



VINTAGE

THE MODEL OCCUPATION

MADELINE BUNTING

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About the Book

When the Germans arrived on the Channel Islands after the defeat of France in the summer of 1940, they and the islanders agreed that it would be a 'Model Occupation'. But as the war dragged on and Britain appeared to abandon the islands to their fate, so features of Nazi occupation already widespread throughout Europe emerged. There were love affairs between island women and German soldiers, betrayals and black marketeering, individual acts of resistance, feats of courage and endurance. Every islander was faced with uncomfortable choices: where did patriotism end and self-preservation begin? What moral obligation did they have to the thousands of emaciated and ill-treated slave labourers the Nazi's brought among them to build an impregnable ring of defences around the islands?

About the Author

Madeleine Bunting was born in North Yorkshire. After studying history at Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, she won a Knox postgraduate fellowship to study and teach history at Harvard University. She worked for an independent television production company before joining the *Guardian* as a reporter in 1989. After a period as a leader writer, she is now a columnist. She has won several awards for her journalism and is a regular broadcaster. She has three children and lives in London.

'I am full of admiration for this book. By careful research and a sensitive use of light and shade, Ms Bunting holds the reader's attention through an uncomfortable passage in our history - and one which we have been most reluctant to inform ourselves.'

Alan Clark, *Guardian*

'Excellent researched . . . This book . . . is an important historical document, if an uncomfortable one, in the understanding of our national character.'

John Mortimer, *Sunday Times*

'The question is often asked: what would have happened if the Nazis had occupied Britain? Would most of us have acquiesced in collaboration, as, for instance, the French did? To a limited extent we know the answers, because the Channel Islands were occupied by the Nazis for almost five years. And any doubts on the matter have now been resolved by Madeleine Bunting's excellent book, which is thoroughly unflinching, fair-minded, humane and sensitive.'

Paul Johnson, *Evening Standard*

'The chill which creeps over us while following this chronicle, a blend of smoothly accomplished narrative and pungent historical analysis, derives from Madeleine Bunting's unemotional clarity in weighing the evidence.'

Jonathan Keates, *Observer*

'Scholarly and immensely readable.'

Jack Higgins, *Mail on Sunday*

'A scrupulously fair account of life under occupation.'

