

German Occupation, 1940 - 1945

The purpose of the Jersey Archive is to identify, select, collect, manage, preserve and provide access to the Island's records on behalf of the whole community, promoting Jersey's culture, heritage and sense of place, both within its shores and beyond.

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Opening Hours: 9am to 1pm & 2pm to 5pm, Tuesday to Thursday. Open 9am to 1pm on the third Saturday of the month. To book an appointment please phone or email.

The information in this leaflet is accurate as of October 2020. Please be aware that the Jersey Archive receives new collections on a regular basis and ask staff if you have any queries.

General Information

The Occupation of Jersey by German Forces during the Second World War commenced on the 1 July 1940. The Occupation was to last for nearly five years and eventually ended on the 9 May 1945 – Liberation Day. The Occupation remains one of the most fascinating periods in Jersey's recent history.

The United Kingdom government provided ships to evacuate women, children and men who wished to join the forces when it seemed that Occupation was inevitable. Though just over 23,000 registered to evacuate, the total number of Jersey residents who actually evacuated was under 10,000.

The Islands were originally intended to support troops invading England. However, approximately eight months after they had been captured, the Islands, instead of being a base for operations into the south of England, became territories that needed to be defended. They were heavily fortified using Organisation Todt construction workers from various parts of Europe including Russia and Spain. There was also a high concentration of German Forces present in the Islands; research has indicated that there was one German soldier to every three members of the civil population.

A number of United Kingdom and some Jersey born residents of the Channel Islands were deported to internment camps at Biberach, Wurzach, Dorsten and Laufen in Germany. Hitler originally conceived this measure as a reprisal for the internment of German citizens in Iran working against the Allies. The Führer also considered United Kingdom-born residents as a security threat.

After the D-Day landings in June 1944, life became very hard for Channel Islanders. The Allied advance into Europe ended supplies to the Islands from mainland France. The International Red Cross ship the SS Vega sailed for Jersey from Guernsey on the 29 December 1944, bringing much needed food and supplies to the Island.

In 2011 the Jersey Occupation Collections held at Jersey Archive were inscribed on the UNESCO UK Memory of the World Register. The register includes records which embody pivotal moments in the history of their communities and Great Britain as a whole.

Access

Each collection held by Jersey Archive has a unique reference code. These references have been included in the following information after the title. Should you wish to find out more about a certain collection go to Archives and Collections Online (ACO) at www.jerseyheritage.org and under the advanced search enter the reference given, e.g. B/A/W under the Reference number search option.

Sources held by the Jersey Archive

Records of HM Lieutenant Governor of Jersey, A
The official records of the Lieutenant Governors of Jersey hold relatively few references to the actual Occupation period. Major General J M R Harrison, the Lieutenant Governor at the outbreak of the Second World War, was ordered to demilitarise and leave Jersey in June 1940. The Major General Harrison Collection, L/C/55, contains records relating to the demilitarisation and evacuation of civilians from Jersey in this period. The official records, A/F, mainly relate to Operation Nestegg - the operation to retake the Channel Islands and the aftermath of occupation.

Bailiff's Chambers Occupation and Liberation files, B/A/W & B/A/L

The Bailiff of Jersey, Sir Alexander Coutanche held a key position within the local government of Jersey during the Occupation. The Bailiff's files record in detail the administration of the Island during this period and the relationship between the local authorities and the German civil authorities. The Bailiff was the head of the Superior Council, which was established on the 24 June 1940 and acted as a buffer between the occupying army and the civil population.

The Superior Council consisted of the Presidents of each of the States of Jersey Departments and the Crown Officers. The collection contains over 2,500 separate items and covers areas such as; imports and exports, licensing, entertainment, deportees, departmental orders and correspondence, requisitioning, the Red Cross, police and prosecutions, rationing and war graves.

The Liberation files also contain volumes of people applying to return to the Island at the end of Occupation (B/A/L42). These have all been scanned and can be purchased on ACO or can be viewed if you are a subscriber.

Immigration and Nationality - Registration Cards, D/S/A

The entire civil population of Jersey was required to register under the Registration and Identification of Person (Jersey) Order, 1940. The official set contains over 31,000 registration cards. Each registration card contains personal details, such as name, address, date of birth and a photograph. Any children under the age of 14 are recorded on the back of their father's card. The registration cards have been catalogued and are available through the Jersey Archive database via a name search. They have also all been scanned and copies of the registration card and registration form can be purchased on ACO or can be viewed if you are a subscriber.

The Law Officers' Department, D/Z

The Law Officers' Department files contain a number of records relating to the Occupation of Jersey. These files are included in the main filing sequence D/Z/H5 and relate to a wide variety of subjects, including: Jewish businesses, rationing, German war graves, German orders and minutes of the States of Jersey. This collection also contains a number of files in German that are assumed to have belonged to the Feldcommandant. The files relate to: entertainment, deportations, fuel rationing, Organisation Todt and requisitioning.

The Law Officers' Department collection also contains the sentences and prosecutions of Islanders during the Occupation (D/Z/H6). These give details of the crime committed and the sentence that followed. These have been scanned and can be purchased on ACO or can be viewed if you are a subscriber.

