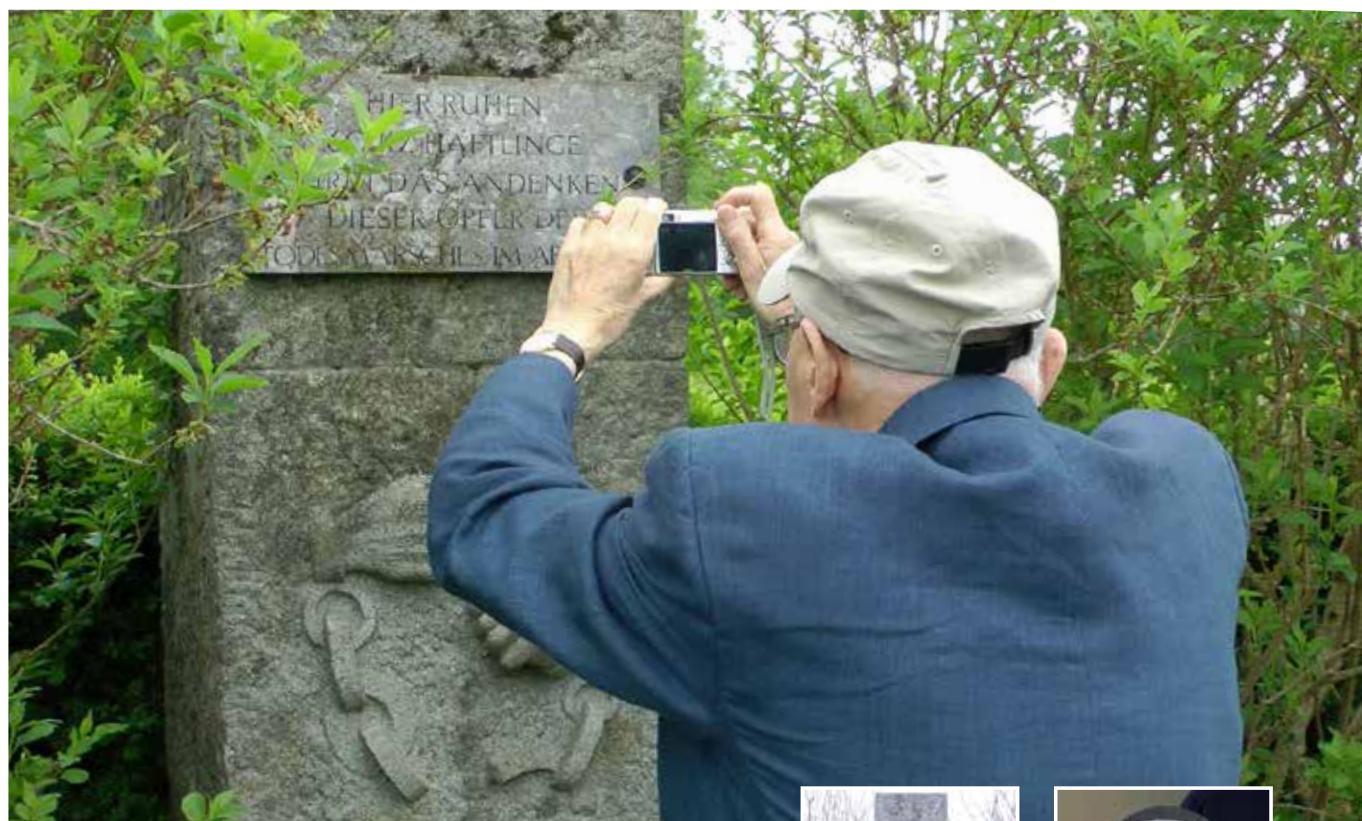


Find A Grave  
Alexander Zisha  
Gross



Room of the names  
Alexander Zisha  
Gross





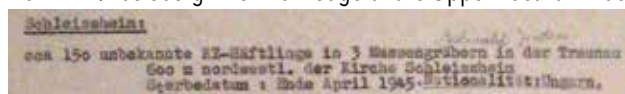
**Michael Kraus, a survivor of the death march,** is taking a photo of the memorial at the sports field of Schleibheim. Photo: Kurt Schlackl 2015

