

2010-12-01

Visiting an old chess metropolis

Regional meeting of the KWA at Vienna, 1-3 October, 2010

Nearly 20 participants gathered for this year's regional KWA meeting in the Austrian capital which naturally seemed to be predestined for a meeting of chess historians, as this metropolis was for more than half a century (about 1880 to 1938) a European chess centre of outstanding importance. Not by chance the magazine KARL had taken account of the brilliant chess past of the Danube metropolis with a focal topic (in issue 2/2009).

Our multinational group which was still completed by Viennese guests, spouses and companions (see [First Snapshots from Vienna](#)) initially met in the [Haus des Schachsports](#), the club seat of the Viennese Chess Association which was intended for the venue of the meeting. Organizational care was provided by the two vice presidents of the association, René Schwab and Johann Pöcksteiner ([Vorstand](#) [Board]), at first the former guided us through the rooms.



The Court Library with

the equestrian statue of Joseph II.

In the afternoon the visit of the imperial palace was on the programme, starting with the **Collection of Manuscripts and Old Printings** ([HAD](#)) of the Austrian National Library (Österreichischen Nationalbibliothek, ÖNB). We got competent guidance from the Messrs. Ernst Gamillscheg (expert of the HAD) and Hans Petschar (director of the ÖNB picture library and the graphic collection) who presented us a number of medieval manuscripts and tracts.



Chairman (Guy Van Habberney) and host (Karl Kadletz)



Prof. Darko Plečaš had arrived from Belgrade.



A book in Middle High German on chess and other board games



Alessandro

Sanvito obviously in his element ...

The pictures below give an impression of the "Prunksaal" - Ceremonial Room of the ÖNB which just hosted the exhibition "Jews, Christians and Muslims. Intercultural Dialogue in Old Scripts".

You will find further details on this wonderful baroque styled library at the corresponding web site www.onb.ac.at/prunksaal.htm (including a virtual tour).

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Competent

• explanation of the ceiling frescos by Karl Kadletz



Dome fresco of

the Ceremonial Room



Of course the visit of the famous Café Central in the Herrengasse was obligatory, there our Viennese member Karl Kadletz proved to be a (chess) expert guide.



By no means bouncers:
Tony Gillam and Per Skjoldager at the café entrance.



The Cafe Central was well visited, nevertheless our group found three tables.

For the joint evening meal not a popular "Heuriger" (wine tavern) for tourists had been chosen but a traditional "Buschenschank" in Neustift am Walde. (More about "Heuriger/Buschenschank" at en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Heuriger.)



The Buschenschank (with certificate "Wiener Eigenbau" [Viennese self-made]) - only wine from own production is offered here.



Michael Negele, Kurt

Landsberger and Karl Kadletz.



Bob van de Velde, Andreas

Saremba and Toni Preziuso.

Alternatively to the "Heuriger" a visit of the Pygmalion theatre was possible where the *Royal Game* was given, this was chosen by our member Siegfried Schönle who is an authority on Stefan Zweig's short novel. (In this connection the article by Siegfried Schönle: "Sechs Illustratoren, ein Text – «Schachnovelle»", in: *KARL* 1/2010, p. 26-31 is to mention.)

Next morning the planned meeting at Michael Ehn's chess publishing house and antiquarian bookshop **Schach und Spiele** took place which is not only a shop for new and antiquarian chess literature but also the seat of the homonymous club Schach&Spiele – you can learn more about that at the [shop web site](#) (in German).



Hugo Kastner and Siegfried Schönle.

Mag. Michael Ehn with



the book table with the latest publications.

Attraction for collectors:

Michael Ehn, largely known as a chess historian, collector and author, had already given an extensive self-portrayal in *KARL* 2/2009 (p. 48-53). On the occasion of our visit he gave a lecture on the history of the famous "Wiener Schachverlag" where his chess shop has finally emerged from, and presented us his own books as well as the publications of the house. One of his latest works which he wrote together with Ernst Strouhal – *en passant, ruf & ehns enzyklopädie des schachspiels* – has just been acknowledged with a highly positive review by Harry Schaack (**Wundervoller Dauerbrenner**, in: *KARL* 4/2010, p. 63).