Personal Collections

The Jersey Archive holds a number of personal collections of documents that relate to the Occupation period. These include many letters and Red Cross messages sent by

anxious relatives to people in Jersey. To access these smaller collections simply click on the term German Occupation under Other Collections on ACO. Please be aware that a significant number of items will be listed.

Joan Coles Collection, L/C/01

Joan Coles was deported to Wurzach internment camp on 18 September 1942. This collection of papers includes her diary detailing every day life in Wurzach and drawings of the camp.

Brigadier Snow Papers, L/C/14

These papers record the detailed plans for the Liberation of the Channel Islands that began as Operation Rankin at the end of 1943 and ended as Operation Nestegg in May 1945. Brigadier Alfred Snow was in charge of the whole of Operation Nestegg and the military Task Force 135. The administrative tasks were undertaken by No. 20 Civil Affairs Unit.

Patrick Owen Smith's Escape Account, L/C/16

A journal written by Patrick Owen Smith on his escape from the Island in October 1944.

Joe Mière Collection, L/C/24

Joe Mière has completed a significant amount of research into various aspects of the Occupation of Jersey. This collection includes lists of those who were deported and also original propaganda news sheets printed during the Occupation.

David Maindonald Research Collection, L/C/48

This collection of research into German fortifications in the Channel Islands includes photographs and text relating to many of the bunkers and fortifications in Jersey.

A S H Dickinson Collection, L/C/177

This collection of Occupation papers includes trench art created by A S H Dickinson in Biberach Internment Camp after having been deported from the Channel Islands. Included are some fascinating caricatures of camp personalities and sketches of the camp.

Lieutenant Charles Arthur Sanders Liberation Collection, L/C/219

This collections consists of papers and photographs of Lieutenant Charles Arthur Sanders, who was in charge of the first naval vessel that came in to St Helier Harbour after Liberation. Included are letters and an account recounting the euphoria of Liberation.

Liberation Album, L/F/51

Album of the liberation made by Major Frank H M Sargent (RAOC) of the 135 Field Ordnance Depot. This album contains a photographic and written account of the Liberation of Jersey and subsequent disposal and destruction of the German ammunition and artillery.

German Soldier's Christmas Letters, L/F/175

Copies of letters that were written by German soldiers and were 'liberated' by some islanders at Christmas 1941. The Feldpostamt had been set up at Falle's shop, 12 - 14, Beresford Street and this was where German soldiers posted their letters home. A group of young islanders decided to resist the occupying forces by stealing some of these letters and they were subsequently hidden throughout the rest of the Occupation and kept in private until being given to the Jersey Archive a few years ago. These letters give a fascinating insight into the views of the average German Soldier living in Jersey. The bundle contains nearly ninety letters from German Soldiers to friends and family sending Christmas greetings and describing the conditions in Jersey.

Channel Islands Occupation Society Collection, L/D/25

The Channel Islands Occupation Society (Jersey branch) was set up in 1971 with the intention of investigating the period of the German Occupation of the Channel Islands and to maintain and preserve sites of special interest such as the German fortifications in the Island. Subsequently the Society has been placed in charge of the maintenance of a number of bunkers and has undertaken substantial research into the Occupation period in the Channel Islands.

The collection encompasses a wide range of different items including notes on research undertaken by the society into the Occupation, a diverse photographic archive, the recording of a great many speakers talking of many different facets of the Occupation, film recordings concerning the Occupation, maps and plans of the Island and different installations within the Island, a wide range of books on a variety of different subjects dealing with the Occupation and the Second World War, German magazines available to buy in the Channel Islands during the Occupation and a section dealing with the deportation of islanders to Germany and illustrations that were drawn in the internment camps as a consequence.

Items of interest include plans from 1978 for a proposed 'Bunkerbar' named Last Chance which would have had a lounge, bar and swimming pool within L'Etacquerel Bunker, a monopoly board owned by an internee,

Charles E Daly, and signed by fellow internees and many drawings by various internees, including Harold Sydney Hepburn, depicting life and the surroundings in the various internment camps. This collection is an important addition to the archive records concerning the period of the German Occupation and should be utilised by a keen Occupation historian.

Printed Sources

The Jersey Archive holds a number of books and printed sources concerning the Occupation, including:

Cruickshank, Charles, The German Occupation of the Channel Islands, London, 1975

Ginns, Michael, The Organisation Todt and the Fortress Engineers in the Channel Islands, (Channel Islands Occupation Society, Archive Book No. 8), Jersey, 1994

Ginns, Michael, Jersey Occupied: The German Armed Forces in Jersey, 1940 - 1945, Channel Island Publishing, Trowbridge, 2009

Harris, Roger E, Islanders Deported Part 1: The Complete History of those British Subjects who were Deported from the Channel Islands during the German Occupation of 1940 - 1945 and Imprisoned in Europe, Ilford, 1980

Lamerton, Mark, Liberated by Force 135: The Liberation of the Channel Islands, May 1945, ELSP, Trowbridge, 2000

Sanders, Paul, The Ultimate Sacrifice, Jersey Heritage Trust, 2004

Sanders, Paul, The British Channel Islands under the German Occupation, Jersey Heritage Trust, 2005

Sinel, Leslie, The German Occupation of Jersey: A Complete Diary of Events, June 1940 - June 1945, Jersey, 1984 (reprint)