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Graz Jewish Cemetery handed over after renovation

12 Aug 2022

On 12 July 2022, following the completion of seven years of renovation work, the Jewish cemetery in Graz was handed over to the local authority for continued upkeep. Between 2014 and 2022 the cemetery was comprehensively renovated with funds from the Fund for the Restitution of the Jewish Cemeteries in Austria amounting to around 1.1 million euros.



Ceremonial handover

Among those present at the ceremonial handover were: the Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Fund for the Restoration of the Jewish Cemeteries in Austria, the National Council President Wolfgang Sobotka, the President of the Jewish Community of Graz, Elie Rosen, the Secretary General of the Fund for the Restoration of the Jewish Cemeteries in Austria, Hannah Lessing, the President of the Styrian Parliament, Manuela Khom, representing the Governor of Styria, the Mayor of Graz, Elke Kahr, the Graz Municipal Councillor Peter Piffl-Percevic, Pastor Dr. Stefan Ulz of the Catholic Church Styria representing Bishop Krautwaschl, Imam Fikret Fazlic of the Islamic Cultural Centre Graz, Pastor Matthias Weigold of the Evangelical Church Graz and Inge-Margareta Brenner, representing the Austrian Buddhist Religious Society of Styria.

Restoration work

At the Jewish cemetery in Graz, the enclosure walls and gravestones, the ceremonial hall and the cemetery caretaker's house were restored in five sub-projects beginning in July 2014. These works were subsidised by the Fund for the Restoration of Jewish Cemeteries in Austria in the amount of around 1.1 million euros.

The exact positions of the gravestones were re-measured and recorded in a database. Furthermore, most of the historic avenue trees could be saved, so that the cemetery has regained its original appearance.

Moving history

The 14,046 m² Jewish cemetery at Wetzelsdorfer Straße 33 in Graz was built in 1864 and extended in 1901. Until the cemetery was opened, the deceased of the small but rapidly growing community had to be buried in the nearest Jewish cemetery in Güssing (then still in western Hungary). During the Nazi regime, the ceremonial hall, built in 1910, and a number of graves were destroyed. In the 1950s a temporary ceremonial hall was erected, and in 1990/91 a new one was built by the City of Graz and handed over to the Jewish community. The Jewish cemetery in Graz also contains three fragments of medieval Jewish gravestones, which were found during foundation work for the new local authority offices in Graz Castle in Hofgasse in the autumn of 1950, and which are kept in the ceremonial hall for conservation reasons.

The Jewish cemetery in Graz has around 1,500 graves. One of the personalities buried here is Hermann Öhler (1847–1918), co-founder of the well-known department stores' Kastner & Öhler.

Guided tours of the cemetery

For security reasons, the cemetery is not open to the public. Several times a year, the cemetery can be visited on guided tours or as part of the Jewish Community's educational programme.

Links

- [Details on the Restoration of the Graz Jewish Cemetery](#)
- [Graz Jewish Cemetery in FOGIS](#)
- [Jewish Community Graz](#)