

Researching the Occupation

The Jersey Archive collection includes thousands of official and personal occupation documents that can reveal the precise details of wartime life. Linda Romeril outlines how researchers can access this considerable database.

THE NINETEENTH AND twentieth centuries saw a huge increase in the amount of paperwork that was created and kept by both public bodies and private individuals. As a result, the Archive holds several thousand documents that give the historian a chance to recreate the events that occurred in Jersey during World War II.

Each collection of documents at the Archive has a unique reference code, which can be used to search for documents on our catalogue. The Jersey Archive computerised catalogue can be searched by name, place or subject and is available to view at the Jersey Archive or online at www.jerseyheritagetrust.org.

Potentially the most valuable research collection concerning nearly every aspect of the occupation is the archive of the Bailiff of Jersey, Sir Alexander Coutanche (Code: B/A/W). The Bailiff's original arrangement of this collection has been maintained so the structure of our catalogue reflects the original file titles used between 1939 and 1946.

The Crown's representative in Jersey, the Lieutenant Governor, was ordered to demilitarise and leave the Island at the end of June 1940. His departure resulted in the increased importance of the position of the Bailiff.

After the arrival of German troops on 1st July 1940, the Superior Council was established to act as a buffer between the occupying army and the civil population. The Bailiff was appointed head of the Council, which included the



Researchers in the Reading Room at the Jersey Archive.

presidents of each States department and the Crown Officers. The Bailiff's archive records in detail the administration of the island during the occupation and the relationship between the local authorities and the German civil authorities, Feldkommandantur 515.

The vital and varied role that the Bailiff played during the occupation means that his archive records are an incredibly rich and diverse

source. The number of files concerning Emergency Defence Regulations and Orders that passed through the States as well as Orders proposed by States departments that were then submitted to the German Kommandant reflect the role of the Bailiff as head of the States of Jersey. The Orders show the concerns of the different departments and the problems they faced during the occupation. For example, those proposed by the Department of Essential Commodities concern rationing and prices and those from the Department of Transport and Communications show increasing problems with the supply of fuel throughout the period.

The Bailiff's role as intermediary between the occupying forces and civil population can be seen in the significant amount of correspondence between Coutanche and the various Feld Kommandants in charge of the German civil authorities. The archive contains a number of files with requests for information from the Kommandant, from statistics on the food position in the Island to the water supply to the number of churches. The Archive also includes a significant amount of detail concerning requisitioning

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Verordnungsblatt des Militärbefehlshabers in Frankreich (VOBIF)

Bestellungen nehmen alle Kommandanturen des Militärbefehlshaber in Frankreich an. Einzelnummern sind nur bei diesen Dienststellen zu haben. Einzelpreis 0,10 RM.

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contenant les ordonnances du Militärbefehlshaber in Frankreich

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Nr. 63	Paris, den 1. Juni Paris, le 1 ^{er} juin	1942
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Inhalt :
Sommaire :

Seite :
Page :

Achte Verordnung über Maßnahmen gegen Juden. Vom 29. Mai 1942. — Huitième Ordonnance, du 29 mai 1942, concernant les mesures contre les juifs	383
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undertaken by the German authorities for items such as wireless sets, firearms, cars and mattresses, as well as buildings and land. There is also information concerning the burial of German troops on the Island and of allied troops who died on or near the Island.

The Bailiff's archive also contains some more personal information that reflects the conditions and lives of the people of Jersey. He established an Enquiry and News Office, which allowed Jersey people to send Red Cross messages from the island and receive some news of relatives in the UK. The registration of the population is also described in detail in the files.

The Bailiff's role as head of the Royal Court can be seen in a series of files that relate to police and prosecutions. The intervention of the Bailiff in sentences from the German Courts can be seen in a letter to the Kommandant concerning

Lucy Schwob (renowned artist Claude Cahun) and Susanne Malherbe, both of whom were sentenced to death for inciting the German troops to rebellion. As a result of the Bailiff's letter the sentence was commuted, though both women had to serve a prison sentence.

