

# Occupation Tapestry and the Jersey Archive

Many of the images used in the Occupation Tapestry are based upon actual documents held in the Jersey Archive. The Archive reference for the documents have been highlighted in red.

As the Archive has to look after its documents, original papers cannot be released for loan although copies can be requested

Questions worth considering when viewing the documents are:

- What does the document tell us about the occupation?
- What doesn't the document tell us, or what questions does it raise?
- What further research is needed?
- Is the document written from a particular viewpoint, and if so how might it differ from other viewpoints??

## The Outbreak of War

Asked by the States to clarify the position of the island Major General Percival left a States' sitting and went to talk to the war cabinet on the phone. It was then that he was told that it was the war cabinet's decision to demilitarise the island. Hearing this news he hastily wrote the details onto this envelope and went back into the sitting to announce that all British armed support was to be withdrawn from the island. [L/C/55/B/9](#)

This is a message from the King stating the position of things in the Channel Islands before the Germans had invaded. Owing to the position of the island close to France and away from the mainland it was deemed sensible to pull out all of the British troops as defending the islands was considered too big a risk. [A/F/4](#)

As the Germans took control of France and the Allies were forced to retreat and leave the country there was a problem with the transport of the troops away from soon to be occupied territory. On Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> June 1940 the Commodore of the St Helier Yacht Club was called in for a meeting between the Lieutenant Governor, the Bailiff and a Commander of the Royal Navy. He was asked to assist in evacuating the troops from France and as can be seen did so enthusiastically (two of these small boats *Fiona* and *Diana* are at the Maritime Museum). [A/D1/Y2](#)

As the Germans took control of France there was a rush of people who wanted to leave Jersey and find safety on the mainland. As July grew closer it became increasingly difficult to leave the islands as a result of a lack of transportation. There was a real confusion on the part of islanders of what the best action was to take, whether to stay at their homes or uproot to England. There were chaotic scenes on the harbour as people attempted to leave and had to say farewell to their loved ones not knowing if they would see them again. This is a ticket from Jersey to Guernsey and then on to Southampton that was due to be used on the 2<sup>nd</sup> July. The official evacuation of the Channel Islands actually ended on the 26<sup>th</sup> June so it the person that carried this ticket would not have been able to use it. [A/F/4](#)

## Occupation

A telegram sent on the 27<sup>th</sup> June 1940 detailing the situation in Jersey as the German aircraft bombed the island. It had not been made public that the island had been demilitarised so the Germans still saw Jersey as a potential threat that needed to be taken by force. [A/F/4](#)

Testimony given by Alexander Moncrieff Coutanche, the Bailiff, at the war crimes trials of Colonel Oberst Knackfuss and General Muller. In it he describes the bombing raid of the 28<sup>th</sup> June when the island had been fully demilitarised. The Germans were met with no resistance and yet still carried out an air raid on Jersey killing eleven people and injuring nine. [B/A/L33/1](#)

On the 1<sup>st</sup> July 1940 three notices demanding the unconditional surrender of Jersey were dropped on different parts of the Island. These notices were in German and were signed by General Richthofen, the Commander of the German Air Force in Normandy. This is a copy of one of these notices. [B/A/W30/1](#)

On the same day a States sitting was held discussing the pros and cons of surrender to the Germans. It was decided that the civilians should be ordered to remain calm and that no resistance should be shown as in the long run it would be more damaging. Without the support of the army Jersey did not have much chance to oppose the Germans and the way to save as many lives as possible was to surrender the island. [B/A/W30/3](#)

During the Occupation Organisation Todt forced workers were employed to complete work on defences for the Germans. As can be seen by this note the Germans were worried about workers escaping and integrating into Jersey society and Islanders were under threat of punishment if they did help the workers. [B/A/W50/48](#)

## Restrictions

During the occupation the Germans confiscated all radios in order to avoid 'propaganda' from the British media filtering through to the island population and alleged cases of 'espionage' taking place. Islanders, however, despite the harsh penalties involved, often held crystal radio sets. These papers relate to the confiscation of wireless sets in the Channel Islands. [B/A/W30/23](#)

Registration of the entire population of Jersey was required under the Registration and Identification of Persons (Jersey) Order, 1940. This registration process began in January 1941 when all people over the age of 14 were allotted a card with personal details recorded. Those under the age of 14 were registered on the back of their father's card. The official set contains approximately 33,000 cards. This particular card belongs to Albert Gustave Bedane. It was discovered after the occupation that he hid Erica Mary Richardson, a suspected Jewess who was facing deportation, and a number of others in his cellar for the duration of the occupation. [D/S/A/4/A817](#)

Some measures were taken against the Jews in Jersey. As can be seen in this instance regulations were introduced whereby Jewish people were not allowed to own shops. The problem of the definition of Jews also proved a problem in Jersey as the Germans began by contacting people on the basis that they had "Jewish sounding names". Here are the advertisements of shops for sale that had been owned by Jewish people but which they were forced to give up and to sell to 'Aryan' owners. [D/Z/H5/108](#)

