

## **The other side: The Second World War through the eyes of an ordinary German family**

**An illustrated talk by Angela Findlay**

*It was a privilege to hear Angela Findlay's talk about her family's relationship with, and attitudes towards, the Nazi regime in Germany. She managed to captivate a whole room of usually restless Sixth formers with her riveting, emotional, brave and honest account of what it was like to live under the Nazis.*

**Head of History, Francis Holland School**

The Second World War is a subject that has an on-going and infinite fascination for so many. With all the current centenaries and anniversaries of the two World Wars, Nazi Germany and Remembrance are once again hugely topical. But how much do we actually know about Germany's side of the story?

In this talk Angela uses stories from her own family history and their wartime experiences to bring to life everyday occurrences and to approach some of the difficult questions around Nazi Germany. Through original family letters, diaries, photographs as well as military records she presents the period as experienced through the eyes of her German grandfather, a decorated General on the Eastern Front, and her mother, a young child living outside Berlin and fleeing from the Soviet army,

Angela also presents the impact that intense feelings of guilt and shame have had on subsequent generations of Germans, including herself. Placing her own experience within the broader context of post-war Germany she reveals the hitherto little known yet very significant role the arts play in its ongoing process of engaging with and coming to terms with its past. A fascinating culture of counter memorials has emerged all over Germany making bold, brave, confrontational, humble and moving attempts to remember what so many would rather forget.

Throughout Angela raises questions rather than gives answers and thereby transports her audiences to the period in a way that enables them to relate to it more personally and imagine it more vividly. Times have changed but moral dilemmas and the effects of both guilt and trauma are things that any of us could face at any point today. With the current refugee crisis and Germany's leading role within it, it is not only helpful but important to understand Germany's past and the roots of their unshakeable resolve to prevent anything like Nazism and the Holocaust from ever happening again.