

Council approve the installation of memorial to Jane Haining

Following a campaign initiated by Edinburgh Central SNP MSP, Angus Robertson, The City of Edinburgh Council has agreed to pay for the installation of a Stolperstein or 'stumbling stone' memorial to Jane Haining at St Stephen's Church.

Just under 90 years ago, Haining left Edinburgh for Budapest to help Jewish children in the Hungarian capital. She was killed in Auschwitz in 1944 and subsequently recognised as 'Righteous Among the Nations' at Yad Vashem World Holocaust Remembrance Centre in Jerusalem. Haining is the only Scot to be given the honour.

The motion was passed by acclaim by City of Edinburgh Councillors on Thursday.

'Stolpersteine' or 'stumbling stones' are small brass plaques set in pavements with the inscription of the name and life details of victims murdered by the Nazis. Across Europe, there are now over 75,000 brass plate memorials outside the homes or places associated with victims of the Nazi Holocaust.

The proposals were welcomed by Cllr Vicky Nicolson and Professor Joe Goldblatt, Chair of the Edinburgh Interfaith Association and prominent member of Scotland's Jewish

Community, who brought a motion to Edinburgh Council to have the Stolperstein paid for and installed by the City.

Angus Robertson MSP said: "Jane Haining is Scotland's most prominent Holocaust victim and is Righteous Amongst the Nations at Yad Vashem. A 'Stolperstein' to her memory would be fitting, perhaps outside Edinburgh's St Stephen's Church, where her mission to help Jewish children was dedicated. As well as being a proper commemoration, it will also serve as a warning to never forget the lessons of history."

Professor Joe Goldblatt said: "I hope that in the years to come when children and others pass the Stolperstein stone and plaque they will feel pride because of this daughter of Edinburgh whose courage and bravery saved so many Jewish lives. I hope that the Church of Scotland and Jewish community will work closely together to plan a meaningful and memorable unveiling of the stone."

Cllr Nicolson, said: "Before Jane Haining left for Budapest, a dedication service was held for her at St Stephen's Church in Stockbridge. It was presided over by the chair of the Jewish mission committee, Dr Stewart Thompson. Haining left for Budapest the next day, seven months before Adolf Hitler became Chancellor of Germany on 30 January 1933. She went to her dedication service as an everyday citizen and left as a missionary, to Budapest where she looked after and saved many Jewish children's lives until her extermination at Auschwitz-Birkenau.

"Edinburgh was the last place Jane Haining chose to be prior to her mission and it is time we, the Capital City of Scotland, commemorate her incredible humanity, bravery and kindness. Her Stolperstein will be a marker and a reminder of the Holocaust and what that did to the world. Jane Haining was an incredible woman and for Edinburgh not to have recognised her yet is wrong and we want to right that wrong."

Rt Rev Dr Iain Greenshields, Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland said: "We are delighted that Edinburgh City councillors have voted in favour of buying and installing a 'Stolperstein' in memory of Jane Haining, who showed tremendous courage in the face of intolerable evil during a dark period of history.

"A woman of deep Christian faith, she was fully aware of the risks she was taking but repeatedly refused Church of Scotland pleas to leave Budapest and return home to Scotland as the war engulfed Europe.

"Jane was determined to continue doing her duty and stick to her post, saying 'If these children need me in days of sunshine, how much more do they need me in days of darkness?'.
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"She was simultaneously an ordinary and extraordinary woman and her story is one of heroism and personal sacrifice and reminds us that when we feel powerless, there is always something that we can do.

"Her story is moving, humbling, heart-breaking and inspirational and we hope that this honour will help keep her memory alive for generations to come."



Cllr Vicky Nicolson, Angus Robertson MSP and Professor Joe Goldblatt outside St Stephen's Church with a photo of Jane Haining PHOTO ©2023 The Edinburgh Reporter