



SAVING AND RENEWING SCHINDLER'S ARK



Löw-Bear & Schindler
Foundation







THE STORY OF SCHINDLER'S ARK

Schindler's Ark was where Jews on Schindler's List were saved instead of going to Auschwitz and certain death. In the central scene in the film by Spielberg, if you were on the list, Jews were sent to this Ark in the home region of Oskar and Emilie Schindler.

The buildings form the only concentration camp, which saved rather than exterminated Jews. Who were Oskar and Emilie Schindler, why did they do what they did to save the Jews, would we respond like them now?

The buildings of Schindler's Ark are in disrepair and danger of collapse. The Low-Beer family owned the factory before they had to flee from the Nazis in 1938. In 2019, after eighty years, the Low-Beers have reunited with locals to create the Foundation Arks to help save and rebuild Schindler's Ark for future school children and visitors. They are committed to save and make history together again.





Aims and Priorities

The foundation has two main aims:

1. *Save and develop a memorial to Schindler's Ark, Shoah and the Low-Beer factory for school children and visitors to experience the history and film where it occurred*
2. *Promote activities which benefit the people of Brnenec and the wider Moravian region and its promotion at the heart of Europe*

In addition, the Foundation will work

In an independent, open and apolitical manner reflecting the spirit and continuing contribution of the Low-Beer family to the region

This document presents initial plans and options for wider open and transparent consultation on how the buildings should be restored, used and supported.









- 1 Schindler's Ark
- 2 The European Building
- 3 Oskar and Emilie Schindler Building
- 4 Glass Rest Room
- 5 Events and Activities Space
- 6 Restaurant and Facilities Building







SCHINDLER'S ARK

The Low-Beer family has met with locals, museum and history experts from Austria and Germany, to suggest below how the three main components may be rebuilt progressively. The spirit of Arks is for the buildings to become a home for the collections of Oskar and Emilie Schindler, the film Schindler's List and the direct interviews of the Schindler Jews, and European history told through the factory and Low-Beer archives.

The Low-Beer family was surprised how little the Schindlers's Ark buildings had changed in eighty years. In 1938, their grandfather had stood on the bridge over the stream defending the factory against the Nazis. He had held the Nazis up for three days, a Jew defending his home country.

In 2019, they found the original buildings and features of Schindler's Ark are still standing. Yet, they are now empty and in danger of disappearing, wiping out a key part of our history.





1. **Schindler's Ark** – is at the centre, intact and with its original features. It is spacious with three floors, a factory floor, a huge cinematic turbine room, and a floor where the Schindler Jews slept (chosen for safety on top of their work so they did not need to pass dangerous SS soldiers). The building is:

To show the film and associated documentaries in the original setting to school children and tourists

Engage personally and through multimedia with the interviews of the Schindler Jews (kept by Spielberg's Shoah Foundation formed with the profits of the film)

Experience the European history of the 20th century through this working factory, and the stories of living here and of escape of the Low-Beer family

The lower floors could also be used for a neglected museum on Jewish history in Czechoslovakia, the theme of film and documentary films, and the upper floor for simple, good value, group accommodation





2. The European Building – next to Schindler's Ark at the entrance with its original gate, is the building that housed the German soldiers. Schindler had to fund them, while protecting the Jews from their danger. The most dangerous soldiers he got drunk one evening and got them signed up for the Russian front.

This building would engage with the German and Austrian history with Czechoslovakia, which in the 1920s and 1930s allowed this factory and region to be at the heart of Europe, and one of its wealthiest and a cultural high point of European modernism. It will show the unique partnership and what was lost with the subsequent history and difficult present issues.

3. Oskar and Emilie Schindler building – this is the intact working building of Oskar and Emilie Schindler a challenging partnership that saved over a thousand Jews and took on the Nazi extermination machine. They turned a concentration camp into a place to save Jews.

This building would have the function of housing the Oskar and Emilie Schindler exhibition and archives, in close cooperation and design with the heir to these archives. She has visited the buildings and is committed to shape them as a home or Ark for people to engage with these unique and original materials, videos, interviews and documents.





