

ANNA LEHNKERING



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Researching her family history, Sigrid Falkenstein found her aunt's name – Anna Lehnkering – on a list of 30,000 people who were murdered by the Nazis as part of the *Aktion T4* project in the year 1940/1941. This spurred Sigrid on to find out more both about her Aunt and *Aktion T4*, the Nazi programme for sterilising and murdering those with mental or physical disabilities.



'Who, if not us, would be the most appropriate to give you back your identity and name, and therefore some of your dignity?'

Sigrid used family photographs and memories alongside archives to reconstruct Anna's life story to ensure that she lives on even after she was murdered as a victim of Nazi Persecution.

Anna was born in the Ruhr area of Germany on 2 August 1915 to Heinrich Friedrich Hermann Lehnkering and his wife Anna Johanna Helene. Anna had three brothers and the family ran a pub.

When she was four years old Anna became very restless, had night time tremors and some nervous episodes. Family life took a turn for the worse. Life after World War One was hard, and Anna's father turned to drink to drown his sorrows. He died in December 1921 of cirrhosis of the liver. In 1922 Anna's mother married again and shortly afterwards she gave birth to a baby boy.

Anna did not have an easy time at school and she often had to repeat the school year. One doctor described her as good natured and obedient. At the end of February 1929, a school report noted that Anna's attendance was inconsistent because of illness and as a result her knowledge was inadequate. Anna loved playing with children and wanted to help in a nursery when she was older. She was a big help to her mother, cleaning, making the beds, and running errands. Anna was religious and enjoyed going to church, particularly as she met with other disabled girls, with whom she felt very comfortable.

In 1931, two years after her schooling had ended, Anna went to a children's institute for mentally disabled children. When Sigrid was researching more about Anna's ill health, she discovered that there had been family rumours that her father's dependence on alcohol was a possible cause of Anna's nervousness. Sigrid wondered whether Anna herself was aware of this and how it might have affected her relationship with her father. Sigrid's father also recalled that Anna was dropped by a neighbour when she was a baby and that may have contributed to her illness. Anna's disability was not identified in any of the files that Sigrid found but for Sigrid, the cause of Anna's illness was not important; she was more concerned with finding out about Anna's life and why her family had kept silent about Anna.

In December 1934, aged 19, Anna was called before a court to determine if she should be sterilised. Her mother accompanied her and the court decided that Anna should be sterilised. Sigrid believes that Anna did not know what was going to happen to her; there is a photo of Anna standing in front of the hospital where she was forcibly sterilised, and she is smiling.

One and a half years after being sterilised, Anna was admitted to hospital suffering from kidney disease. The doctor persuaded Anna's mother that she needed to be institutionalised as they would be able to offer the care that Anna needed. In December 1936 Anna was taken to a so-called healing and care home. Anna underwent further diagnoses and tests of her intelligence, with mathematical questions as well as general knowledge. Despite not being able to build a picture of day to day life in the home, Sigrid's research demonstrated that those in the care home were mistreated and often starved.

While researching, Sigrid was informed that Anna died on 23 April 1940; not only was this the incorrect date, but the word 'died' belittles the fact that Anna was murdered. Anna was 24 years old when she was transported, along with 300 women and 157 men to Grafeneck 'Euthanasia' Centre, in southern Germany. It is estimated that 10,654 mentally and physically disabled people were murdered in gas chambers at Grafeneck in 1940. Grafeneck was one of six centres, and it is estimated that at least 250,000 disabled people were murdered under the Nazi regime.



Anna's mother received a letter to say that Anna died of peritonitis – an inflammation of the tissue lining the stomach – on 23 April. Sigrid's research led her to believe that Anna was murdered on the day she arrived in Grafeneck, 7 March. Sigrid hoped Anna did not suspect what was going to happen to her, and therefore her last hours were not full of fear and panic.

Sigrid compiled her research into a series of letters to Anna, restoring the identity that the Nazis tried to take from her. These letters form a book about Anna, integrating her life story into a wider historical context, creating an exemplary family history. This book, together with Sigrid's website and a *Stolperstein*, memorial stone, ensures that Anna is not forgotten, and that she still lives on today.



