



# *One in a Thousand*

*My childhood memories of the  
German Occupation of Guernsey  
1940 - 1945*

*by Nancy May Allen (née Goubert)*





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German Occupation of Guernsey  
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# Introduction

The Monnaie Chapel has been holding weekly healing services since its dedication by the Bishop of Winchester on the anniversary of Liberation Day, 9th May, 1957. Twelve years earlier, young Nancy Goubert had been one of thousands of weary but ecstatic Islanders who lined the streets of St. Peter Port to cheer the liberating forces as they landed on the Esplanade. In today's relative affluence it is hard to imagine the level of deprivation which thirteen year-old Nancy, her family and the other twenty-four thousand remaining Islanders had to suffer throughout the German occupation. She was one of the thousand children who remained on the Island; hence the title of this booklet: 'One in a Thousand'.

Nancy and her husband Len have been regular members of the Chapel congregation for over thirty years and throughout that time many of us have marvelled at her dazzling flower arranging and wider decorating skills, kindled no doubt, from the resourcefulness which she had learned from her parents during her years of early childhood.

We at the Monnaie Chapel were delighted to have been given the opportunity to re-publish Nancy's own, very personal record of her childhood, which she has compiled from memory and from her father's wartime diaries. She has been kind enough to allow all proceeds from the sale of this booklet to be donated towards upkeep of the Chapel. Thank you, Nancy.

*Nicholas Drake, Chairman  
The Monnaie Fellowship Trust LBG.*



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My Childhood memories of the German Occupation  
of Guernsey 1940 - 1945

Nancy Allen (née Goubert)



*Nancy and her husband Len, in 2018*

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All proceeds from the sale of this book will be generously donated to

The Monnaie Chapel of Christ the Healer.



# Foreword

*by Sir de Vic Carey*

*(Bailliff of Guernsey 1999 - 2005 and grandson of Sir Victor Carey, Bailliff of Guernsey 1935 - 1946)*

Eye-witnesses to what happened in Guernsey during the German Occupation are inevitably growing fewer and that is why it is so important that their memories are recorded for posterity. The publication for a wider readership of Nancy Allen's short memoir modestly entitled "One in a thousand" is therefore to be welcomed as adding yet more flesh to the compendium of Occupation literature. Nancy was fortunate to have been born into the family of a resourceful smallholder in that special part of Guernsey, the Clos du Valle, as keeping animals and having land to cultivate would have helped a little in keeping starvation at bay, but still the picture she paints, from the eyes of a child, is of a grim scene to us who have enjoyed over seventy years of freedom and prosperity. She brings home the fear and uncertainty of the time. She corroborates in a clear and simple manner material which appears in more comprehensive studies, but she does introduce new material in the record of the rail accident and the wonderful trip to London for the Victory parade. The latter interested me in its reference to Rex Stranger, an entrepreneurial Guernseyman who made a considerable impact on the civic life of Southampton during and after the war years. He and his wife helped numerous Guernsey families passing through Southampton and Nicholas and I owe them a debt for looking after us as we transited the City on our way to and from boarding school.

# Dedication

*To the memory of my dad, with regrets that it has taken me fifty years to put in print our memories of five years of German occupation and for my family whose support and encouragement got me through it.*



I had been at Ker Maria school for around three years when everything around me became confused. Although I wasn't yet eight years old, I could tell that my mum and dad were worried, wondering what to do for the best. The news had arrived that a limited number of mail boats were being sent to Guernsey to evacuate the people; children first, then if time allowed, the rest of the population. I remember quite clearly being taken by my parents to the White Rock Jetty one evening to listen to Jurat John Leale. He was urging the people to leave the Island and go to England. Others were suggesting that German forces would not invade such a tiny Island. There were so many Islanders who had never left Guernsey in their life, some rarely coming from the country parishes into the town, still only speaking the local patois, many of them farmers, quite content to be looking after their small herds of cows, certainly not wanting to leave their placid way of life. School children were the first to be evacuated, starting on the 21<sup>st</sup> June, 1940.



*The seventy-six ton Haslemere, cruising at fifteen knots, carried three hundred school children to Weymouth in June 1940*

The first ship to sail was the Antwerp with 1,154 children, teachers and helpers on board. This was followed by the Felixstowe, in which four hundred and thirty seven children and those in charge embarked. The third ship was the Haslemere, with three hundred more children. Another eight hundred embarked on the Batavia. The next to load was the Sheringham. Unfortunately, when she arrived on the White Rock Jetty at low water, it was obvious that the children could not embark via the steep gangway connecting the ship to the quay. The ship's officers and crew were very helpful and managed to reposition the gangway on a lower landing. However, the delay resulting from this meant that the children arrived in semi darkness and had to descend the steps onto the lower landing which was wet. Despite this, the embarkation proceeded smoothly.

As each bus arrived it was unloaded and the children were marshalled down the steps and across the gangway. The greatest credit is due to all concerned, considering that six hundred juniors and infants sailed in that ship, having embarked without mishap of any kind. These children were all under twelve years of age, some under five. The last ship was the Viking; she carried eighteen hundred and eighty children and teachers. Approximately five thousand, two hundred people were evacuated in these six ships, nearly five hundred of whom were teachers and helpers. Only a thousand school children remained in the Island. To have evacuated so many people, the great majority of whom were children, within forty-one hours, was no mean feat!





*Mother Teresa's class of infants at Catholic Kerr Maria School*

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |                   |                                                                                                                                                       |
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| <p><small>"THE STAR" may be posted to Canada and Newfoundland at magazine rates. Registered at the G.P.O. as a newspaper.</small></p> <p>CXXVI.—No. 146 WEDNESDAY, JUNE 19, 1940. GRATIS</p>                                                                                                                                                  |                   |                                                                                                                                                       |
| <h2>ISLAND EVACUATION</h2> <h3>ALL CHILDREN TO BE SENT TO MAINLAND TOMORROW</h3> <p><i>Mothers May Accompany Those Under School Age</i></p> <h3>REGISTRATION TONIGHT</h3> <h3>WHOLE BAILIWICK TO BE DEMILITARISED</h3> <p><b>Strong Advice To Men Between 20 and 33</b></p>                                                                   |                   |                                                                                                                                                       |



A strange incident I remember to this day happened when I was going back and forward to school for three days, case packed, gas mask in the bag around my neck and a huge label pinned on my coat with details of my name, age, parents and address. On this particular day, we were again all assembled in a little field adjoining the school building. The Catholic Sisters, Mother Teresa, Sister Peter and Sister Anthony, who were going away with us, were busy preparing the children. I spotted one of the Sisters in the distance who appeared to be sewing a crucifix on a little boy's skin. I took fright and started to run, reaching home exhausted, vowing that I would never go back to that school again. Little did I know at the time that nothing so drastic had happened to the poor little boy. The Sister was only sewing the cross to his vest! That finally settled my parents' minds. They decided that if we could not all go together as a family, we should stay put in Guernsey. Less than an hour after I had run home from school, the last ship left, it was called the Viking. The journey of those on board finally ended in Hazel Grove, Cheshire.