**Witness Sister Edith Thill**  
Photo: Village of Schleibheim

## From the "right direction"

*"The Wehrmacht was staying in the castle at Dietach. There we were allowed to fetch our food at noon," witness Sister Edith Thill reported. "One day on our way to the castle we heard shots of pistols after a large number of captives had marched past us. What a horrible view! On the right side of the street there were lying 10 to 12 shot people. We got extremely frightened. [...] Now every day captives that had wasted away to nothing more than skin and bones were passing by. [...] Once an older, weak man got up and swayed. A guard immediately took his pistol and shot him in front of our horrified eyes. He was lying in the ditch in front of our house for a few days." The concentration camp memorial with its plaque near the sports field on the plot of the family Maurer, vulgo Peißl, commemorates the agonizing death of 60 captives of the concentration camp, who were dug in a bomb crater. It was put up by the*

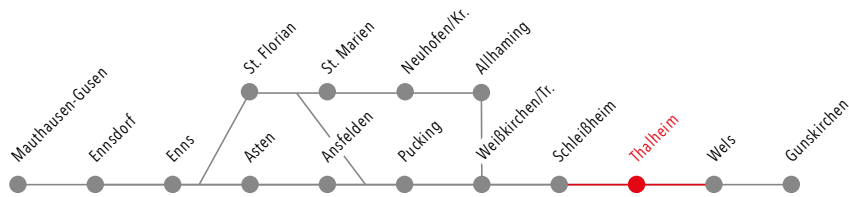
Black Cross according to the instructions of Governor Gleißner like all the other memorials along the route of the death marches. Until 1991 it presented itself with the backside, therefore it was dug out, turned around and newly grounded by the tank pioneer company from Linz/Ebelsberg. The knowledge of the Upper Austrian Black



Cross about Schleibheim that approximately 150 unknown concentration camp prisoners of Hungarian origin were buried in three mass graves in the riverside forest of the Traunau 600 metres northwest of the church of Schleibheim at the end of April 1945 was not reported in the municipal files.

Source: OÖLA, Upper Austrian Black Cross, Sch.1, Jewish victim list, 4 May, 1948





**The memorial in the cemetery Thalheim bei Wels**

Photo: Market town Thalheim/Wels

**Thalheim bei Wels 1945**

Photo: Market town Thalheim/Wels



## "They were even eating nettles"

The route led along the walking paths along the Traun, over the Lange Gasse and the Aigener hill to the two (old) bridges to Wels. A then 15-year-old witness at the crossing Lange Gasse/Berggasse, "I saw that horrifying march. It was terrible to these people. These haggard people. They came up to us to the windows and asked for something to eat. [...] We gave what we could. Primarily potatoes. [...] They fought for the food, it was obvious that each of them wanted to get something. All the way the grass was torn out and eaten. They were even eating nettles. [...] It is said that there were terrible incidents where Lange Gasse joins district road. [...] It is said that there were several dead people. It was a horrifying, terrible march when these people passed by."

After the end of the war the dead people had to be exhumed and buried in the cemetery at Thalheim by former Nazis. A memorial made of stone commemorates that. The inscription says:

HERE 15 CONCENTRATION CAMP PRISONERS HAVE FOUND  
THEIR FINAL REST COMMEMORATE  
THESE VICTIMS OF THE DEATH MARCH  
IN APRIL 1945  
MANKIND'S HIGHEST AIM IS PEACE!  
WAR HAS ALWAYS BEEN ITS GREATEST CURSE.  
IF THE WORLD COULD AVOID IT IN THE FUTURE -  
IT WOULD BE MANKIND'S MOST BEAUTIFUL VICTORY!  
RENOVATED IN 1998  
IN THE MEMORY OF THE VICTIMS OF FASCISM



**The old and the new memorial on the cemetery of Wels**

Photos: Wolfgang Mairinger 2020

**Old photo:** City archive of Wels

## About 1 000 victims of the death marches

The routes of the first marches went over the road bridge and then into Traungasse, Volksgarten-, Pollheimer- and finally Salzburgerstraße towards Günskirchen. Later marches led over the railway bridge and the exhibition area, to Feld- und Bernadingasse and then into Salzburgerstraße.

Alois G., Wels, *"It was on a morning at the end of April 1945 when there was a march of miserable people from the Traun bridge towards Lambach. [...] It was a horrifying view. Only skeletons that could not move on any more passed by. If one of them wanted to sit down on the pavement, there was immediately a bang. [...] Looking at the swaying, starving people was so horrible. I went into Mr. Fitz's shop and there I took baker's*