If residents of Jersey wanted to publish a book or put on play they had to first apply to the Germans for permission to do so. The Germans had power of veto, which they sometimes used. Censorship was a major part of island life during the occupation and failure to go through the proper channels

could result in severe punishment. These papers show German approval given to the publication of the periodical of the Dramatic Section of the Green Room Club and the production of two one act plays. [B/A/W71/3](#)

## Transport

As a result of the shortage of fuel in the island it was necessary for the defence committee to approve its distribution through the use of coupons. These coupons were those of Harold Le Seelleur for his vehicle J526. [L/C/29/D/A/4](#)

Requisition of Major General JMA Harrison's Hillman Saloon car from Government House. As there was a lack of transport in the islands the Germans took to requisitioning a number of civilian vehicles for their purposes. [L/C/55/C/2](#)

There was a lack of fuel in Jersey and so the Germans rationed the consumption of petrol and banned the use of vehicles for pleasure trips. Contravening this law came with a heavy penalty as can be seen by the fine of 250.00 RM imposed on a lorry driver who was caught transporting a football team in St John. [B/A/W31/4/162](#)

In 1940 the Germans set up a military car service. This innovation was in order to save on fuel and carefully monitor the use of vehicles. At the time there was a real lack of fuel and facilities on the island and so restrictions were necessary to save vehicles for their most important use. [B/A/W31/4/6](#)

There were also restrictions on the hiring of horse drawn carriages. Horses became a useful way to replace motor vehicles and were utilised a great deal by the population. As a result of a shortage, however, a great deal of them had to be requisitioned by the Germans to help in agriculture. People who did not follow the Germans restrictions were liable to be fined. [B/A/W31/4/87](#)

## Everyday Needs

Report from the Jersey Teachers' Association outlining the conditions in school and the general bad state of health of the students. Shortages hit the young the hardest as when they needed to be built up they lacked the sustenance to maintain their growth. Equally they often grew out of their clothes and shoes quickly with none to replace them. [B/A/W31/3/14](#)

Letter from May Liff describing to friends in England conditions of life in Jersey during the occupation. These include the hardships suffered by the islanders because of the lack of food and the conditions imposed by the German troops. [L/C/23/1](#)

These documents show that the food situation in Jersey was rapidly worsening and that the Germans were going to be forced to appeal to England and the Red Cross in order to improve the conditions for the islanders. Food supplies were running out quickly and as a result the general health of the population was deteriorating. The doctors in the island believed that it was their duty to inform the Germans about the worsening situation in the island. [B/A/W88/1](#)

These three documents display the difficulty faced by islanders as they could rely less on food from France because of bombing raids. It is interesting that the first notice announces a reduction of rations of only English subjects, which suggests the reduction was to be used as punishment because of English raids on German ships. Similarly the announcement in the Evening Post seems to be purely propaganda and trying to divert the blame for the lack of food from the Germans themselves.

The Bailiff's answer in the third piece displays that he was of this opinion and because of this the reductions in rations were made fairer. [B/A/L33/1](#)

## School and Work

For reasons of defence the Germans placed mines at a number of different points in Jersey to deter invaders. As a result it was necessary to warn people who could be affected by these dangerous conditions. This is an example of such a notification to fishermen that the strip of coast from Grosnez to Plemont was to be mined. [B/A/W35/19](#)

As can be seen by this requisition of Farmer Roberts' bull by the Germans to be sent to the Kaiser Wilhelm Institute for Cattle-breeding research the occupying force were interested in the Jersey Cow as a breed. [B/A/W40/2/1](#)

Letter from the Field Commandant to the Bailiff of Jersey ordering that German be taught as a compulsory language in Jersey schools. [B/A/W31/3/3](#)

Letter from the Department of Labour describing the work schemes that were planned to be undertaken in order to use the manpower that would otherwise be unemployed. With the arrival of the Germans many of the formally profitable industries such as tourism were lost and had to be replaced by new initiatives. [B/A/W54/1](#)

## Social Life

The Germans requisitioned the top floor of the then Forum Cinema for use as an Officer's Club for the German troops. As can be seen by this requisitioning actions islanders had very little leeway to appeal and had to give up their spaces in order to accommodate the German Troops. [B/A/W40/3/1](#)

Curfews were imposed in Jersey throughout the occupation thus restricting the movement of people and possible entertainments that would normally occur later at night. For this reason it was necessary to issue curfew passes to a number of different people, including in this instance the honorary policeman Charles Edward Cabot. [D/Z/K11/2](#)

Dances were extremely popular during the occupation but as can be seen by this request to hold dances at West Park Pavilion and the Plaza Ball Room the Germans were relatively strict in the granting of licences. Eventually public dances were banned in 1943. [B/A/W3/3/2](#)

Every club or society in Jersey were asked to produce a set of rules and provide the German bureaucracy with a letter saying that they would abide by these rules and not take part in any unauthorised activity or meetings. Both the Freemasons and Oddfellows were totally banned with their property being taken over by the States and the Masonic regalia was sent to Berlin. This is an example of such a letter from the President of the Jersey Swimming Club, Charles Walter Duret Aubin. [B/A/W30/150/87](#)