*Town Harbour after the bombing*

**A**fter the last boat had left Guernsey, the people seemed to settle back to live in a normal way again. At the back of their minds was the hope that we could perhaps escape the war in our tiny Island, but that was not going to be the case.

My dad was visiting his friend in a boatyard on the Castle Emplacement on that sunny afternoon of the 28<sup>th</sup> June, 1940. My mum, aunt and I decided to go to the beach for the afternoon. We thought we would stay and eat our sandwiches for tea, as the early evening was calm and beautiful. Dad was feeling rather hungry and left his friend to come and look for us on the beach. We all came back home together, which was very lucky, as that proved to be the fateful day of the German invasion of Guernsey. Within an hour of us being back home, the dreaded grey planes, with their huge black crosses, were swooping down on our pretty, unspoilt, peaceful Island. The beach which we had just vacated was being machine gunned. The sheds at the Castle Emplacement which my dad had been visiting were blown up. The worst hit was the White Rock

Harbour. A queue of lorries standing with their cargo of no more than Guernsey tomatoes in chips (boxes), awaiting shipment to England, was hit as it appeared to the approaching German pilots that they were shipping ammunition. To the horror of the unsuspecting drivers standing around their lorries, the planes dived on them, machine gunning men, lorries, anything that moved. We lost many brave men that day, they just had nowhere to run, diving under their lorries which were catching fire and exploding. On Friday 28<sup>th</sup> June, 1940 at 7 pm, the enemy aircraft bombed and machine gunned the White Rock Harbour. Twenty-two people were dead and thirty three seriously wounded.



*"It was officially announced tonight that the Channel Islands had been demilitarised. The Home Office stated that, in view of the German occupation of parts of France nearest to the Channel Islands, it was decided to demilitarise the islands. All armed forces and equipment have already been withdrawn ..... 'There need be no fear', military experts declared, 'of the Germans taking any advantage from the British decision to quit. The Nazis could no more hold positions on the isles than we could defend them.'"*

*Extract from The Star, Saturday 29<sup>th</sup> June, 1940*

**O**n the 30<sup>th</sup> June, 1940, the German forces landed at our airport unchallenged, as we were defenceless, nearly all young men having left the Island to join the UK forces. We in the north had not realised that the Island had been taken over by the German forces until later that evening when, on walking down the road, we spotted a soldier in a green coloured uniform on a motor bike and side-car with the dreaded swastika on the side.

Then came the big parades through the town of St. Peter Port. High strutting arrogant soldiers dominated the local scene. The first and only piece of British soil had been conquered. We quickly realised that we were now under German rule. This was confirmed by the Guernsey Press, on the 1<sup>st</sup> July, 1940, printing the orders of the Commandant of the German forces:



All inhabitants must be indoors by 11 pm and must not leave their homes before 6 am.

We will respect the population in Guernsey, but should anyone attempt to cause the least trouble, serious measures will be taken and the town will be bombed.

All orders given by the military authority are to be strictly obeyed.

All spirits must be locked up immediately and no spirits may be supplied, obtained or consumed henceforth. This prohibition does not apply to stocks in private houses.

No person shall enter the Aerodrome at La Villiaze.

All rifles, air-guns, pistols, revolvers, daggers, sporting guns and all other weapons whatsoever except souvenirs, must together with

all ammunition be delivered at the Royal Hotel by 12 noon today, July 1<sup>st</sup>.

All British sailors, airmen and soldiers on leave in this island must report at the police station at 9 am today and must then report at the Royal Hotel.

No boat or vessel of any description, including any fishing boat shall leave the harbours or any other place where the same is moored without an order from the military authority to be obtained at the Royal Hotel. All boats arriving from Jersey, Sark or from Herm or elsewhere, must remain in harbour until permitted by the military to leave. The crews will remain on board. The Master will report to the Harbourmaster, St. Peter Port and will obey his instructions.

The sale of motor spirit is prohibited, except for use on an essential services such as doctors' vehicles, the delivery of foodstuffs and sanitary services where such vehicles are in possession of a permit from the military authority to obtain supplies. These vehicles must be brought to the Royal Hotel by 12 noon today to receive a necessary permission. The use of cars for private purposes is forbidden.

The black-out regulations already in force must be observed as before.

Banks and shops will open as usual.

Signed: The Germany Commandant of the Island of Guernsey.



The Germans had been resident in the Island for two or three months, when they started to patrol the streets, checking on any light showing through windows after curfew. I was so frightened at night, as I was scared that they were going to take mum and dad away. I had witnessed a school friend of mine with her mum and dad being deported to camp Biberach in Germany because her dad was English born. She cried as we said goodbye as she didn't want to go. This really upset me. At night I would creep out of my bed and go into mum and dad's room, asking mum if I could sleep beside her for a while. She always held me close and told me it would be OK. When I calmed down, she would take me back to my room and wait until I fell asleep. This happened for many nights, it was like a terrible dream to me. Strange that when daylight came I was never really frightened of the Germans!

The curfew made it very difficult for people to have any evening social life. Quite a few of the islanders had all night dances in their own homes. Next to my dad's barn was 'Grove House', a Guernsey granite building with very large rooms. In the early evening, my school friends and I would sit on the windowsill and watch the dancers enjoying themselves. My family and I were invited to join in during the first week of occupation and I can remember being put on the table to sing, 'Hang out your washing on the Seigfried line'. My dad had bought a set of drums that week from Fuzzey's in town and our next door neighbour was an expert on the piano. Everyone sang at the top of their voices and finished with our own anthem 'Sarnia Cherie'.

My dad was a tomato grower before the war. Like many others he worked a couple of small greenhouses, mainly for export,

but his main job was rotavating. He was very good with machinery and the company he dealt with in Birmingham had made him an agent for their machines in the Island. Just weeks before the German invasion they had sent him an urgent telegram offering him a job in their factory (with very good wages), because of his knowledge of machinery. Being a stubborn, 'Guernsey Donkey', he refused, as he did not want to leave and he, like many others, believed the Germans would never invade our small Island!