The files also contain detailed documents concerning the evacuation of British subjects from the Island in 1942. The Bailiff corresponded with the captains of the three main camps to which islanders were sent, Biberach, Laufen and Wurzach.

The Crown Officers, Solicitor General Cecil Harrison and the Attorney General, Charles Walter Duret Aubin, joined the Bailiff on the Superior Council. The Royal Courts in Jersey continued to function throughout the occupation and tried most civil and criminal

cases. Records from the Royal Court (Code: D/Y) are held at the Jersey Archive as part of the series deposited by the Judicial Greffe.

However for the majority of the occupation four other courts existed at which islanders could have appeared:

- The Feldkommandant's Court was mainly concerned with civil offences. For example, if a traffic offence was spotted by the Feldgendarmarie the offender would appear in this court.
- All three sections of the Wehrmacht - the Luftwaffe, the army and the navy - had their own courts.

A large number of the papers from these four courts were retained by the Law Officers' Department (Code:

D/Z) at the end of the occupation. These files are now stored at the Jersey Archive and detail various offences against the occupying authorities, from illegally listening to a wireless set to the spreading of British propaganda. The files are currently closed to members of the public and will be opened in the 2040s, a hundred years after their creation.

The Law Officers' Department also managed to save some of the files from the Feldkommandant's administration at the end of the occupation. The majority of these files are in German and detail requisitions and shortages of essential services.

The department's main filing series from the occupation period does contain some important files relating to the closure of Jewish undertakings and the German policy towards the Jewish people in

Comité International de la Croix - Rouge - Genève
Délégation pour le Proche-Orient
LE CAIRE

DEMANDEUR - ENQUIRER - RICHIEDENTE

Nom - Name - Cognome Tel. Ahier
 Prénom - Christian name - Nome David
 Rue - Street - Via
 Localité - Locality - Località 32 B.F.C.U.,
 Département - County - Provincia M.E.F.
 Pays - Country - Paese

Message à transmettre - Message - Testo del Messaggio
 (25 mots au maximum, nouvelles de caractère strictement personnel et familial) — not over 25 words, family news of strictly personal character — al massimo 25 parole di carattere strettamente personale e familiare).

Dear Mum, Hope all well. Bub and I fine.
 Reggie getting married soon. Hilda, Lotta
 and Marjorie corresponding regularly. Be
 together again soon. Love David

Date - Data 2.6.44.

DESTINATAIRE - ADDRESSEE - DESTINATARIO

Nom - Name - Cognome Ahier
 Prénom - Christian name - Nome Mrs. G.
 Rue - Street - Via 6 Brighton Road
 Localité - Locality - Località St. Helier
 Province - County - Provincia
 Pays - Country - Paese Jersey Channel Islands.

RÉPONSE AU VERSO REPLY OVERLEAF RISPOSTA AL VERSO
 Prière d'écrire très lisiblement. Please write very clearly. Scrivere molto chiaramente

16. AOÛT 1944

Red Cross message sent by David Ahier to his mother Mrs G Ahier. Ahier Family Collection L/C/129/A/2/1

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1066.2056.8.AUG.44.F/36//PR.V.6



Aerial reconnaissance photograph taken of St Helier in 1944. (Brigadier Snow papers re Operation Nestegg 1942 – 1945 Collection L/C/14/B/88)

the island. This subject is also covered in a series of files from the States Greffe Collection (Code: D/AP), which contains details of the registration of Jewish people and the enactment of orders against the Jews.