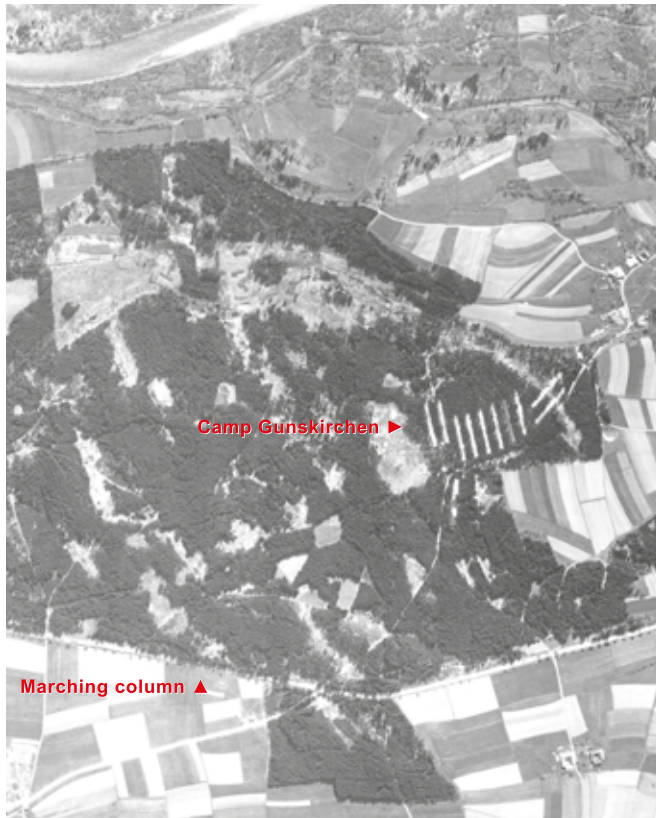
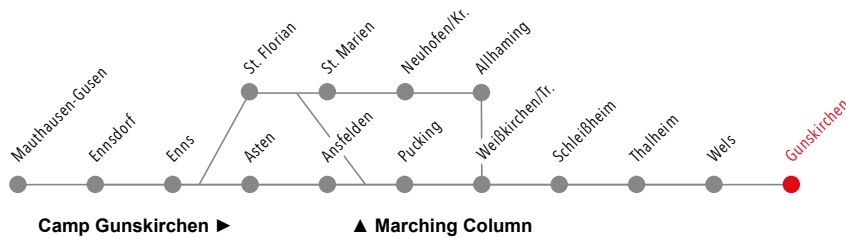


*wares basket with Mr. Fitz's silent acceptance. [...] I distributed that bread."*

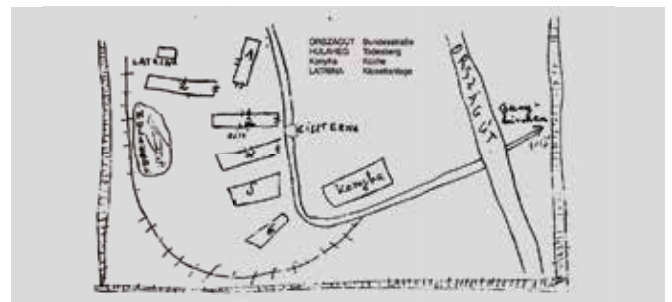
On the city cemetery of Wels (new part) there are several burying places with more than 1 000 victims of the death marches. There are also two memorials from the years 1947 and 2001. On the last memorial the names of 824 people who primarily died in the months after the liberation are inscribed. Recent research has shown that Ignác Auspitz, who survived the death march, collected the personal data of 12 000 survivors and documented 1 500 dead people in a report for Wels in May 1947 when he was in charge of the Alpenjäger barracks in Wels and the camp in Lichtenegg.

Source: IKG Budapest and ITS Bad Arolsen





**Aerial photograph from April 1945.** In the street at the left bottom a death march is visible. Photo: Data bank of aerial photographs Dr. Carls



**These were the circumstances at the forest when the US soldiers arrived there.** Photo: USHMM, Samuel Teicher, Gunskirchen 6 May 1945.

#### Survivor Pal Bacs' diary entry, 24 April, 1945.

Source: Roman Moser, Heimatbuch Gunskirchen, 135.

## The death camp Gunskirchen

In December 1944 August Eigruber, the gauleiter of Oberdonau, ordered Franz Hochhuber, who was then the mayor and the owner of a sawmill in Gunskirchen, to build a sub camp to Mauthausen in Hochholz in the municipal area of Edt near Lambach. 400 captives were deported from Mauthausen into the old primary school in Gunskirchen to build a hut. They were forced to work in the forest every day. In March 1945 the unfinished wood camp became a "collecting point for Jewish prisoners" that was filled up with captives from the concentration camp Mauthausen, Gusen and the camps of the south east embankment which were not needed anymore.