My dad was allowed to keep a little old Morris van to transport his rotavator for tilling the soil before planting vegetables for the public. He was allowed a small amount of fuel each week for that purpose. My dad did a lot of



tilling of greenhouses and outside land for the States Essential Commodities Committee, growing potatoes and vegetables to sell to the public by controlled rationing. I would go along with him at weekends and sit on the front of the large rotavator as he went up and down the fields. I carried a tomato basket and would be jumping on and off as soon as I spotted the old potatoes that dad had unearthed while tilling the ground. We came home at the end of the day covered with dirt and I would be very lucky if I had found six or seven old potatoes.

We, like hundreds of islanders took to riding bicycles. When the tyres wore out, we cut a length of garden rubber hose and clipped that around the wheel. What a hard bumpy ride!

Every Sunday morning, mum, dad and me, with me sitting on the back of dad's old hosepipe bicycle, would set off for a ride of about six miles to my aunt's farm, up hill most of the way, so I had to get off the carrier and walk. The farm had soldiers billeted in the house. They had constructed large huts in the spacious front garden and kept quite a few of their horses in them. We did that tiring journey weekly, just to bring back a couple of bottles of milk and any spare vegetables. On the ride home we picked up odd pieces of wood from the trees along the road-side, to eke out our heating fuel.

Strangely, I can't remember much about my school days during those five long years. My previous Catholic School had been taken over by the Germans as the remainder of the pupils had left for England with their teaching nuns. I do remember going back there with my dad to collect a coat I had left, when we were greeted by German troops, tipping all the books into the yard and burning them. We were told to go; nothing was now left in the classrooms. I then attended the Vale Primary School which was accommodated in two or three small rooms at the back of the Vale Methodist Church. So many children had left the Island and the few that remained were amalgamated into one school in each parish. In 1941, by order of the German Commandant, we were compelled to learn the German language.

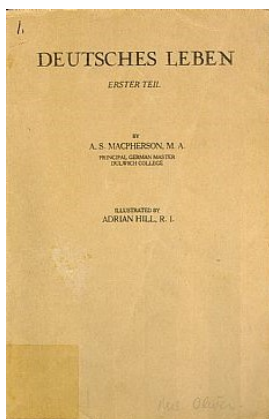
I quote, 27<sup>th</sup> September, 1941 taken from the prefix of our German book:

*"As it was found impossible to obtain sufficient copies of a suitable text-book for teaching German to adults and school children in the Islands of Jersey and Guernsey, the Guernsey Education Council was faced with the task of either compiling one or printing sufficient copies of one already published."*

*After careful consideration and after obtaining expert advice, it was decided to print a book using as a basis a text-book called "Deutsches Leben", it being considered the one best suited for the purpose. A few alterations and additions have been made. Owing to the conditions then existing, it was impossible to get in touch with the Authors or Publisher of the book mentioned above but the Guernsey Education Council hopes that they will approve of the printing of a number of copies of their text-book "Deutsches Leben" and that they will be pleased to find that it was selected as being considered the most suitable amongst those which were reviewed.*

*In anticipation of such approval the Council hereby wishes to express to them their deep gratitude for this favour."*

*Signed: J. N. O. Roussel, President, Guernsey States  
Education Council*



Some other pupils and I rebelled against learning German, much to my dismay in later years when it would have been very useful to have been able to speak another language.



By my recollection, the humble German soldiers were kind to us children. We all walked to school, often passing German houses, or rather local houses that had been taken over by the German authorities. In some cases the families had evacuated, in other cases, a days notice would be given that their house was required and the families must vacate. This happened many times. In the early days when they still had food, the German soldiers would often call us school kids over and give us perhaps a piece of chocolate or a slice of bread, usually spread with honey. They loved Christmas time. Every billet had a Christmas tree and we could hear them singing, especially Stille Nacht (Silent Night), with gusto. In the latter years, they had nothing, were also starving and had no soap to wash themselves, so they smelled and their uniforms hung on their thin bodies.

**I**n 1942, at ten years of age, I took on the role of 'Mother Hen', the name the children's parents gave me. I walked to school each morning, collecting children on the way. First I called on Mr. and Mrs. Tait who ran our corner shop. They had one young daughter called Marion, a couple of years my junior. Her parents were spared deportation to Biberach and Laufen, despite Mr. Tait being both ex British Navy and English born. Mrs. Tait was German and a qualified school teacher and since the Germans had decreed that school children must learn the German language, she was needed on the Island. Mr. Tait was therefore allowed to continue to run the shop. Mr. Tait always saved what little he had of his stock of goodies, as treats for the local children. After the Tait's, I called at the house next door, for Janet Bonathan to join us. My next call was to pick up Margaret and



**'Our Gang'. Occupation kids 1940 - 45.**

Back row: Jasmine Rowe, myself and Billy Brown.  
Middle row: Marion Tate, Janet Bonathan, Richard Rowe.  
Front row; Stan & Margaret Cleal and Barbara Brown.

Stan Cleal. John, who was the baby of the family was left at home. Their mother was widowed during the occupation and found it very hard to bring up three young children alone. Christmas time was the worst for them, no toys in the shops, she had to mend and paint any second-hand toy she could find. Their clothing was handed down from one family member to another. It wore so thin that there was hardly anything left of it when the last child in line came to wear it. We were all used to hand-me-downs in those dark days. I remember my uncle gave my mum his regimental Scottish highland kit, she had it made up into a skirt for me. It was so heavy and coarse, but this did not stop me feeling very proud of the Black Watch tartan, although I was suffering badly from chapped legs as it rubbed onto my skin like sandpaper.

The next call was to Mrs. Brown, for Barbara and Billy. Her son Billy loved to play truant and I was lucky if I managed to get him into the school building. More often than not, he would run away from me and go and play in the fields during the school day.

My last call was to Sohier Villa, an old Guernsey house. Here I collected Jasmine and Richard Rowe. We all loved to play at 'Sohier' as we envied their beautiful, big old fashioned rocking horse which we were thrilled to have a chance to ride. One morning after I called for them, we were most alarmed to see a German truck and soldiers outside. They were escorting a sheepish young German into their vehicle. We could see that the seat of his trousers was torn. It turned out that he had broken into their house earlier that morning looking for food, not



realising that they had a large collie dog inside. The dog spotted the German and chased after him. The soldier ran to the window to climb through and had almost made it, when the sash cord broke and the window came crashing down, trapping him, with his rear end still in the room. The dog then lunged at the intruder, biting and tearing at the only part he could reach, his backside. What a laugh we had that day, we had such a tale to tell our friends at school!