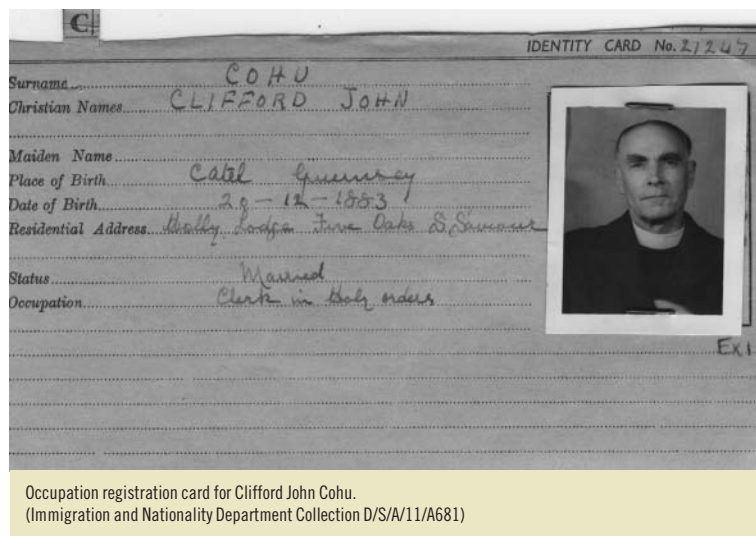
The registration of the population was carried out under the Registration and Identification of Persons (Jersey) Order, 1940. This required all

persons in Jersey over the age of 14 to register with the authorities. Children under 14 were listed on the back of their parents' cards. Each individual was required to carry an identification card and the authorities of each parish kept an official set of cards. The official set, which include a photograph of the individual as well as details of date of birth and address, are now kept at the Jersey Archive. They have all been indexed and catalogued in detail and can be searched by surname. The original arrangement of the cards in separate parishes has been maintained. Individuals who were not of British nationality were registered separately as aliens. The Immigration and Nationality Department (Code: D/S) were required to maintain lists of aliens throughout the occupation and were also ultimately given custody of the registration cards.

These public records from States departments, Crown Officers and the Bailiff can give the researcher a great deal of information relating to the administration of government and the interaction between the States and the German administration.

However, they do not capture the personal views of individuals who lived through the period in quite the same way as the private collections at the Jersey Archive.

Private collections are those owned by individuals, societies, businesses and charities with no States connection. These can contain a few letters or Red Cross messages

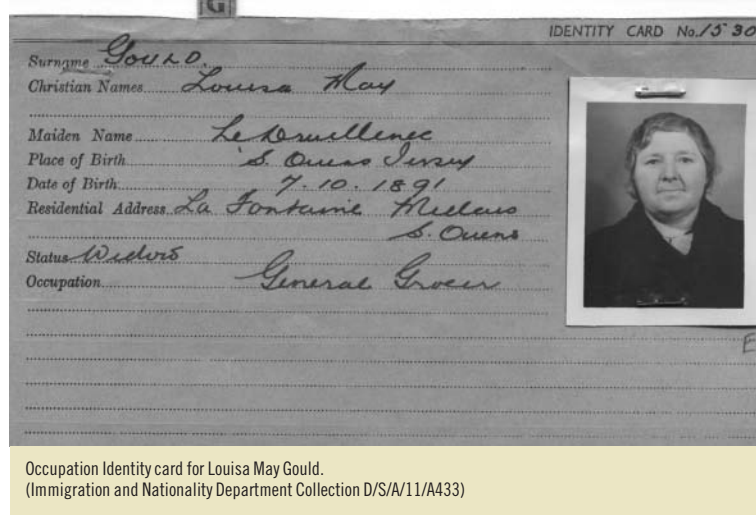


Occupation registration card for Clifford John Cohu. (Immigration and Nationality Department Collection D/S/A/11/A681)

Many individuals kept diaries during the occupation and a number of the original manuscripts have now made their way to the Jersey Archive. Their research value varies significantly depending on the individual's position and the detail in which they wrote. It is also immensely interesting to try to decide if the writer intended their diary to be read by others as a conscious history of the occupation or if the intention of the writer was that the diary was a private record of their experiences during the five years.

