

School children thanked for taking part in Holocaust Memorial Day.

Children at Mereside Primary School were thanked by councillors for taking part the recent Holocaust Memorial Day tree planting ceremony on 27 January.

The cherry tree, a British fruit variety called the Black Oliver, was planted near the school, to commemorate the 70th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz death camp from the Nazis.

Thank you letters to the four children representing the school have been sent by Councillor Mike Owen for assisting him in planting the tree. Joining the ceremony was local Councillor Jane Mackenzie, Mr Mark Michaels member of the Jewish community in South Shropshire and the South Shropshire Interfaith Forum, and members from the Shrewsbury Interfaith Forum.

Councillor Mackenzie told the children about how her grandfather had personally saved more than 250 Jewish children from death camps, and Mr Michaels told them about what the commemoration of the liberation meant to him as a member of the Jewish community.

A special candle, was also lit by Mr Michaels with the help of the children, which had been lit in commemoration at a previous ceremony at Church Stretton School the day before. Mr Michael then conducted a memorial prayer in Hebrew and English.

The candle is one of just seventy that were being lit at locations across the country to commemorate the liberation of Auschwitz. It was later lit at an interfaith service in Church Stretton later that day and students from Church Stretton school will be taking it to Germany to the site of a concentration camp near Berlin.

Councillor Mike Owen, Cabinet Member for Resource, Finance and Support at Shropshire Council said:

"It was a pleasure to meet the children, and they were an absolute credit to their school and to their families. I know that, together with all the children at Mereside School, they will look after the tree, and help it to grow, and that it is in safe hands. I hope that the children will always remember the Holocaust Memorial Day theme this year to "keep the memory alive", because it is really important to do so. We must never forget what happened, and we must do our utmost to ensure that genocides do not happen again."

Councillor Jane Mackenzie, local member for Bayston Hill, Column and Sutton added;

"It was a very significant event, and I am delighted that the tree has been planted in my ward. I will be working with Mereside School and the local community to ensure that the tree and everything it signifies will flourish."

Shropshire Council would like to thank the Town Council as landowner for giving swift permission for the tree to be planted, and for the help given in the preparation of the

ground and future maintenance along with the primary school. The hope is that it will be possible to plant a cherry tree in another part of the county next year, following the example of Southend Borough Council, where a tree is planted each year on Holocaust Memorial Day.

The tree planting ceremony was one of a number of Holocaust Memorial Day activities in Shropshire, which also included events in Church Stretton and a national touring exhibition entitled "Righteous Muslims". The exhibition arrived in Shropshire in January for a six week tour that has so far included schools, colleges and churches. It will be at the Shrewsbury United Reform Church on the 10th February, finishing with a week long residency at the Redwoods Centre in Shrewsbury from 9th to 13th February 2015.

Notes to editor

The children, shown on the picture with Councillor Owen, are (l to r):

Teegan Gemmell; Will Rigby; Joe Loughnane; Kate Mitchell.