**B**illy Brown's mum and dad had set up an outhouse filled with big tin boilers which were filled with copped sugar-beet, covered with water and boiled until the contents turned into thick, black treacle syrup. You could smell the sickly sweetness all along the road. People would queue first thing in the morning just for a tiny jam-jar full. Strict daily rationing applied. Finally we reached school, 'Mother Hen' and all her chicks following behind, well not quite all, naughty Billy had run away again!

After a day at school, on our way back home for tea, we would all stop off at the North's Dairy, which is now the Maison Maritaine House. The farmers in the north of the Island would bring to this depot, all the day's milk, in what they called 'pots'. These were large metal cans. The 'pots' were then collected by horse drawn carts, taken to the main dairy, where the milk ration was allocated to each milkman. Deliveries would be made to your door in cans, you took your own jug to the milkman who ladled in your quarter, sometimes half pint of skimmed milk. Not very hygienic by today's standards. We would eagerly wait for Mr. Le Feuvre to jump on his horse drawn cart and say, "Come on kids, get on and I will drop you off halfway home". My thrill was for him to say to me, as I was the eldest, "Now you can take the reins".

I would sit on the front seat with him, as

proud as punch and not once did I catch the sides of the cart going down the lanes. He said I was a natural born driver.



*Maison Maritaine, on the site of the old dairy.*

In 1943, I developed a nasty illness. I became very weak and tired with terrible aching limbs. Mum called in our doctor and he said I had rheumatic fever and I was to stay in bed for at least three months. Each child was allowed a half pint of milk each day at school, but I was able to have mine at home. Then the worry for my mum, what to give me to eat? Despite my teacher sending my school work to me daily, I couldn't prepare for my Eleven Plus well enough to pass. The time went very slowly, I so looked forward to my school friends visiting me. I spent hours cutting all the pictures out of an old Oxendale catalogue a neighbour gave me.

**L**iving in a country area we were very lucky to have a certain amount of land which we could put to good use. No flower gardens were thought of, only edible food. The local greenhouses were commandeered by the Germans, mainly for growing potatoes and vegetables for the German troops, the rest were sold at food stores in rations for the locals. As salt was now impossible to buy, except on the black market, we were forced to buy salt water sold at two and a half old pence for a half gallon from a few local fishermen who had a permit to fish, accompanied by a German, in a restricted area. The local people could not get anywhere near the beaches for mines and barbed wire fences. Dad poured the salt water in old trays and put them on top of our garden shed in the summer for the sun to dry out the contents, then mum would scrape the salt from the bottom of the trays and start all over again for a few ounces of more or less solid grey salt.

We were also given a seaweed called carrageen moss which mum boiled down and the juice was used as a form of jelly. If you were lucky to have any flavouring left from pre-war times, it

came in very handy to flavour it. I believe Stonelakes the chemist was able to produce a few packets of the concentrated seaweed with flavouring they still had in stock at the start of the occupation. I loved the very unusual taste, most healthy by today's standards.

**CARRÉ'S**  
**Flavoured Powdered**  
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**FOR MAKING BLANCMANGE**  
**AND JELLY.**  
**DIRECTIONS—1 Teaspoonful to**  
**every  $\frac{1}{2}$  pint of Milk or Water.**  
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We also grew a lot of sweet-corn or maize for food. When the cob had dried, the maize was ground down though the old mincer on the table, either for flour or used to take the place of rice in a milk pudding. Green beans were also grown to be dried and used with a piece of meat on the bone, normally rabbit. The rabbits and chickens were kept in wooden hutches which we brought into our hallway every night for safety. If we had left them outside, they would have been stolen in the night after the curfew hour, mainly by the Germans, but possibly by Islanders who were also starving and were prepared to risk being caught after curfew.

As the gas and electricity were being cut-off for hours on end, my dad devised a hay box. He made a wooden box large enough to hold two saucepans, filled it tightly with hay with the imprint of the saucepans, made a lid stuffed with hay. Then whatever few vegetables were available were brought to the boil in the pans which were then immediately put in the hay box, the lid was put on and was then left until tea time. When it was opened, everything was cooked.

Once a week there was a special treat: Guernsey bean-jar.

Beans, carrots and any other 'veg' that were available and a piece of meat, were put into a bean-jar crock. As they took quite a few hours to cook and we did not always have enough fuel, my dad and I would put the crock in a basket on our cycles and go to a house in the Vale where they still had an old Guernsey furze oven. Dried furze was cut on L'Ancrese Common and pushed into this old brick lined oven which was lit and left to burn out. More furze were pushed in to build up the heat, the doors were then opened and ours and many other people's bean-jars were slid into the oven, all bearing names and covered with thick brown paper. Once they had been pushed into the red hot oven they were left there all night. The next morning we would be part of a convoy of old clanging bicycles fetching our hot, delicious smelling bean-jars. For me, this was the best meal of the week.

**M**y dad was one of the many who 'fraternised' with the Germans, if you call fraternising looking after your family in the latter part of the occupation, when food was in such short supply. With no bread ration I remember going to school crying, still hungry as my mum could only give me a carrot to eat on my way. The elderly German, Fritz, who had befriended us, could see our desperate plight and had told my dad that if we had a few spare onions, he could barter them for a loaf of bread at the cook house where they were housing over five hundred German soldiers in huge huts at the rear of the Braye du Valle House. Just before curfew hour in the early but dark evening, dad and I walked to the back of the cook house with our half a dozen onions in a sack on dad's back. Fritz had already had a few words with one of the many cooks and one came out to dad saying, "Ist sie ihre tochter?" (Is this



your daughter?), “Sie ist meine tochter” (This is my daughter), “Wie heisst sie?” (What is her name?), “Sie heisst, Nancy” (Her name is Nancy). He then went into the bake house and we saw rows and rows of shelving with hundreds of dark brown rye bread loaves all stamped with dates. He took one large loaf and dropped it into dad's now empty sack, “Raus, Raus”, he shouted and we ran back home through the fields so no one would see us as it was very near to curfew hour.

By 1944, the rationing for the public was four and a half pounds of bread a week per household, two and a half pounds of potatoes, a quarter pint of skimmed milk per day, per person and three ounces of butter per week. It became a lot less as time went on, with the last issue of bread being made on the 13<sup>th</sup> February, 1945.