## Government

Resistance during the occupation was not widespread as a result of the sheer numbers of German troops in the Channel Islands, a ratio of one soldier to every three islanders compared to one soldier to every hundred civilians in France. Some forms of resistance by the islanders did take place during the occupation, however, including in this instance an incident of a v sign propaganda, representing

the word 'victory' found near St Ouen's parish hall. This was investigated but a culprit was not found. [B/A/W50/39](#)

Letter from England clarifying the position of the Bailiff if the Island was demilitarised and the Lieutenant Governor withdrawn. As it happens this event did occur as the Lieutenant Governor left Jersey on 21<sup>st</sup> June and the Bailiff, Alexander Moncrieff Coutanche, took control of a great deal of the administration of the island. [A/F/4](#)

A great deal of responsibility for running the island during the occupation was placed upon the shoulders of parish officials. Local members of the honorary police, especially the constables, were relied upon to keep the island running as smoothly as possible. Unfortunately as can be seen by this the Germans did not necessarily take this into consideration when deporting people. As a result of having been in the militia the Constable of St Saviour, Leslie Thomas Anthoine, was deported to Germany. This put an even greater strain on the instruments of local government and local officials were forced to petition the Germans to try and get Anthoine released. [B/A/W49/3/1](#)

For the first time during the occupation as a result of a lack of English stamps a set of Jersey ones were issued. [B/A/W39/2](#)

## Sent Overseas

Roy Skingle's memories of the German Occupation of Jersey detailing his work at the Food Control Office, his deportation to Biberach and his return to the island during the occupation. The hardships of war are plain to see in the account but at the same time the spirit of the islanders constantly shines through. [L/C/42/1](#)

On the 17<sup>th</sup> September 1942 Mr and Mrs Frank Salmon of St Clement received this letter from the Feldkommandant without any other warning telling them that they were to be deported to a concentration camp the next day. [L/C/01/D/1](#)

As the Occupation reached a conclusion many Jersey residents who were evacuated to England wanted to return to the island. To do this they had to apply to come back, as it was impossible to allow them all to come back at once. As can be seen from this application personal details were recorded such as their name, address and reasons for wanting to return. [B/A/L42/2](#)

Patrick Owen Smith was a rear gunner in the RAF who was captured and held at the Holiday Camp. In October 1944 he attempted an escape with 5 others and this is his account of his successful voyage. [L/C/16/1](#)

Diary of Joan Coles. The diary gives details of daily activity in the internment camp at Wurzach. The sections copied here show the deportation to Biberach and then the elation of freedom as they are liberated and realise that the war is coming to a close. [L/C/01/A/1](#)

## By-passed

### The Red Cross

Here are newspaper notices showing the way the Red Cross parcels were distributed to the general population. [B/A/W49/14/18](#)

An example of a message sent from a person in England to someone in Jersey. These messages were not allowed to exceed 25 words and were passed on by the Red Cross [L/C/03/A/16/1](#)

A notice that appeared in the Evening Post on December 30<sup>th</sup> 1944 detailing the contents of both the Canadian and New Zealand Red Cross parcels. As can be seen the contents of each branch of the Red Cross' contribution differed. **D/Z/K16**

Letter and list made by the Medical Officer of Health putting forward the items that were most needed to be restocked by the Red Cross. During the occupation it was not only the food that was in short supply but also medical equipment and as a result not only the general health of the population deteriorated but also the medical profession lacked the equipment to deal with this. **B/A/W49/9**

A letter from the Controlling Committee of the States of Guernsey to the Bailiff discussing the idea of organising a Christmas package scheme with the International Red Cross. Morale could be a problem on the occupied islands so any ideas to improve this were greatly appreciated. **B/A/W49/9**

## **Liberation**

At the end of the occupation King George VI sent these heartfelt words to Jersey congratulating them on escaping the German oppression and wishing them luck for the future in rebuilding the island. **B/A/L8/1**

This aerial photograph was taken in August 1944 as a part of Operation Nestegg. Operation Nestegg was the name of the planned liberation of the Channel Islands and was under the control of Brigadier Alfred Snow. **L/C/14/B/8/8**

Lieutenant Colonel James Taylor was the Senior Officer of the 20, Civil Affairs Unit. It was his job to bridge the gap between the German military authorities, who offered their surrender to him, and handing back the Island to the States. He had to oversee the bringing of the Island back to normality and the distribution of still scarce food. These two letters are to his wife concerning the Liberation of the Island and the goings on of the military authorities. **L/C/72/A1 & 2**

Identity card of Kathleen Alice Davis issued in January 1941. As the occupation was over and the identity cards useless as a souvenir of the occasion she got soldiers from the liberating forces to sign her card. **L/F/05/C/1**

Copy of the terms of unconditional surrender signed by the German and British forces to confirm the handing back of the Channel Islands to Britain. **L/F/54/C/V/3**