

France - The Elie Bloch Lodge in Metz

The Elie Bloch B'nai B'rith Lodge in Metz, was put forward by the Alsace Lodge in Strasbourg, of which Doctor Gaston Revel was a leading member, for establishment under the terms of Supreme Lodge Charter dated 8th May 1952.

It was officially inaugurated in Metz on 23rd November 1952, under the Leadership of Brother Edwin Guggenheim, from Zurich, then President of the Continental Europe District.

23 founding members started the Lodge, including Chief Rabbi Nathan Netter of Metz. The founding president was head of the bar council, Myrtil Zacharyus. Its first mentor was Brother Etienne Schweitzer

Elie Bloch was born in Alsace in 1909, and became Rabbi of the dynamic Jewish Community in Metz before the 2nd World War, with a special responsibility for youth.

In 1939, he was forced to flee to the Poitou region, where he set up community structures with other refugees. He set up support networks to help his Jewish brothers and sisters from Alsace and Lorraine, with a sacrificial spirit and outstanding bravery.

In October 1941, he used false papers to release children under 15 who had been arrested and interned with their parents in the "route de Limoges" camp at Poitiers, and then had them looked after by Jewish or non-Jewish families.

He managed to get foodstuffs to internees and visited the sick and elderly. He also managed to keep up relationships with passeurs who helped smuggle Jews through the zone libre.

The networks still operated after his arrest in 1943. In Poitou, many residents helped the Jews and it is said that at least 400 people were rescued.

When he was 34, Rabbi Elie Bloch disappeared in the camps along with his wife Georgette and daughter Myriam.

Those who knew him remembered a generous, self-sacrificial man. He left an indelible mark on the Jewish Community in Metz and it is with pride that the Lodge bears his name.