No. 151046

The holder of this Card is **GOUBERT WILSON JAMES**  
 Inhaber dieser Karte ist

Residing at **"MELITA" Route Militaire ST. SAMPSONS**  
 Wohnhaft

Born on the **30. 8. 1906** (at **GUERNSEY**)  
 Geboren am

**M.** **PARTICULARS — NÄHERE ANGABEN**  
 Single, Married, Widow or Widower **NONE**

**VERHEIRATET** Ledig, verheiratet, verwitwet  
**black** Colour of Hair  
**SCHWARZ** Farbe des Haares

**blue** Colour of Eyes  
**BLAU** Farbe der Augen

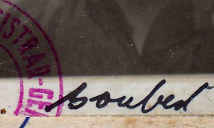
**KEINE**

*Richard* *J.P. Goubert*

Controlling Committee of the States of Guernsey.

Feldkommandantur, Nebenstelle Guernsey.







**M**y dad like many other Islanders, loved his cigarettes, so decided to grow his own tobacco. He could hardly wait for the leaves to dry before he and I were rolling out the sweet smelling leaves on our shed bench with glass bottles, then packing it into a home-made wooden press, the leaves were sprinkled with saltpetre and left to cure for a few weeks.

Sometimes dad couldn't wait for the 'cure' and cut the tobacco early! He had fixed up a cutting blade with a hand wheel and pulley to slice the leaves, making it look like commercial pipe tobacco, then the first smoke. The bliss on his face at the first draw, was quickly replaced. The colour drained away and he became giddy as he was already so short of food that the strength of the raw tobacco went straight to his head.

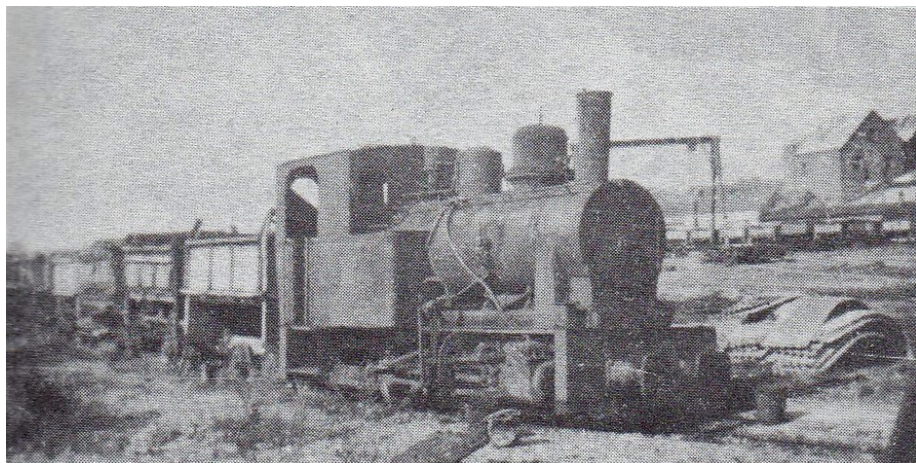


*A scroll of Dad's home-grown and cured tobacco which has survived to this day.*

Dad had set up his tobacco press in his old granite barn. Many things went on in and outside this old building. In the barn we would hide discretely behind an old Morris car, which stood on blocks as the wheels had been removed to avoid being commandeered. To pass the time, dad made a crystal set with a pair of ear phones bought from a friend. I took it in turns with mum to sit in the old car and listen to the BBC, remembering not to laugh out loud at the shows like 'ITMA' (It's That Man Again) and Family Favourites. If we had been caught, my dad might have been sent as a reprisal to a German concentration camp like many Guernsey people had.

The old granite barn stood alongside the recently constructed German railway, close to the level crossing with Route Militaire. The railway ran from the town harbour to St. Sampson's Bridge, supplying the German defences on the north of the Island, out to the west and L'Eree. It was built by forced labourers, French Algerians, Russians, Dutch, Belgium and Polish, brought over by the Germans and controlled by the callous TODT organisation, who we called OTs. We watched from inside our barn as the labourers were insulted and beaten as they were laying the sleepers for the train outside.

Many accidents followed the building of the railway. One that stands out vividly in my mind, was on a beautiful afternoon in the summer. I had been busy milking my goats in a field adjoining the railway line close to my home. I saw my dad walking along the road towards the railway crossing so I decided to run along and join him. Down the road came a lorry carrying long steel rail tracks. The lunch-time train taking the prison labourers back to the barracks was coming down the track. The labourers were forced to stand, packed like



*The German locomotive which travelled from the town harbour to L'Eree.*

sardines, in the first two open trucks, being pushed by the engine from behind. The lorry was travelling at speed, the driver not hearing the quiet train whistle as it approached the road crossing. The oncoming lorry smashed into the packed trucks, derailing and overturning them, then sending the long rail lines and girders into the startled men. The screams of injured and dying men were chilling, their crushed and bleeding bodies were strewn all over the road. The German driver of the lorry was trapped in his cab as his load folded the cab roof like a pack of cards. The OTs riding in the engine jumped out and just threw the dying and dead into my dad's field alongside the track.

Later, a crane lifted the rail tracks off the lorry, the German driver being treated the same way. The bodies were left there all day, until later that evening when a German open lorry arrived and they were just thrown in the back.

**M**y mum and dad kept around eight goats, all of mixed breeds, mainly golden coloured ones plus a couple of Toggenburg types and white Saanens, but no pure breeds. They were all mainly sired by a male goat within walking distance of home, around the north common area. Their food was mainly grass. Sometimes we were able to find a little extra to cut for hay. Naturally, the milk yield was very poor, at the most, one to three pints per goat per day, if we were lucky.

We bred our goats every year, mainly to cull the kids for meat. Nothing was wasted, my dad even cured the skins, as he did the rabbit pelts for the fur which he used to line our shoes that had lost part of their soles and we made rabbit fur mitts to keep our hands warm. We tried to protect the goats and rabbits from being stolen, so dad devised a barricade by placing large wooden bars across the inside of the stable door. He would then crawl up through a trap door he had made in the roof, which led to the main barn, well hidden from prying eyes.



*This is me on the left aged eleven in 1944 with my goat May and her baby kid and a year later, on the right, with my young neighbours Beryl & Tony.*

One morning we arrived to feed the animals to discover the Germans had 'visited' the barn in the night. They had entered the stable by taking off the tiles on the roof and removing the young kids and rabbits. They only left the old goats which we kept close to our house in a small out-building. Our few hens we kept inside the house every night or we would have lost these too.