This resource has been produced with support and help from Sigrid Falkenstein for which we are very grateful.

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Find out more...

About Anna: sigrid-falkenstein.de

Aktion T4: hmd.org.uk/t4

Nazi treatment of disabled people: hmd.org.uk/disabledpeople

hmd.org.uk
enquiries@hmd.org.uk
020 7785 7029

 @hmd_uk
 hmd.uk
 @holocaustmemorialdaytrust

Learning lessons from the past to create a safer, better future

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Wrth ymchwilio i hanes ei theulu, daeth Sigrid Falkenstein ar draws enw ei modryb – Anna Lehnkering – ymhlith rhestr o 30,000 o bobl a lofruddiwyd gan y Natsïaid fel rhan o brosiect *Aktion T4* ym 1940/1941. Cafodd Sigrid ei sbarduno i ddysgu mwy am ei modryb ac *Aktion T4*, rhaglen y Natsïaid i sterileiddio a lofruddio pobl ag anableddau meddyliol neu gorfforol.



'Pwy, os nad y ni, fyddai fwyaf priodol i roi'ch enw a'ch hunaniaeth yn ôl i chi, a thrwy hynny, rhywfaint o'ch urddas hefyd?'

Defnyddiodd Sigrid ffotograffau ac atgofion y teulu i ail-greu bywyd Anna er mwyn cadw'r cof amdani'n fyw, hyd yn oed wedi iddi gael ei lladd dan erledigaeth y Natsïaid.

Ganed Anna yn rhanbarth Ruhr yr Almaen ar 2 Awst 1915 i Heinrich Friedrich Hermann Lehnkering a'i wraig Anna Johanna Helene. Roedd gan Anna dri brawd, ac roedd y teulu'n cadw tafarn.

Pan oedd hi'n bedair oed, dechreuodd Anna ymddwyn yn aflonydd, gan ddiodef cryndodau nos ac ambell bwl nerfus ac anniddig. Dirywiodd bywyd y teulu'n raddol bach. Roedd bywyd wedi'r Rhyfel Byd Cyntaf yn galed, a throdd tad Anna at y botel i foddï gofidiau. Bu farw o sirosis yr iau ym mis Rhagfyr 1921. Ym 1922, priododd mam Anna eto, a ganed bachgen arall iddi'n fuan wedyn.

Doedd bywyd ysgol ddim yn hawdd iawn i Anna, a bu'n rhaid iddi ail-wneud ei blwyddyn ysgol. Fe'i disgrifiwyd gan un meddyg fel merch annwyl ac ufudd. Ddiwedd Chwefror 1929, nododd adroddiad ysgol fod lefelau presenoldeb Anna yn anghyson oherwydd ei salwch, ac felly bod ei gwybodaeth yn annigonol. Roedd Anna wrth ei bodd yn chwarae gyda phlant, ac roedd eisïau helpu mewn meithrinfa pan fyddai'n hŷn. Roedd hi'n gaffaeliad mawr i'w mam, yn helpu i lanhau, gwneud y gwelyau a nôl negeseuon. Roedd Anna yn grefyddol ac yn mwynhau mynd i'r eglwys, yn enwedig gan ei bod yn cwrdd â merched anabl eraill yno, ac yn teimlo'n gyfforddus iawn yn eu cwmni.

Ym 1931, ddwy flynedd ar ôl iddi orffen ysgol, aeth Anna i sefydliad plant ag anableddau meddyliol. Wrth i Sigrid ymchwilio'n ddyfnach i salwch Anna, daeth sïon teuluol i'r fei mai dibyniaeth ei thad ar alcohol oedd wedi achosi nerfusrwydd Anna. Meddyliodd Sigrid wedyn a oedd Anna ei hun yn ymwybodol o hyn, ac a allai fod wedi effeithio ar ei pherthynas â'i thad. Roedd tad Sigrid hefyd yn cofio i gymydog ollwng Anna pan oedd hi'n fabi, ac y gallai hynny fod wedi cyfrannu at ei salwch. Doedd dim cyfeiriad at anabledd Anna yn unrhyw un o'r ffeiliau welodd Sigrid, ond nid achos salwch Anna oedd yn bwysig i Sigrid; yn hytrach, roedd ganddi fwy o ddiddordeb mewn dysgu mwy am fywyd Anna a pham i'r teulu gadw mor dawel amdani.

