

# **New documentary will feature a Scottish holocaust heroine**

**A new documentary about a Scot who died in Auschwitz during the Second World War is being produced for schools.**

Jane Haining, who grew up on a farm in Dumfriesshire, refused to abandon Jewish girls in her care and flee to safety. She was matron of the Scottish Mission School in Budapest in Hungary from 1932 to 1944. The school had around 400 Jewish and Christian girls in its care. On the outbreak of war in 1939, Ms Haining's employer the Church of Scotland recalled her to come home. But she refused, saying: "If these children need me in days of sunshine, how much more do they need me in days of darkness?" Jane Haining was dux of Dumfries Academy in 1915.

She kept the girls safe until 1944 when she was betrayed by the son-in-law of the school's cook. Ms Haining had discovered him stealing scarce food meant for the girls and he revealed her presence, and the presence of Jewish schoolgirls to the Nazis. She was arrested and left telling the girls she would be "back by lunch". But she never returned.

She was charged with eight separate offences and jailed in Budapest before being transported along with Hungarian Jews by rail cattle wagon to Auschwitz in Nazi-occupied Poland on 14 May, 1944. She was given the number 79467 and forced to work as a slave labourer but only survived a few months.

The Scottish matron was 47 and her death certificate said she

died in hospital, succumbing to cachexia following intestinal catarrh, on 17 July but it is considered likely she died in a gas chamber.

Unison is making the film as it will celebrate the life of a woman who once worked in a Paisley factory. Unison Scottish convener and Renfrewshire branch Secretary, Mark Ferguson, said he and branch treasurer Stephen Hicks have been taking people to the Auschwitz camps for the past eight years.

He said: "Our study tours allow individuals to learn about the Holocaust and feel connected more closely through Jane Haining's story," explained Mr Ferguson.

"These delegates can then relay her story and educate the wider community on the horrors of the Holocaust.

"Unison has commissioned a film to illustrate our work, Jane's story and the Scottish connection to the horrific events at Auschwitz Birkenau.

"It is hoped that it will be used as part of a schools programme.

"This work could not have been possible without the active involvement of Jane's family members who have joined us at events and campaigning, providing an important insight into her life.

"Dumfries Academy and Dunscore Heritage Centre, as well as members of the local community, feature in the film and we thank them for their participation.

"Renfrewshire Provost, Councillor Lorraine Cameron, has been personally involved and provides a valuable link to the council and facilitating our plans for a documentary launch in January 2026."

After the launch in Renfrewshire it will be decided whether the film is then made available in the rest of Scotland.

# Edinburgh connection

This is the same woman for whom Edinburgh Central MSP Angus Robertson wants to install a memorial. Read more [here](#) about the campaign to create a Stolperstein

The City of Edinburgh council has agreed to pay for the memorial at St Stephen's Church. The local connection is explained by local Councillor Vicky Nicolson. She 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."

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."

'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.



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





Jane Haining



Jane with pupils at Lake Balaton in Hungary



I, Jane Mathison Haining, being in my right mind, do hereby with my own hand give directions for the disposal of my possessions in the event of my death.

Money left after meeting funeral expenses to be divided into four equal parts, and paid out as follows: -

- (1) Mrs. Jas. Mc Knight, nie Alison Haining
- (2) Margaret Haining
- (3) Alison McKnight
- (4) Agnes Haining.

If the £100 lent to Lewis Carson of Huddersfield has not been paid into the bank, the

Miss Haining's handwritten will