Two very different diaries can be used as excellent examples of the viewpoints that can be gained by looking at diaries as sources. The Occupation Diary of Ralph Mollet, Secretary to the Bailiff (Code: M/28), complements the Bailiff's files because it details Mollet's experiences as the Bailiff's right-hand man. Mollet's diary is incredibly detailed and contains newspaper cuttings and Red Cross messages. The diary of Izett Croad, who lived in Colomberie, St Helier, and was the unmarried daughter of an undertaker, gives a completely different view of life during the Occupation.

The British citizens who were deported to internment camps in 1942 often kept diaries, which can provide an understanding of everyday life in the internment camps. The Joan Coles collection (Code: L/C/01) contains a copy of her diary, which was published in the 1980s. The collection also contains paintings and photographs



Occupation Identity card for Louisa May Gould. (Immigration and Nationality Department Collection D/S/A/11/A433)

concerning the internment camp at Wurzach to which Joan was sent.

Contact between families and friends who were left in Jersey and those who evacuated to the UK, were deported or were fighting in the forces was infrequent and unreliable. The Archive holds a number of Red Cross messages, which comply with the rules that they should not exceed 25 words and be of personal and family news only.

Since the Liberation in 1945 questions have been asked about the occupation of the Channel Islands. This has led to a number of private research collections being compiled by individuals with an interest in one of more aspects of the occupation. The Archive holds copies of much of this research including the Joe Miere Collection (Code: L/C/24), which centres on political prisoners, escapees and deportees. The David Maindonald Collection (Code: L/C/48), which details the bunkers and fortifications found in the island.

Details of German fortifications can also be found in the archive of Brigadier Alfred Snow (Code: L/C/14), the man in charge of Force 135 and Operation Nestegg to re-take the Channel Islands, and Major Le Brocq (Code: L/C/34) one of the high-ranking local officers with the force. These collections include copies of the plans for Nestegg and a significant number of aerial photographs.

Major Frank Sargent (Code: L/F/51), another member of Force 135 compiled a Liberation album, which is now kept at the Archive. The album includes photographs and a written account of the clear-up operations that occurred after Liberation.

The Channel Islands Occupation Society (Jersey) collection (Code: L/D/25) contains a wealth of information, both primary and secondary, that has been gathered by members since the establishment of the society in 1971. It is responsible for eight German fortifications but the collection reflects members' interests in all aspects of the occupation.

The collection contains original material from the occupation period including German magazines, maps, photographs, newspapers and propaganda films and also a significant amount of research and secondary material including articles by members. The Society also has an

excellent sound archive of talks given to and by members. These tapes are one of the major oral history sources from the occupation.

The Jersey Sound Archive (Code: R/03) also contains some important material. The tapes were produced by the Channel Islands Educational Broadcasting Service and include interviews with Bailiff Alexander Coutanche, the Jersey Evening Post, Arthur Harrison, and many individuals with stories to tell.

Film footage of the occupation is relatively rare as the use of both cameras and cine cameras was forbidden. However, the Jersey Film Archive (Code: Q/05) does contain some footage shot in secret and more openly on the Liberation in 1945.

The Jersey Archive also includes some material that relates to the other Channel Islands. The Archive holds a copy of the six-volume Occupation diary of Reverend Ord, which details his experiences in Guernsey. Official records,

such as the Bailiff's files, contain correspondence with the Bailiff of Guernsey, while the Channel Islands Occupation Society (Jersey) Collection includes some information on camps in Alderney.

Archive material concerning the Occupation of the Channel Islands can also be found in the National Archives of England, France and Germany. The National Archive at Kew



Image of deportee standing behind a barbed wire fence. (Joan Coles Collection L/C/01/B/A/23)

contains a significant amount of information relating to the aftermath of the occupation, including complaints made against the administration, collaboration and the nationality of illegitimate children born during the period. Other records in the National Archive include interrogations of Jersey people who managed to escape during the occupation. Copies of some of these interrogations are available to view at the Archive. (Code: M/17)

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Jersey Archive, Clarence Road, St Helier, JE2 4JY is open from 9am to 5pm on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays. The reading room is closed between 1pm and 2pm. The Archive opens until 7pm on the last Thursday every month.