Michael Ehn indicated to have additional completed manuscripts on hand, but he has not been able to find a publisher by now.



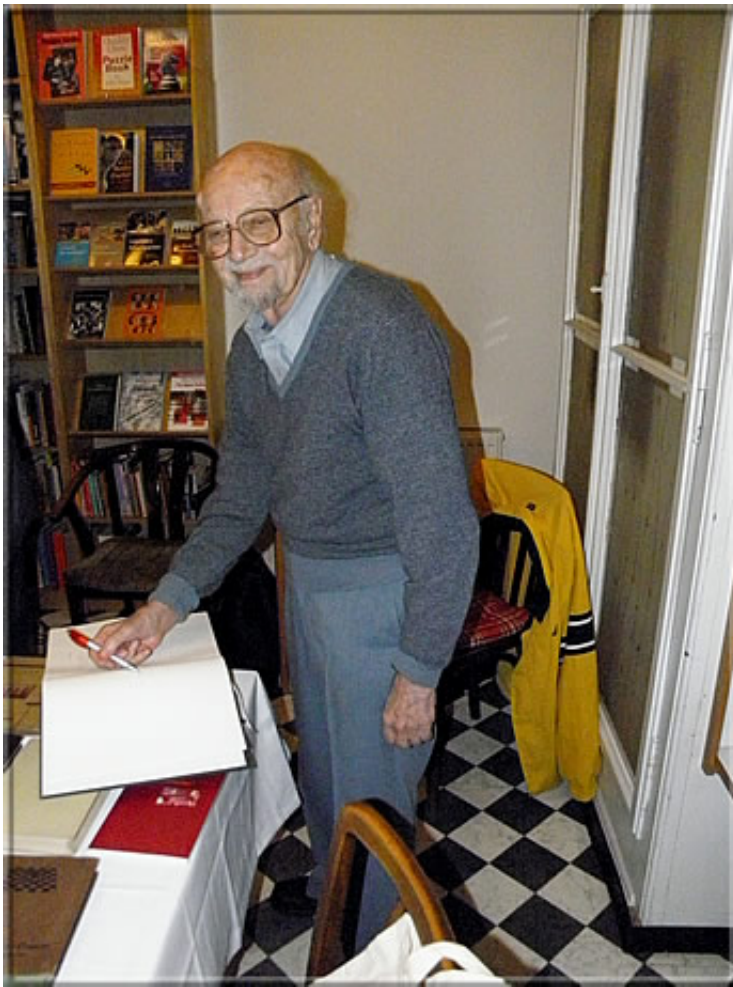
Gillam and Michael Ehn, in the background Siegfried Schönle.

Alessandro Sanvito, Tony



captivates the audience.

Michael Ehn's talk



 Kurt Landsberger

Our senior participant Kurt Landsberger was the next who rose to speak, he told about his genealogical research on the Steinitz family in the period of Nazi persecution. The results of his research work will be integrated in his next book.

Subsequently Hugo Kastner (author of *Das große humboldt Schachsammelsurium*, 2008) presented his work **Alles über Schach. Mythen, Kuriositäten, Superlative** (humboldt, Hannover 2010) written together with Michael Ehn – here an [extract](#) (PDF) as well as a [review](#) (in German) from the Glarean Magazin.



Hugo Kastner (standing)
with Bob and Winifred van de Velde



Shop window attractions



Intermediate stop on the overlong way to the Central Cemetery: the graveyard restaurant invites to the necessary lunchtime snack.



There was no food for a "Heaven repay you!" ...

As the next station of our meeting the visit of the Central Cemetery was planned that afternoon, there our interest was directed at the old Jewish part with the graves of former chess greats. Here our group

benefitted from Michael Ehn's preliminary works, as to his commendable chess activities belong among other things the tracking and the documentation of forgotten graves of Viennese chess players. On such occasions he also used to make overgrown graves accessible again.