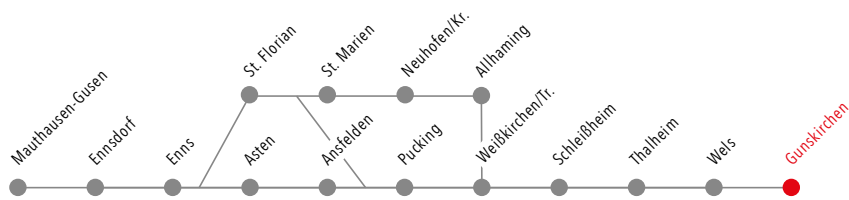
Source: Hans Maršálek, History of the Concentration Camp Mauthausen, Vienna 1995, Roman Moser, Heimatbuch Gunskirchen 1990



*"There is no doubt about it that we were sent here to die."*

Edith Eva Eger was 18 years old when she came in the camp Gunskirchen. Source: Edith Eva Eger, I am here and everything is now. Why we can decide in favour of freedom every time. Munich 2017.

The people who came to the camp Gunskirchen after surviving marching for three days and spending two nights in the open, faced death in the forest now. The living conditions in the overcrowded camp were disastrous. 1 500 to 3 000 people were crammed in one of ten unfinished huts. They were lying on each other, were sitting back to back with drawn up legs or were sleeping outside the hut. Hunger, cold, wetness, missing sanitary facilities increased the number of diseases. Diseases were spreading because of the lice. Brutal abuse and arbitrary shootings of the guards cost 200 to 300 human lives very day. Many dead were not buried anymore. When the last captives from Mauthausen arrived at the end of April, the ground of the forest was full of corpses.



**First aid from the US-army**

Photo: USHMM, May, 1945

**Wehrmacht soldiers burying corpses**

Photo: USHMM, May, 1945



## The liberation on 4 May, 1945

In the evening of 4 May unsuspecting soldiers of the 71st Infantry Division of the 3rd US-army arrived at the camp Gunsckirchen. They saw human creatures in an unimaginable condition. 70 years later Bill Juksch was convinced, "It was hell!" and Peter Carnabuci could not still believe it, "Why did they try to exterminate the Jews? I don't understand it."

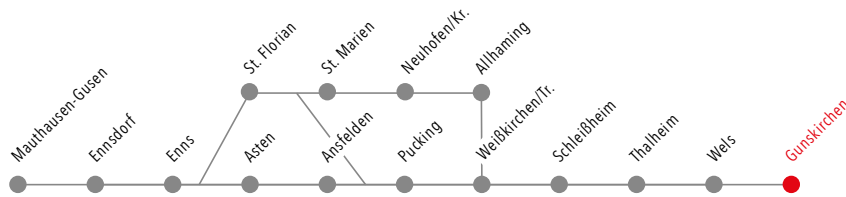
On 5 May, 1945 Major Coffman wrote in his daily report, "[...] The ride into the camp on a little, narrow street was the experience to avoid hitting many swaying men and women who were trying to flee from the horror they had experienced." [...] Many put together the things they still had, maybe a blanket, a torn coat, and went away on their feet covered in rags. They didn't care where to go as long as they got away from that place.

*It's unnecessary to mention that they didn't come far, only few kilometres, others only a few hundred metres, some died on the side of the street.*

*[...] My days of reading about crimes was over now. Today I visited this camp. Here there was the living and dead evidence for cruelty and brutality beyond every imagination, lying and crawling and dragging their feet in smelling, ankle-deep mud and human excrements. [...]"*

The young US-soldier David L. had to spend two weeks there with his unit. Their order was to guard Wehrmacht soldiers who had been arrested by the Americans and who were digging mass graves now.





Large picture: **Memorial on the Federal Road B1** that was built in the forest and moved after the exhumation in 1979, Photo: MKÖ 2016.

Small picture: **Memorial plaque in the forest** Photo: B. Veitschegger 2014

At the right bottom: **Survivors Michael Kraus and Frank Grunwald at the memorial for the 71<sup>st</sup> Infantry Division** Photo: Angelika Schlackl 2015



## Never number, always a human being.

In 1979 seven mass graves in the forest were exhumed and 1 227 of the originally 5 000 dead people were transferred to the concentration camp memorial Mauthausen. On this occasion 31 prisoner identification tags were found that are archived in the depot of the concentration camp memorial Mauthausen-Guns kirchen. Regarding the prisoner numbers all the 31 names could be identified in the entry lists and prisoner personality cards (see page 26). They were Jews without any exceptions. 21 came from Poland, the others were from Hungary, Romania, Slovakia and Ukraine. All however were registered as Hungarians. In 1944 eleven of them were transferred from the KZ-Plaszow near Cracow (well-known because of the movie "Schindler's List"). The others came from Auschwitz. Apart from few exceptions they all already came into the KZ-Gusen in 1944 and were forced to work at the construction of the "mountain



crystal" tunnels or for the company Messerschmitt under inhumane conditions in the labour units of the SS-company DEST (German Earth- and Stoneworks) in the quarry Kastenhof. Their lives ended in the camp Guns kirchen after the death march.