Ym mis Rhagfyr 1934, pan oedd Anna'n 19 oed, cafodd ei galw i'r llys er mwyn penderfynu a ddylai gael ei sterileiddio. Gyda'i mam yn gwmni iddi, barnodd y llys y dylai gael ei sterileiddio. Mae Sigrid yn credu nad oedd gan Anna unrhyw syniad beth fyddai'n digwydd iddi; mae ganddi lun o Anna yn sefyll yn wên o glust i glust o flaen yr union ysbyty lle gafodd ei gorfodi i gael ei sterileiddio.

Flwyddyn a hanner ar ôl cael ei sterileiddio, aeth Anna i'r ysbyty yn dioddef o glefyd yr arenau. Llwyddodd y meddyg i ddarbwylllo'r fam fod angen i Anna gael gofal sefydliad gan y bydden nhw'n gallu'r darparu'r gofal angenrheidiol iddi. Ym mis Rhagfyr 1936, cafodd Anna ei chymryd i gartref gofal a gwella honedig. Cafodd ragor o ddiagnosis a phrofion deallusrwydd, gyda chwestiynau mathemateg yn ogystal â gwybodaeth gyffredinol. Er na allai greu darlun o fywyd bob dydd yn y cartref gofal hwn, mae ymchwil Sigrid yn dangos bod y clefion yn cael eu cam-drin a'u llwgu yn aml.

Wrth ymchwilio, gwelodd Sigrid mai 3 Ebrill 1940 oedd dyddiad marw Anna; nid yn unig mae'r dyddiad yn anghywir, ond mae'r gair 'marw' yn bychanu'r ffaith mai cael ei llofruddio a wnaeth. Roedd Anna'n 24 oed pan gafodd ei chludo, gyda 300 o fenywod a 157 o ddynion i ganolfan ewthanasia Grafeneck yn ne'r Almaen. Amcangyfrifir bod 10,654 o bobl ag anableddau meddyliol a chorfforol wedi'u lladd gan siambrau nwy Grafeneck ym 1940. Roedd Grafeneck yn un o chwe chanolfan o'r fath, ac amcangyfrifir bod 250,000 o bobl anabl wedi'u llofruddio dan y gyfundrefn Natsïaidd.



Derbyniodd mam Anna lythyr i ddweud bod ei merch wedi marw o beritonitis - llid ar feinwe a amwisgai'r stumog - ar 23 Ebrill. Mae gwaith ymchwil Sigrid yn awgrymu i Anna gael ei llofruddio ar y diwrnod y cyrhaeddodd Grafeneck, sef 7 Mawrth. Roedd Sigrid yn gobeithio i'r nefoedd nad oedd Anna yn amau beth oedd am ddigwydd iddi, ac nad oedd ei horiau olaf yn llawn arswyd a brow.

Cyflwynodd Sigrid ei hymchwil mewn cyfres o lythyron at Anna, yn adfer yr hunaniaeth y ceisiodd y Natsïaid ei dwyn oddi wrthi. Mae'r llythyron hyn yn creu llyfr am Anna, sy'n cyfuno hanes ei bywyd mewn cyd-destun hanesyddol ehangach, gan greu hanes teuluol gwerth chweil. Mae'r llyfr hwn, yn ogystal â gwefan Sigrid a *Stolperstein*, carreg goffa, yn sicrhau nad yw Anna yn angof, a bod ei hanes yn fyw hyd heddiw.



Lluniwyd yr adnodd hwn gyda chymorth a chefnogaeth Sigrid Falkenstein – diolch o galon iddi

Holl ffotograffau © Sigrid Falkenstein




Rhagor o
wybodaeth:

Ynglŷn â Anna: sigrid-falkenstein.de

Aktion T4: hmd.org.uk/t4

Sut oedd y Natsïaid yn trin pobl anabl: hmd.org.uk/disabledpeople

hmd.org.uk
enquiries@hmd.org.uk
020 7785 7029

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