

Kitty Heart-Moxon: the West Midlands remembers

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Kitty Hart-Moxon OBE returned to the University of Birmingham for the first time since being awarded her honorary degree, to give an emotive talk to staff and students on October 16.

The well-attended event, jointly hosted by the Department of Theology and Religion, and the Holocaust Educational Trust, focussed on Kitty's complex story spanning the seven years from the first Nazi invasion of her home town, Bielsko, to her arrival in the UK post-war.

Kitty described the conditions in the Lublin ghetto, where her and her family first escaped to and were subjected to strict food rationing, amongst other atrocities. Twice-weekly she would undertake a dangerous journey through the sewers to reach the non-Jewish part of town to trade anything her father could find for food. After a number of unsuccessful attempts to escape the family agreed to part to increase their chances of survival. The family established false identities and continued their journey separately. Kitty and her mother travelled to Germany with a convoy of Polish forced labourers, but were sadly to be betrayed in 1943 and sentenced to death, later commuted to life-imprisonment in Auschwitz.

Her time in Auschwitz was highlighted with a screening of just some of the highlights of Kitty's award-winning documentary *Kitty: Return to Auschwitz*. In both moving and emotional scenes Kitty describes the scenes and horrors of her time in the concentration camp whilst touring the grassy fields and remains of the camp. With her eldest son accompanying her Kitty explored the old shed-like buildings prisoners were housed in, and the death pits – where bone fragments and ashes remained.

In November 1944 Kitty and her mother were evacuated from Auschwitz to a sub-camp of Gross-Rosen, where they remained for 4 months working in an electronics factory. In February 1945 they were evacuated again, and commenced their long 'death march', taking them eventually to Salzwedel, and their freedom when the camp was liberated by American forces on 14 April 1945.

Kitty now tours the UK and abroad working with the Holocaust Educational Trust speaking about the events that she witnessed and the horrors of war; warning future generations of the consequences of intolerance, racism and hatred.