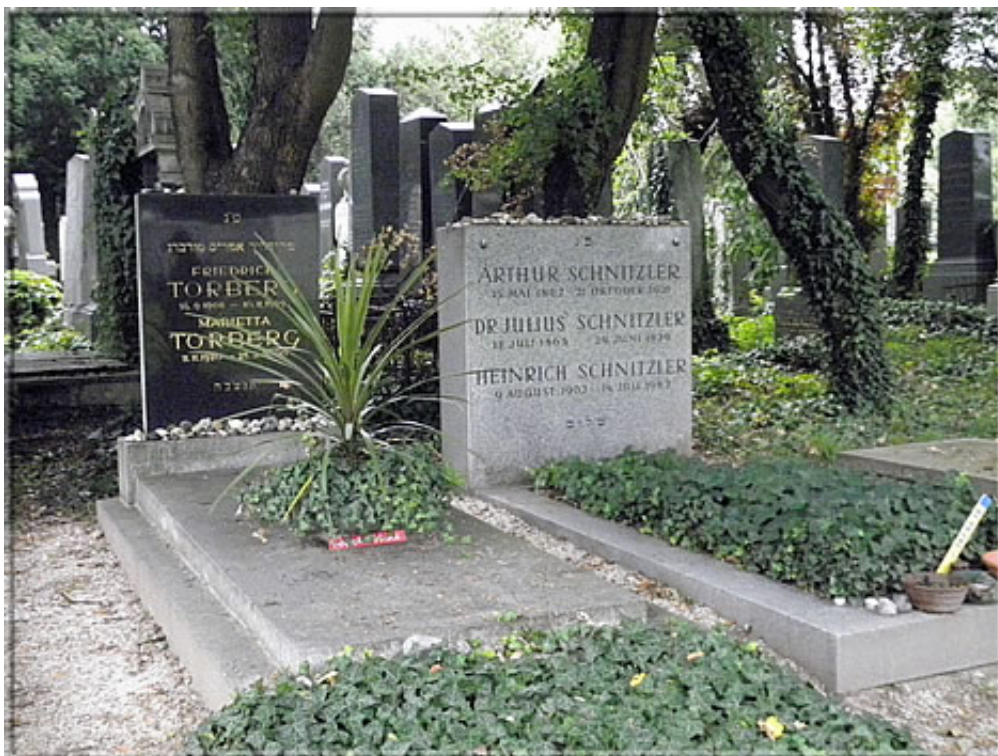


Finally we had arrived (with a big delay) at the Central Cemetery. (Our meeting has suffered a little from the "vast extent" of the Danube metropolis.)





Michael Ehn at the grave of Ignaz Freiherr v. Kolisch only recently rediscovered by him.



Friedrich Torberg and Arthur Schnitzler, side by side bedded in their final resting places.



The Trebitsch family - the inscription of Leopold Trebitsch (10/05/1842 - 12/12/1906) is top right, partly covered with grape leaves.



Richard R ti was entombed 1929 in the grave of his father, a Professor of Medicine who had already passed away in 1904.

The remaining Saturday afternoon was reserved to the first part of the KWA series of lectures at the "Haus des Schachsports". This time we had won Tony Gillam to give the plenary talk, he highlighted the fate of the Russian masters after the broken off tournament Mannheim 1914: interned after the outbreak of war, Alekhine, Bogoljubov, Rabinovich and others had to go on a trip through German prisons ...



Once again Tony Gillam can unfold his rhetorical skills.



The auditorium

The starting point of the subsequent contribution by Toni Prezioso was the short movie **Białystok 1897** (see below) leading us to the then Russian part of Poland. As a prospective Rubinstein biographer Toni had investigated the question how Akiba Rubinstein's beginnings could have happened in the Russian-Jewish

environment of that time. (The Rubinstein family had moved to Białystok soon after the birth of little Akiba [*1882] where he also learned to play chess as a teenager.)