Additional facilities for saving and rebuilding over time:

4. Events and Activities Space – the cluster of buildings is completed with a huge and beautiful, open, factory floor. This site would be restored in its present form, as a large and flexible activities and events space.

It would allow the museum to be interactive with film, textile and other activities, for example of school children making small YouTube documentaries of interviews of their experience.

It would also allow the museum to engage further with the present and future, in seminars (on related issues of European identity, Czechoslovakia, industry, migration, Jewish history), and present day events or concerts.

Similarly the space would be a resource to the village for its activities, to integrate the factory and its history back into local and regional life.

5. Glass and Rest Room – behind Schindler's Ark is a large framed building, open to the beautiful, surrounding countryside, which will be used as a resting, reading and meditative space. It provides a more meditative space to absorb the events and personal encounters with history.

6. Restaurant and Facilities building – around the main cluster of buildings, is a building that will be used as a restaurant and facilities building, open to the museum and to the village as a resource.











REBUILDING THE ARK

As we walk through the ruins, we imagine a visit to the rebuilt Schindler's Ark. How would visitors and school children respond? How can we bring alive the story, the people, and the history, in the places and buildings where they occurred?

In 2020, we invited museum experts, historians, locals, Schindler's heirs and Low-Beers to walk through Schindler's Ark with us and imagine a rebuilt Ark. They suggested what an hour tour would look like.

More importantly we want your ideas on how to rebuild the Ark.





1. Walk of the Schindler Jews (15 minutes) – The first suggestion is how to link the train station on the main express line, which is 500m away. This is where the Schindler Jews arrived, the women from Auschwitz, the men more directly from Krakow.

We suggest a 500m walk from the station across the river to the original and beautiful gate to the concentration camp. The walk would be marked with the names of the Schindler Jews on plaques.

There would also be a welcome point with documentation, information on regional tourist sites at the station, where guided tours could commence, so visitors are welcomed off the express trains to Prague and Brno. There is also access directly to the Schindler's Ark by car or bus.

2. Schindler's Ark (60 minutes) – as the concentration camp gate opens, visitors would then see the beautiful, haunting and intimate cluster of buildings of the concentration camp.

Entrance into history (10 minutes) – visitors then enter the main Schindler's Ark building. The entrance and stairs will have a white, translucent onyx like surface with images of the film and events projected through it. Architectural components of the Tugendhat House in Brno will be used, built for the Low-Beers. This reflects the culture of collaboration between Germans, Czechs and Jews that was lost.









Seeing the film where the events happened (30 minutes) - visitor's will then walk through the original and evocative rooms where the Schindler Jews worked and lived.

One central space will be left in the form it is before it was reconstructed

People then enter the surprisingly huge and evocative turbine room, which is used as the central film and seminar room.

The huge hall will maintain its beautiful turbine and factory features covered in glass below the floor, with a large screen and film and seminar seating.

Visitors will watch 30 minutes excerpts of the key scenes in the film (Schindler car to Krakow, celebrating with Nazis, Jews coming to work in Krakow factory, ghetto clearing viewed by Schindler, Concentration camp, Schindler's List making, Main square Krakow, Train scene, come to Brnenec, when women come to Brnenec, End of War in Brnenec speech Oskar. Narration between scenes), watching Schindler's List in the original Schindler's Ark, together with an introduction and documentary material.





Meeting the Schindler Jews with multimedia (20 minutes) – we then want visitors to personally encounter the Schindler Jews, and Oskar and Emilie Schindler, in their words, using extensive interview archives, brought alive with multi media. Why did Schindler and his wife save the Jews? How do the Schindler Jews tell the story? What became of them after the Second World War? Your suggestions are welcomed.

The room to the side of the turbine room, will have a circuit of encounters with 6-8 of the Schindler Jews using multi media audio and visuals.