As time progressed and local food supplies got less, we were on strict rationing. With only a small amount of food arriving from France, the German forces were also near starving. Our next door neighbour had a few daffodil bulbs and one day, after a German skirmish through his garden, they stopped, bent down and quickly pulled up the bulbs thinking they were onions. After skinning then, they ate them raw.





**A**s the end of the occupation approached, the soldiers were really suffering as no supplies were reaching them. We were still lucky to be receiving a small supply of Red Cross food parcels. On the 27<sup>th</sup> December, 1944, the ship called the Vega arrived with 750 tons of food and medical supplies. The first issue of Red Cross bread, a 2lb loaf per head, as an emergency, came on the 8<sup>th</sup> February, 1945. Another issue of parcels, which were Canadian, arrived on the 15<sup>th</sup> February. On the 19<sup>th</sup> dad was again a happy man for a little while, when the Red Cross issued 40 cigarettes for each male and female over eighteen years of age as a special treat for the smokers.

The wonderful taste of chocolate (I had completely forgotten the taste), tinned meats, cereals and a special gruel which mum made up like a custard. The dried milk in tins had a double purpose. A friend of my dad used the empty tins to make into saucepans as ours were getting very thin. He soldered on a handle and shaped the lid to become a proper saucepan cover. Our new saucepans were used on the open coal fire. Other treats in the parcels were tea for mum and dad and real soap which smelled almost good enough to eat. The days that the Red Cross parcels arrived were some of the happier days of the occupation.

Fritz the elderly German soldier we had befriended, had left a wife and daughter my age in Germany and hated the war. Just like us, he wanted to be home in his small village with his family, which he missed terribly. He was very kind to me, bringing me his ration of honey, even sometimes his two or three slices of bread – his day's ration. We really saw the fear in his eyes, one evening, when he heard planes overhead and guns being fired

from the Chouet gun battery. He dived under our kitchen table, shaking from head to foot, crying out that it must be the Russians landing. He feared being captured by the Russians more than anything else. Soon after he was taken prisoner, but not by Russians. This time the sound of the planes heralded the arrival of our British troops.

On that 'never to be forgotten day', the 9<sup>th</sup> May, 1945, the British troops landed. My mum never got around to cooking that day. My dad, after so many attempts to shave, with me running outside, jumping on and off our garden wall shouting out every five minutes,

“Dad just come out quick and see these planes, they are not the black German ones, they are British. Look!”.

Out he would race, half shaved, half covered in shaving cream, he never finished. We stood outside calling, laughing, crying, so excited we were free after five years under German rule. Then back inside to listen to Sir Winston Churchill broadcasting, “Our dear Channel Islands have been freed today”.

We, for the first time, had listened to our own radio which we had hidden in a false compartment under the hens’ nesting box. This time it was tuned to the BBC and we turned the volume up full blast. Wonderful!

My mum had saved a piece of red, white and blue fabric which she had made up into a dress for me waiting for this special occasion. How proud I was to be truly British that afternoon! The family went to town with all our neighbours who could walk or cycle. On the way, the crowds got thicker and thicker. Everybody dressed up in their Sunday best, they were thin, but very proud. Many houses on the way had flags hanging outside. They had been hidden away during the occupation and brought out for the long awaited freedom. By the time we



GUERNSEY

# Evening Press

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EVENING PRESS, WEDNESDAY, MAY 9, 1945

TWOPENCE

## PEACE AND LIBERATION

### How the German Capitulation was Signed.

Five years, eight months and four days after it began, at 11 o'clock on the morning of Sunday, September 3rd, 1939, the war in Europe was ended at 2.41 (normal Greenwich time) on Monday morning, May 7th, 1945, by the unconditional surrender of Germany to Great Britain, the United States of America and Soviet Russia.

For the island of Guernsey this historic moment meant more than the cessation of hostilities. It meant, too, that the 23,000 islanders who remained here after the evacuation are freed from the captivity imposed upon them by the German armed forces which invaded this, a part of the only mere fragment of British territory they could ever capture and possess, on the night of Sunday, June 30th, 1940. With the submission of Germany to the Allies, the Occupation is over.

It was a few minutes after 6 o'clock on Sunday evening, May 6th, that the news flashed around the Island that Peace was imminent. Those still in possession of radio receiving sets heard at that time the brief, but pregnant assurance that the Prime Minister was expected very soon to broadcast the news for which the whole world was waiting, and that His Majesty the King would afterwards speak to his subjects everywhere in the British Empire and Commonwealth.

Throughout Monday the tension in Guernsey was electric. Everyone was on the edge of expectancy. Excitement was subdued, but intense, and all were conscious of momentous events impending.

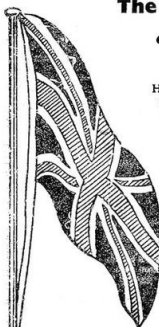
Then, again at 6 o'clock in the evening, came the glorious tidings. Germany signed her capitulation to the three big Powers at nineteen minutes to three o'clock (G. M. T.) on Monday

### The King calls Nation to "The Final Task."

His Majesty King George VI. broadcast from London at 9 p.m. Tuesday to all the peoples of the British Empire and Commonwealth of Nations. This is the full text of his address—

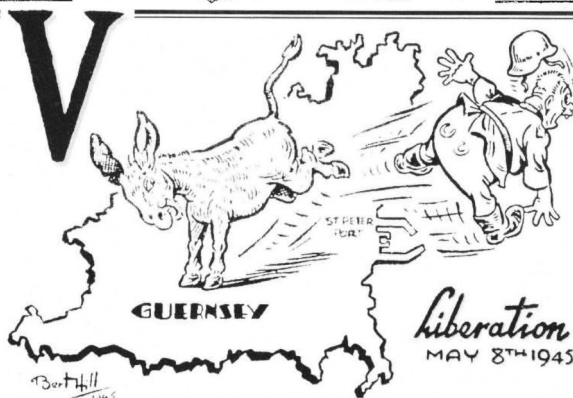
To-day we give thanks to Almighty God for a great deliverance. Speaking from the Empire's oldest capital city, war-battered, but never for one moment daunted or dismayed, speaking from London, I ask you to join with me in that act of thanksgiving. Germany the enemy who drove all Europe into war, has been finally overcome. In the Far East we have yet to deal with the Japanese, a determined and cruel foe. To this we shall turn with the utmost resolve and with all our resources. But, at this hour, when the dreadful shadow of war has passed far from our hearths and homes in these islands, we may at least make one pause for thanksgiving, and then turn our thoughts to the tasks all over the world which peace in

Europe brings with it. Let us remember those who will not come back—their constancy and courage in battle, their sacrifices and endurance in the face of a merciless enemy. Let us remember the men in all the Services and the women in all the Services who have laid down their lives. We have come to the end of our tribulation, and they are not with us at the moment of our rejoicing. Then, let us salute, in proud gratitude, the great hosts of the living who have brought us to Victory. I cannot praise them to the



(Continued on Page 4)

(Continued on Page 2)





reached our town, the British soldiers had already taken over quite a few of the hotels on the North Esplanade, in which the Germans had been billeted. They were leaning out of the windows, throwing down sweets and cigarettes and the children were diving underneath the windows to catch the sweets. I was desperate to find a cigarette for my dad and when I did his face lit up as if I had given him a hundred pounds!