Alternatively the link to the video: <http://www.youtube.com/...>

Additional historical pictures from Białystok:

[Białystok - Nikolaistraße](#)

[Białystok - Marktstraße mit Stadtuhr](#)

[Białystok - Marktstraße](#)

[Białystok - Lindenstraße](#)

[Białystok - Ulica Lipowa](#)



from Tony Gillam. Toni Prezioso takes over

Our treasurer Michael Negele gave the third and last paper of the day, he picked up once more the diversified history of the *Wiener Schachzeitung* – "all what a collector should know about". On this we offer his [powerpoint presentation](#) (35 MB, as PDF) and besides refer to a previous article of the speaker (Michael Negele: "Glanz & Elend des Schachorgans. Die bewegte Geschichte der Wiener Schachzeitung", in: *KARL* 2/2009, p. 20-27).



Attentive listeners: Ivan Bottlik, J. Walter Simon and Gábor Gyuncza (from Budapest, companion of Ivan Bottlik)



Darko Plećaš, Tamás Erdélyi and Per Skjoldager

On Sunday morning we met again at the "Haus des Schachsports" to hold the general meeting – including the reports of the Board as well as a review of the association's activities.



Our chairman flanked by Alessandro Sanvito and Siegfried Schönle

Hereafter the second part of the lectures followed starting with our host Karl Kadletz. He dealt with two objets d'art located in Vienna: the painting "Die Schachpartie" (1839) by Josef Danhauser, exhibited in the "Upper Belvedere", and the chess set of the carver Rupert Grießl from Styria (1898) in the "Wiener Volkskundemuseum" (Viennese Museum of Folk Culture). Both exhibits reproduce at the same time numerous contemporaries, also to see in this short [presentation](#).



Karl Kadletz with his presentation - unfortunately cancelled the evening before.



Intensive discussions about the future aims of the Ken Whyld Association: Per Skjoldager would like to implement an interactive web market.

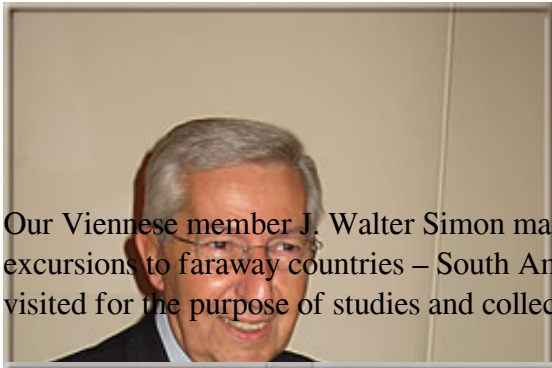
In his lecture "New documents on the Bonus Socius" Alessandro Sanvito shed light on new sources about the medieval collection of mansūbāt. His presence in Vienna also afforded the opportunity to personally hand over the just published "Festschrift" in his honour (first volume) which was performed by the Viennese publisher Robert Karner (Refordis publishing house) and the present editors. (This handing over occurred at another place parallel to our event.)



receives the commemorative publication from Robert Karner.

Alessandro Sanvito





Our Viennese member J. Walter Simon marked the end of our series of lectures, he told about his chess excursions to faraway countries – South America, Nepal and the emirates were the destinations he has visited for the purpose of studies and collecting.



J. Walter Simon with "exotic" chess literature from Nepal: *CHESS, FIDE & THE RULES* and *Nepal Chess Diary*



Chess books from South America and Nepal

Our Vienna meeting found an harmonious end with the traditional KWA book market.

Here is a picture gallery with additional 32 photos from our [Vienna Meeting 2010](#).

Sincere thanks go to the committed preparers and organizers Karl Kadletz and J. Walter Simon who - with the assistance of Michael Ehn - have this great get-together of chess historians made possible.

(Text partly according to the article by Karl Kadletz, "Internationales Schachtreffen in Wien", in: *Schach-Aktiv* 12/2010, p. 642-645 [R.B.])