



Liberation 1945

At the beginning of May 1945, it was clear that the Allies were going to win the war against the Germans and on 6 May 1945 German officials met with Jersey's Bailiff, Alexander Coutanche, and the Attorney-General to discuss what to do in the Channel Islands.

However, the German Commander, Vice-Admiral Huffmeier refused to surrender saying that he had not had orders from 'his own government'. Despite this, Jersey began preparing for Liberation. Islanders had already been hearing reports of Hitler's death in Berlin on their hidden radios. By 7 May 1945, the German Army had surrendered in Europe but the Channel Islands were still under German command.

The Allied military powers had been busy making plans to liberate the Channel Islands from their Occupation. A British Military operation called 'Nestegg', had been set up to bring troops into the Islands and free the Islands from the German forces. These British Army units were called 'Force 135'.



Don't forget: there's even more information at www.jerseyheritage.org

8 May 1945

Force 135 received their orders to move to Portsmouth whilst their Commander, Brigadier AE Snow, and a small number of troops from the Force left for the Channel Islands aboard HMS' *Bulldog* and *Beagle*. The rest of the troops were to follow a few days later.

“Our dear Channel Islands are also to be freed today”

Islanders were getting ready for Liberation. The Allies' victory in Europe was front page on the JEP, and Islanders were informed that the British Prime Minister Winston Churchill would broadcast the Nation's first official announcement that afternoon at 3.00pm. Crowds began to gather at various locations to hear the announcement that would declare their liberation. Churchill announced the end to the war in Europe and the “unconditional surrender of all German land, sea and air forces in Europe”. When, amidst great cheers across the Island, he uttered the words, “our dear Channel Islands are also to be freed today”.

From a balcony overlooking the Royal Square, Bailiff Coutanche gave an impassioned address and proceeded with an emotional rendition of the British national anthem. Union Jack flags and other items forbidden under the Occupation, miraculously reappeared, adding to the celebrations. Parties continued throughout the rest of the day with several bonfire and firework displays taking place.



9 May 1945

At 7.15am on 9 May, on the quarter deck of HMS *Bulldog*, Second-in-Command for Guernsey General Siegfried Heine signed the 'Instrument of Surrender' in Guernsey. At midday, Bailiff Coutanche met with the German commanders from Jersey on HMS *Beagle* in St Aubin's Bay and the surrender for Jersey was signed. The Channel Islands were officially liberated.

The first troops from Force 135 were sent to secure control of St. Helier and officially announce the liberation. There were huge crowds that greeted the liberating forces. Lieutenant-Colonel WPA Robinson and his team arrived at the Pomme d'Or hotel and the German swastika flag was ordered down from the hotel balcony and, at 3.40pm the Union Jack was raised, officially signalling the end of the German Occupation. The celebrations continued and Islanders celebrated their freedom.



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