

Memorial to the forced workers 1940-45

During the Second World War, the German troops occupying Jersey divided the Island into four areas – North, South, East and West – and each was defended by one battalion of 319 Infantry Division.

On 10th March 1942 work started on building a battalion command bunker into the western side of the Neolithic mound, and over the next two years a total of 70 trenches were dug in the grounds. This was the headquarters for the Abschnitt Ost (East sector), which stretched from Grève d’Azette, St Clement, to Archirondel, St Martin. Telephonic and radio communication linked it to all the strong points in the sector as well as with the main battle headquarters at St Peter. Archaeologically, the damage was extensive.

The bunker, which still retains the original stove, wooden flooring and ventilation equipment, provided sleeping and working accommodation for the battalion commander and his staff during times of general alert; otherwise they lived in the house known as Broadlands, situated just across the road from La Hougue Bie.

Today, the bunker is dedicated to the memory of the thousands of men and women who were brought to the Channel Islands as forced workers¹.

So few remain To give a face to the thousands

During the Second World War, the German war economy depended on the forced labour of millions of men, women and children

They were taken from all over occupied Europe . . .

The display in Room 1 places the Channel Islands in the context of the wider European catastrophe. As well as the various camps in the islands, there were forced labour camps and concentration camps scattered throughout occupied Europe, and the forced workers were shuttled between them.

. . . and forced to labour in appalling conditions . . .

¹ At the Nuremberg Tribunal forced labour was referred to as **slave labour**. It included prisoners of war, voluntary workers from Allied countries, conscripted workers from northern and western occupied areas and workers brutally gathered up from Eastern Europe. In Jersey the popular description of these people has been ‘slave workers’, and this is how they described themselves. However, it has been pointed out that although they had no choice in the type of work they did or its location, many of the different nationalities involved were paid and had a leave entitlement. These conditions did not apply to the Jews, the Russians and Spanish Republicans or the political prisoners. In March 1942 the German authorities established a standard diet for all civilian workers fed in camps, but once again Eastern Europeans and Jews from eastern Europe were exempted.

The suffering of the forced workers is highlighted in Room 2 by extracts from the testimony of the victims, the perpetrators and the onlookers cast in metal.

. . . for many of these workers the islands were just another stage in their journey towards death . . .

. . . many are known to have died in the islands.

The forced workers are the unseen aspect of the Occupation because there are so few photographs of them. Room 3 displays the few images we have.

Some have their final resting place marked, others lie unrecorded. We will never know how many were sent to their deaths elsewhere.

In all of the Channel Islands there are 610 known graves of forced workers of which only 503 are named. All of these names taken from the official German records and are recorded on a glass pillar in the centre of Room 4.

This bunker is now a memorial dedicated to the suffering and courage of those transported to the Channel Islands . . .

. . . and to the undeniable freedom and dignity of the human spirit.



On top of the mound covering the bunker is a sculpture of a powerful but disjointed human figure who is breaking free from the restraining influence of the earth. Its creator, Maurice Blik, is himself a survivor of the notorious concentration camp, Belsen.