

Vraic on the Rock

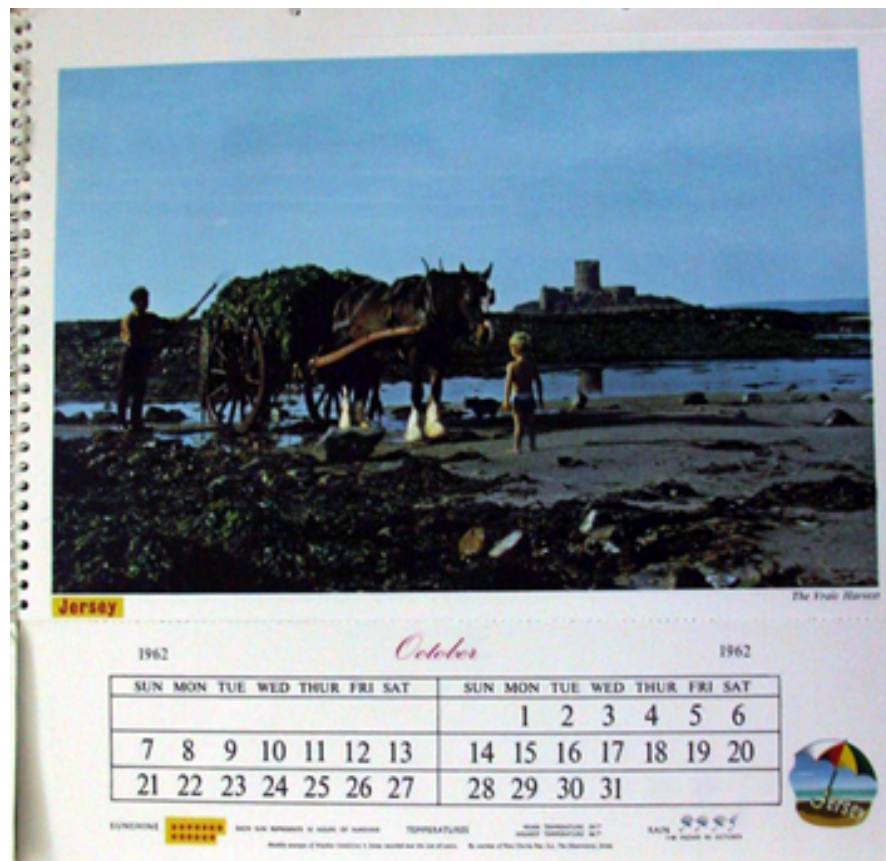
Vraic (pronounced 'rack') is the Jersey-French name for seaweed which is collected from the beaches and used to fertilise the land. It could be spread onto the soil whilst it was fresh and then ploughed in, or it could be burnt and the ashes used instead. Traditionally it was the main form of fertilizer used in Jersey. As it was so important to the island, there were various laws and regulations concerning the vraic harvest, which were enforced by Parish officials. Some people were even able to earn a living by collecting vraic and selling it to others. However, the harvesting of vraic died out around the 1960s as farmers began using more convenient chemical fertilizer.

The Jersey Archive also holds a series of sound recordings in which Jersey residents are interviewed about their experiences of gathering and using vraic (reference number R/03/B).