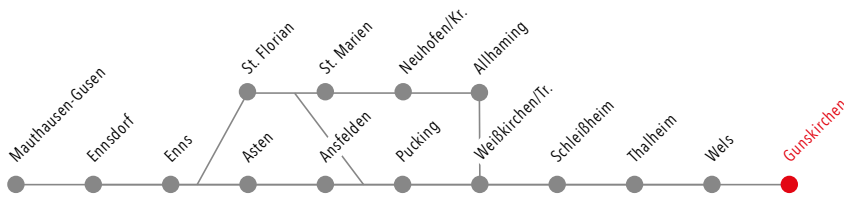
Source: AMM, BM.I Care for War Graves, Identification of prisoners ID tags 1979;

Shoah databank Yad Vashem; Yvonne Burger, The forgotten Camp, master thesis 2019.









#### Surviving adolescents in the US-military hospital Hörsching-Neubau

US-military doctor Max Wolfson is posing with six boys from the death camp Gunskirchen in the "21st Evacuation Hospital Hörsching-Neubau". [From the right to the left] Leo Zisman, Kalman Tsechenowski, Meir Gecht, Max Wolfson, Leizer Greiss, Mordechai Levitan, Daniel Lebanowski. Identified in: Leo and Myrna Zisman, I Believe. The Story of One Jewish Life. New York 2011. © USHMM Collection.

### The "Birkenau Boys from Kovno"

In the morning of 5 May six boys were walking together from the camp Gunskirchen towards Wels to be registered by the American Jewish Distribution Committee. On their way they met the US soldier Max Wolfson, who spoke Yiddish. His parents came from Lithuania like the boys. Wolfson was a US army doctor and took the six boys to the US military hospital in Hörsching-Neubau, which was suffering from a heavy typhus epidemic. It cost the lives of 2 000 people. 1 400 were buried in the city cemetery of Linz-Süd/St. Martin. The six boys survived their infection. Five belonged to the 131 boys who called themselves the "Birkenau-boys from Kovno (German Kaunas)" later on. They had been deported from the ghetto in their hometown to Landsberg and Dachau and then to Auschwitz. On the ramp of Birkenau and in the crematory they had to work in the trolley unit. On 30 January, 1945 on an extremely icy day they arrived at Mauthausen with a transport of 324 Jews (among them 154 teenagers) from Auschwitz. **Meir Gecht** was born in Kaunas on 21 August, 1929. In Auschwitz he was registered as Mejer Hecht and got the prisoner number 124869. Later he lived in the city Holon in Israel. **Elizier Greiss**, born in Kaunas on 20 January, 1929, apprentice in a saw mill, was registered as Leijzer Greis getting

the prisoner number 124855. He went back to Lithuania together with Meir and found his father in Vilna again. Greiss became a famous sports reporter and author in the Soviet Union.

**Leib Zieman**, born in Kaunas on 3 Juni, 1928, a plumber apprentice, got the prisoner number 125054 and the name Leibe Zismanas. Later he lived in New York as Leo Zisman.

**Mordechai Levitan**, born in Kaunas on 21 April, 1930 is at position 160 on the entry list. He was registered with the name Motel Levitanas and got the prisoner number 1249233. He also went back to Lithuania, where he found out that his father had survived in Munich. In 1946 Mordechai immigrated into Palestine together with his father and lived as the manager of the trade company Feldman in Tivon.

**Daniel Kabinowsky** (Lebanowski on the entry list) did not find a member of his family after the liberation who was still alive. After staying in orphanages in Poland and Germany he also immigrated into Palestine in 1946 and lived in Ramat Hasharon.

**Kalman Tsechenowski**, the only Pole of this group, was adopted by non-Jewish Poles and lost his contact to the group later whereas the others were also meeting other survivors of the "131 Birkenau Boys" again and again. *"As a consequence of our fate we had grown together like a family,"* Meir Gecht told in an interview.



Places and stories along  
the routes of the death marches



Mit Unterstützung von Bund, Land und Europäischer Union



Bundesministerium  
Nachhaltigkeit und  
Tourismus