The centre of the room will have the same translucent white onyx like barrier, showing shadows and film of the events, and reflecting the Tugendhat House also linked to the Low-Beers

3. History through the Low-Beer factory (30 minutes) – having seen the film, and the intense, personal stories, visitors will then have a more relaxed walk chronologically through history. They will walk through 150 years of history as seen in this factory. The factory has witnessed many European events of the last 150 years, from the Jews leaving the ghettos, the First and Second World Wars, Communism, the Velvet Revolution and post Communism. The path will be illustrated with documentary videos and materials from Oskar and Emilie Schindler's life, personal Low-Beer stories of life in the 1930s and stories of escape (from the book *Arks*) and of returning eighty years later. There will be a theme of documentary films, some commissioned for the museum.

We have described just the core visit. Imagine what you would like to see if you visited a rebuilt Schindler's Ark. Tell us your views.





Arks will also link to local tourist activities for longer, additional day or overnight visits, and day trips by direct express train or car from Brno (45 minutes), Prague (2 hours) and Vienna (2.5 hours).

Links To Regional Tourism - The terminal building and documentation shop will ensure strong linkage to regional activities for people wishing to spend a longer period in the region, including to local tourism, Jewish tours to neighbouring Boskovice, and to Brno linking this site to the Tugendhat House also part of the Low-Beer history.

Local Nature trails and sports activities - nature trails, half hour through the Low-Beer life in the village, 45 minutes into the neighbouring countryside, will also provide contrasting activities for visitors wishing to spend a full day. There will also be links to a variety of sports and walking activities in the beautiful, surrounding countryside.

Basic, good value, group accommodation can be provided in the Schindler's Ark top floor where the Jews stayed. Progressively as the site is developed the original Low-Beer working factory house can provide seminar accommodation. It is in its original condition but needs securing and saving.







WHO WILL VISIT THE MUSEUM

Schindler's Ark is one of the two or three most recognized stories and sites of the Second World War. As a factory it was also built with excellent access at the heart of Europe. It will attract day tourists and school children from Brno, Prague, Austria and Germany. Similar sites attract several hundred thousand visitors per year.

The focus will be:

School children: half day visit for school classes from the Czech Republic, Vienna, Austria and Germany, with additional activities around making a short film, sports and nature trails. Some limited, good value, group, overnight facilities in the top floor of Schindler's Ark where the Schindler Jews stayed.

One hour core visit for tourists on the main Prague, Brno and Vienna routes, and tourists interested in Jewish sites in Europe. These can be extended with an additional hour of activities and to full day or overnight stays when linked to local and regional tourist activities.

Seminars and events: two hour or evening visits to situate present day issues in this context, for Jewish memorial, European, business and cultural retreats which reflect on the past, present and future.





WHAT ARE THE NEXT STEPS?

The Low-Beers and the Arks Foundation are committed to save and make history together again. They need your input and support.

1. Create Foundation 2019, to integrate the buildings into an open, apolitical foundation, for consultation and input.

2. Consultation, 2020 to 2021. Produce plan with consultations in Brno, Prague, Brnenec on the plans for ideas and inputs.

3. Saving the Ark, 2021 to 2023

a. Securing the site – preventing it falling down, secure building roofs, basic wood and metal materials, cameras and security

b. Preparation of the site – architectural support, and environmental cleaning of the site given its recent use as a working textile factory

4. Rebuilding the Ark: 2023 to 2025

a. Initial Building – open the Schindler story and the Ark of the initial building to show the film, encounter the Schindler Jews.

b. Progressive development of the site – Modular development of the site adapted to funders as a home or ark for their activities. This includes the Schindler archives, the German or Austrian building, the local activity and seminar space.









HOW YOU CAN SUPPORT

There are three ways you can support at this stage

1. Feedback and consultation on the site: provide your feedback comments, links and ideas on the project to arksfoundation.net

2. Support and funding: support to save and rebuild the Ark

***Saving the Ark:** the initial goal is 200,000 euros to secure the basic building, architecturally and to ensure security for the site. There will then be the environmental cleaning and preparation of the full site in addition.*

***Rebuilding the ark.** If you can help with any connections to key partners who could see this as their home including:*

***Spielberg and Shoah Foundation
Austrian and German museums and government
European Funding
Czech and regional
Interested parties with testaments and materials,***

3. Become a Friend of Schindler's Ark, to get updates and information register with us and send us an email at contact@arksfoundation.net











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Help us save and rebuild The Ark