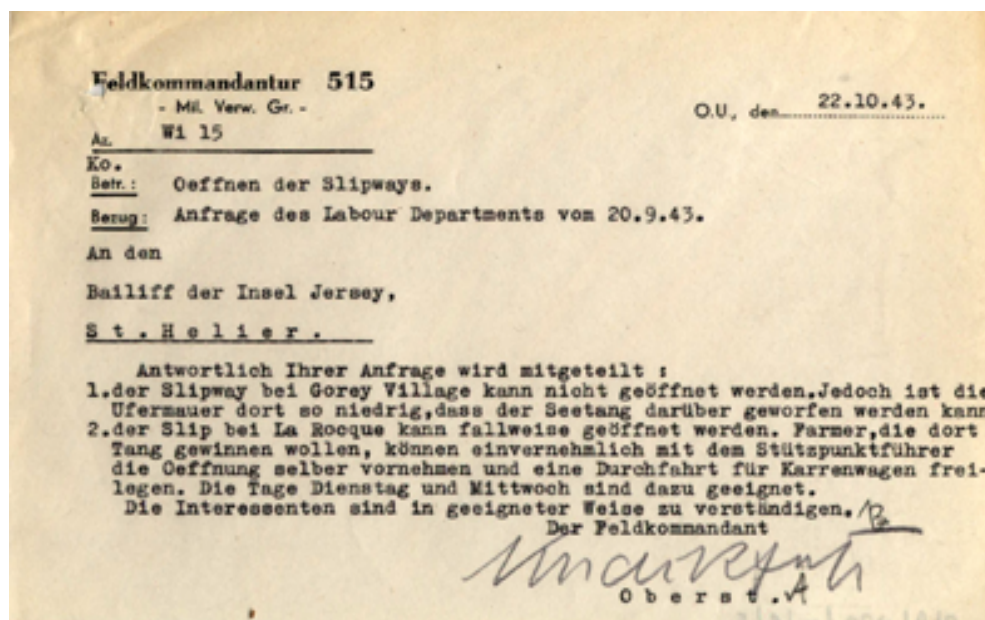
This postcard shows vraic being harvested. The location is not known for certain but the tower shown could be le Hocq. The picture was taken sometime between 1910 and 1920. The original image was a black and white photo which was coloured in by hand and then printed as a postcard. There were many different methods of reproducing photographic images like this, including methods known as Collotype and Photogravure. Archive reference L/F/08/G4/4



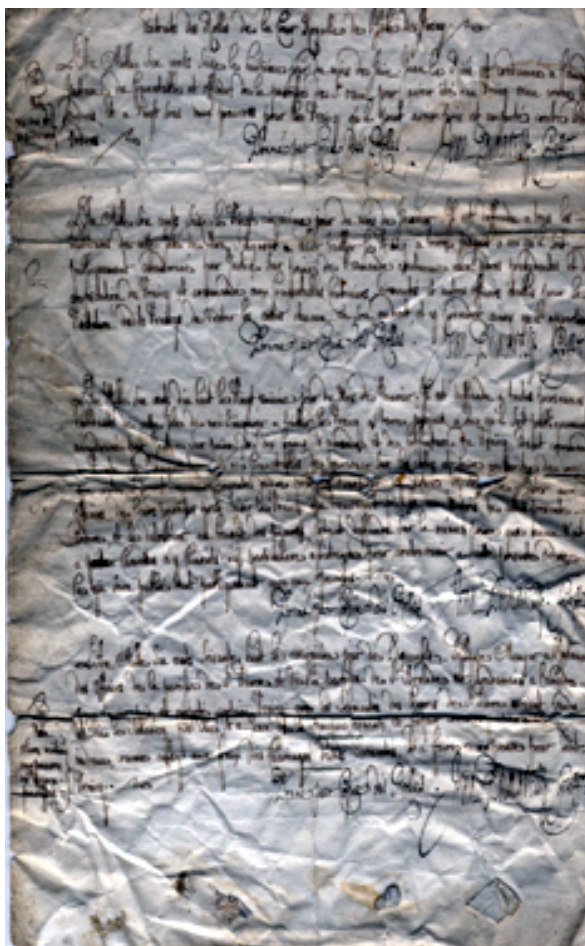
In the 1960s, farmers started using artificial fertilizers rather than vraic to grow their crops. However, collecting vraic remained a Jersey tradition, as this image from a 1962 Calendar produced by Jersey Tourism shows. Archive Reference D/AS/F/12



During the German Occupation, Jersey farmers changed from making produce for export to feeding the Jersey's own population. However, collecting vraic was difficult because the access to the beaches was restricted. The letter shown on the next page is from the German authorities to the bailiff. It gives permission for farmers to collect vraic from the beaches at Gorey and La Rocque. Archive reference B/A/W32/4/8.



The document pictured right is from the 1600s. It lists a number of cases in the Royal Court involving regulations concerning the cutting of vraic. The inhabitants of Jersey were forbidden to cut vraic and the Vicomte and Constables were ordered to patrol the beaches. People caught disobeying this ruling were fined and the vraic that they had cut was confiscated. Archive reference L/C/47/A/69a.





In order to learn more about Vraicing in Jersey, visit or contact Jersey Archive:

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Jersey Archive is open to the public on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays only (late night last Thursday in month and third Saturday of month). Further details are available from our website.

<http://www.jerseyheritage.org/>