

Albert Gustave Bedane 1893-1980 *'Righteous Among the Nations'*

In January 2000 Albert Gustave Bedane was recognised as 'Righteous Among the Nations', Israel's highest Holocaust honour. At great risk to his own life Albert Bedane hid a woman of Jewish origin at his home in Jersey from 1943 until the final months of the Occupation.

Born in France in 1893, Albert Bedane and his parents moved to Jersey the following year. He served in the Hampshire Regiment during the First World War and when he left the army in 1920 he joined the medical staff of the Royal Jersey Militia. In the 1920s he settled down into civilian life, married and in 1925 his daughter, Valerie, was born. He had his own clinic in Roseville Street, St Helier where he worked as a Chartered Masseur - a physiotherapist.

As the German army was approaching the islands Mrs Bedane and her daughter were evacuated to England but Albert remained behind in Roseville Street.

It was while he was living alone in his home in Roseville Street that he began sheltering people hiding from the German authorities - escaped prisoners, French PoWs, Russian slave workers, and a Jewish woman, Mrs Mary Richardson. He was able to feed them by taking food rather than money from his farmer patients. When he was later asked why he risked his life to help so many people his answer was quite simple . . . I thought that if I was going to be killed I would rather be killed for a sheep than a lamb . . .

Mrs Mary Erica Richardson was married to an English sea captain and lived in Dicq Road, St Helier. She did not register when the first anti-Jewish Order of October 1940 came into effect although in February 1941 along with every islander over the age of 14 she had to register in order to get an identity card. She tried to hide her real identity by saying that she was born in British Guiana and that her maiden name had been Algernon. In reality she was born in Holland and was named Erica Olvenich. In late June 1943 she was interviewed by the Feldkommandantur in College House at Victoria College. She was told that she would be sent to a very nice, special camp where she would be well looked after and she allowed to return home to collect her clothing and valuables. While she was there she managed to escape from her guards and made her way to Roseville Street where Albert Bedane hid her in a secret cellar in his clinic. She lived here in hiding for the next few months until she was moved into a room on the upper floor. Whenever the clinic was searched Mrs Richardson hid in the secret cellar. In the final weeks of the Occupation she came out of hiding to look after her husband who was by then an invalid.

An unassuming man, Albert Bedane's heroism went unmarked for a long time. In 1965 he was presented with a gold watch by the Russian government in recognition of his efforts in saving Russian forced workers. Bedane died in Jersey in 1980