Then came the moment that we had all been waiting for: the arrival of the British officers, Brigadier-Commander Snow, the Force Commander and Colonel Power, Chief Liaison Officer. The Colonel walked the length of the jetty and all along the sea front, being mobbed by the freed Guernsey people, but in a good natured way. He was kissed and hugged and held his hand out-stretched to everyone. Barbara, my cousin, whose father had died at the beginning of the war, was with us. She was only small but ran up to him and he picked her up, kissing



her and smiling, it was so wonderful to see. Commander Snow made his way to the Royal Court steps and made an official speech. He told us that the German occupation had ended and our loved ones who had been evacuated to the United Kingdom, would soon be home. It was time to face the long walk home and we felt like we were all walking on air.

We read in the paper that on the 13<sup>th</sup> May, five thousand troops, Royal Artillery sappers,

signalmen and other personnel, were going to land at Pembroke Bay. That day, we set off on foot with all our neighbours, to walk the short distance to L'Ancrese Common. By the time we had arrived, the British troops had blasted a hole in the huge sea wall which the Germans had constructed around Pembroke Bay, as they believed that the bay was a vulnerable point for a hostile landing. They were right. At eleven o'clock, just after the chimes of the Vale Church finished striking, the cry went up from the crowd on the hill overlooking the bay, 'She's moving'. A giant U.S. 137 landing craft moved right into the bay and grounded close to the Atlantic wall which had already been blown up. This ship was huge compared to the two other LSTs (landing ship tanks) which came into sight. Their jaws swung open and out poured the British 'Tommies' with the supplies they had brought. Never before and never since has



L'Ancrese or Pembroke Bay seen anything like it. They were well equipped, not with guns, but armed with extra rations of food to share with the hundreds of local people who had walked, or ridden their hosepipe bikes to the Common. It was thrilling to see, soldiers hugging mums, dads, grans and grandpas and they were equally thrilled to see the excited children. They set-up their specially provided camp stoves and brewed tea, which folks had not tasted, except in their Red Cross parcels. They had made do with the blackberry leaf and herb brew for five years. The children were not forgotten, out came the chocolates, tins of condensed milk which were given to us with spoons. That first delicious taste remains to this day, incredibly I was not even sick! That day the sun shone brightly on a picnic to crown all picnics, never to be forgotten, the laughter rang out and the happy tears flowed from soldiers and happily freed people.

Dad, like many others, invited a couple of 'Tommies' back home with us to share what food we had and they were pleased to come. My dad and mum asking so many questions about what had been going on in the United Kingdom. They wanted to know all the news. They visited us many times during their stay in Guernsey, whilst clearing the beaches of mines.

We were woken a few days after the liberation to the sound of marching feet. This time it was the German occupation force soldiers leaving the Island by boat from Pembroke Bay. They were a sorry sight, uniforms smelly and dirty and hanging off their starving bodies. They were on their way to the United Kingdom for repatriation.

On the 25<sup>th</sup> June, 1945, the first evacuees returned from Britain. There were heart rending reunions, families who had been split up for five long years. Children, who had left home in 1940, at a

young school age, came back home, not even remembering their own parents. Many could not settle back in Guernsey and decided to return to their British foster parents, some came back to brothers and sisters they had forgotten. I remember standing behind the high barbed wire barrier gates at the end of the White Rock Harbour, near the clock at the Weighbridge. My mum and dad waited for their brothers and sister to come back home having had no contact with them, except the few Red Cross messages which were eagerly read over and over again. There were many tears that day and many broken families in later years. Even when peace is declared it takes years to heal the hurt.

Now the occupation was over, we settled down into 'normal' life. Much to my delight, I was chosen, along with a boy called Frank, to represent the Vale School, in a Victory Day Celebration in London, on the 8<sup>th</sup> June, 1946.

*Edited extract from Guernsey Evening Press, 14<sup>th</sup> January, 1971 by Dorothy Dowding*

*It all started in the spring of 1946, when the late Mr. A. Winterflood, who was the secretary of the Education Council, told Dorothy Dowding, a reporter for the Guernsey Evening Press, that he would like to see 20 Guernsey children who had been here during the 1940-45 German Occupation to visit London, but one hundred pounds was needed. Within seconds, the late Mr. Bill Taylor, editor of the paper, opened an appeal fund in the next day's evening press. Within a few days, the response had been so good that the fund closed and one hundred and eight pounds, quite a lot of money in those days, was ready for us children to attend the festivities*

*in London. Within an hour or so, Mr. Lou Morris, managing director of the Regal Cinema was in communication with a friend who was a Member of Parliament who promptly gave his pledge that a good vantage point to view the procession would most certainly be found for the young Guernsey visitors. What better place could there be than the Victoria Memorial in front of Buckingham Palace.*

I was one of the twenty children from the Intermediate and Primary Schools who left Guernsey on the 5<sup>th</sup> June. Most of us had never left the island before. We were all so excited. We travelled by sea on the 'Isle of Jersey' and most of us were very sick as it was such a long, rough journey, but not even that could dampen our spirits. When the boat docked in Southampton, we were met by the Guernsey born Mayor of Southampton, Mr. Rex Stranger, M.C., who shook hands with us all. There was a bevy of news reporters and cameramen from the Southern Daily Echo and other newspapers. This made us feel very proud and important. We had a fantastic week in London. Starting on Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> June, we visited Westminster Abbey and No.10 Downing Street, the then Prime Minister, Clement Attlee's residence. That evening we all made our way to Fleet Street, to watch the Daily Express being printed. It took us four hours to be shown over the whole building, watching the press being set up and printing. We didn't arrive back in our hotel until midnight.



*Liberation medals given to all school children that had remained on the Island during the German occupation*



*A Yeoman of the Guard (Beefeater) at the Tower with us twenty smiling children.*

The next day we went to the Tower of London where we had our photos taken with the 'Beefeaters'. They were really friendly, wanting to know all about our five years under Guernsey occupation. Then onto St. Paul's. We were shown the Sir Isaac Brock Memorial. Sir Isaac Brock was the saviour of Canada and a great Guernsey man. We walked everywhere, miles and miles, but nobody moaned about how tired they were. We took everything in, seeing things we had only been able to read about before.

The day after we visited Eton College and sat in the five hundred year old desks which the boys still used to that day. Our day at Windsor Castle was great. We were even allowed to see the quarters of the Royal family when in residence. We went through Bush Wood and the meadow where King John signed the Magna Carta and were told that no houses would ever be built in that meadow.



Then the great day arrived: Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> June, 1946. We were up and all ready to leave the hotel at 6.30 am. We travelled on the underground and then walked to our place at the Queen Victoria Memorial. We stood on the steps all day as there was no seating at all, the spaces around the memorial being all taken up with as many school children as possible viewing the wonderful parades, on this glorious occasion. We were looking straight ahead to Buckingham Palace and had a clear view of the King and Queen leaving in their state carriage. The Queen looked lovely in lilac and the King in admiral's uniform. The Princess Elizabeth in blue with matching hat and Princess Margaret in turquoise with a white hat. Then the military bands started to parade. We all thought the Scottish band was the best. It poured with rain at 1 o'clock, but even that did not dampen out spirits, At 3 pm, our party was able to leave and walk with many thousands of people all singing and waving flags. Everybody wanted to know who we were as we were wearing our gold liberation medals, which had been given to all school children who had stayed in Guernsey during the war years. When we finally arrived back at our hotel we realised we had







*Leaving Guernsey on the 5th June 1946*

been standing without food for eight hours. We had not even noticed that we were hungry and tired until we arrived back, but that was not the end of the day. After our tea, we were taken on the roof of the Northway Hotel to watch the spectacular show of fireworks. We could see St. Pancras nearby, all floodlit, what an end to an unforgettable day! On Sunday morning we were taken to St. Pancras Church for a service and were officially met by the minister, who said he was very honoured to have met us. Then in the afternoon, the London Zoo. Seeing all those animals live which we had read about at school was fantastic, although we were disappointed the panda would not wake up! After tea at the zoo, we all boarded a double decker bus, another thrill for us. The bus took us to Waterloo Bridge. We walked across to Captain Scott's ship the Discovery, which sailed to the Antarctic. Walking back to Fleet Street, all we wanted was bed! Monday was another special day which had been planned for

us. We were all waiting outside at ten to seven in the morning. We were never late and nobody had to wake us up, always ready, sometimes hours before time, too excited to sleep in. A Rolls Royce and three Daimler cars were waiting outside the hotel. They drove us first to Richmond, where we boarded a pleasure steamer to take us up the Thames to Hampton Court. We had a scrumptious lunch which finished with a huge cake made especially for the occasion. The whole cake was covered in a victory 'V' sign made of icing and many photos were taken of the occasion by our accompanying teachers. We were then shown over the grounds and the great old house and were particularly impressed by the beautiful tapestries and lovely paintings. We were then shown the very old clock over the main gate which tells the time, week, month and year, then down into the dungeons and old kitchens. This wonderful day was made possible by the generosity of Mr.



*Arriving in Southampton with Mr Rex Stringer, Mayor of Southampton*



*Left: The 'famous ice cream shop & Right: The Victory Cake.*

Lou Morris, managing director of the Regal Cinemas, who accompanied us on our visit to Hampton Court, together with Miss Ena Baga and her sister Florence de Jong, organists for the Regal Cinemas. We were given tea and were brought back to the Northway Hotel in limousines, tired out, but very happy. We packed quickly and made our way to Euston Station for the seven p.m. boat train to Southampton.

I must not forget to mention the most popular shop in London, to us. Right opposite our hotel was a tiny newsagent which opened very early in the morning and also sold ice-creams. After five years of German rule, short of food and never seeing an ice-cream for all that time, they were delicious. The shop keeper couldn't believe his eyes, there were twenty of us children, every morning at 6 o'clock, in a queue when he opened his shop, all asking for ice-creams before breakfast. We all had a little pocket money and that is what we spent it on. We arrived in Southampton at midnight and made our way to

the mail boat for the last leg of our journey home. It was a very rough crossing and no seats or berths were available. Some rugs were provided but we had to lie on the lounge floor and those that could, slept. I locked myself in the toilet and was sick many times. We arrived back in Guernsey at 6.30 in the morning and our parents and friends were waiting for us on the quay-side. We couldn't wait to tell them the stories of our experiences.

Thanks must go to the Guernsey Evening Press for it's coverage of our unique week in London and for the generosity of the Islanders who donated money to send us there.

**T**o conclude my story. Twenty-five years later, on 20<sup>th</sup> January 1971, at the Royal Hotel, ten girls and five boys from the original twenty were invited to meet Miss de Jong again; she had returned to Guernsey to play the Hammond organ. We reminisced over our week in London and our part in the Victory celebrations. We presented her with a small Guernsey can, also a bouquet of flowers, which she asked to be placed on the war memorial at the top of Smith Street. We all enjoyed taking a trip down memory lane.



*Miss Florence de Jong at the  
Compton organ*

## EPILOGUE

May, 1995

*The story of my German occupation memories was actually started over forty years ago, when dad and I started reminiscing back through the war years. It had been forgotten and put aside for all these years, until a few months ago when, looking through his occupation diaries, I found many press cuttings and snippets he had recorded of events I had all but forgotten. With the celebration of fifty years of freedom from German rule coming up this May 9<sup>th</sup> 1995, I put our memories into print.*

*I really owe this book to my dad, as all through the war years I followed him everywhere just like his shadow. Being an only child, I spent many hours watching him in the garden, I helped with my own fork and spade; when he mended things, I had my hammer and nails; when he serviced his machinery, I was there to hand him the right spanner or plug and when he tended the goats, I was at his side, so I learned to milk at an early age. These memories will live on for me in my story, 'One in a Thousand'. The title refers to the fact that I was one of the thousand children left on the Island of Guernsey after the evacuation. I am sure that my story could also be told again and again by any one of those remaining nine hundred and ninety nine young people.*







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