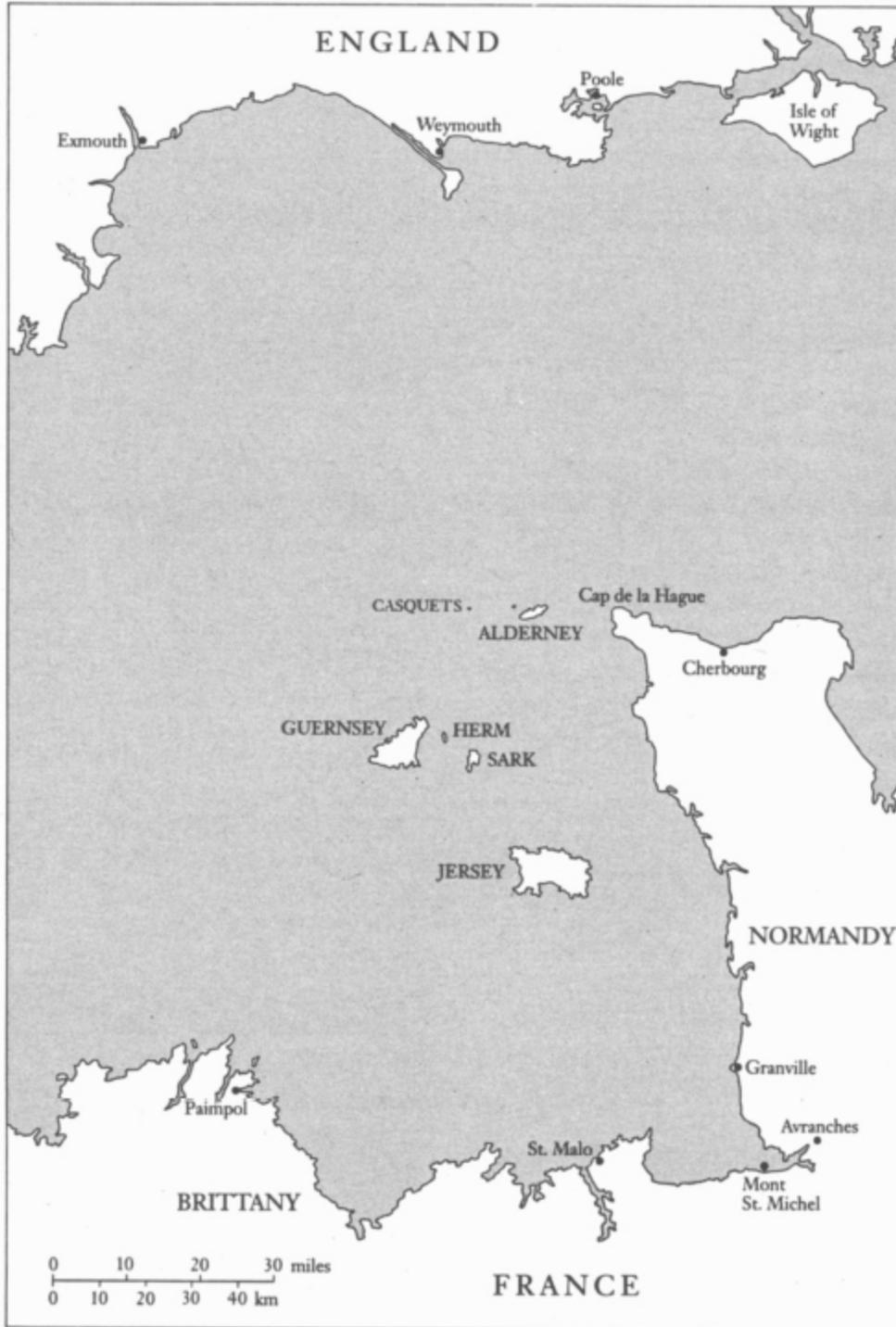
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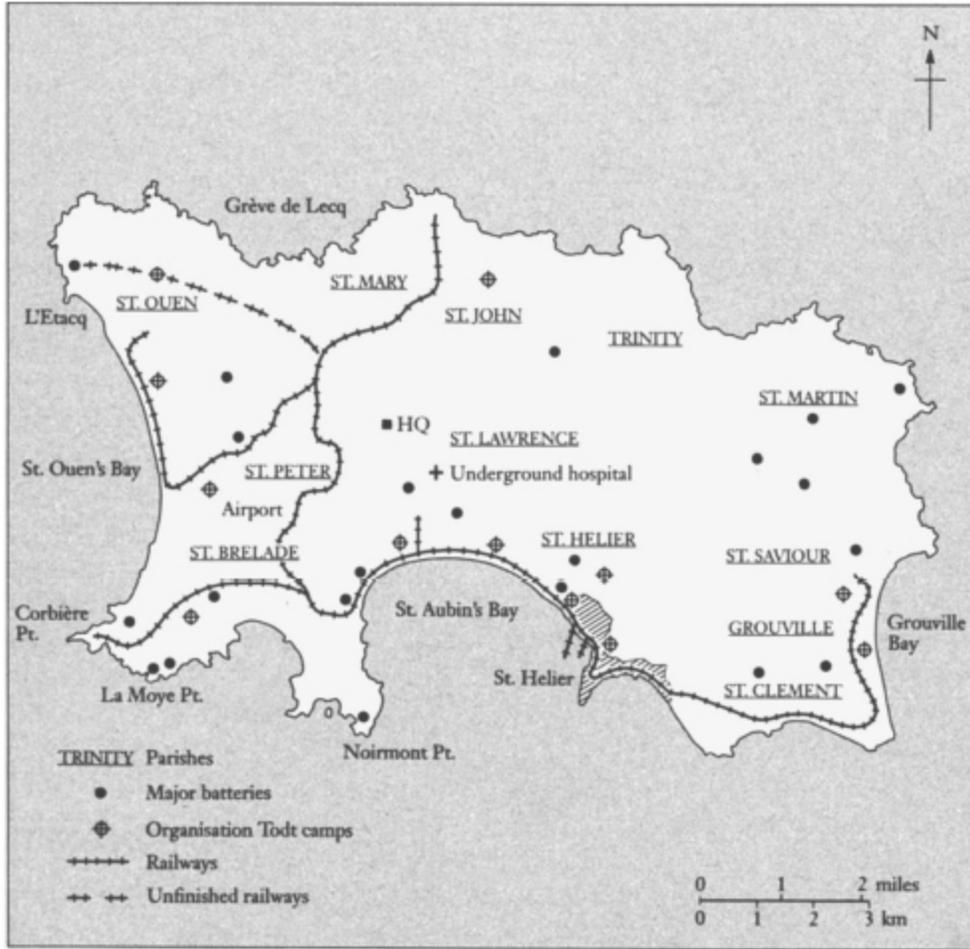
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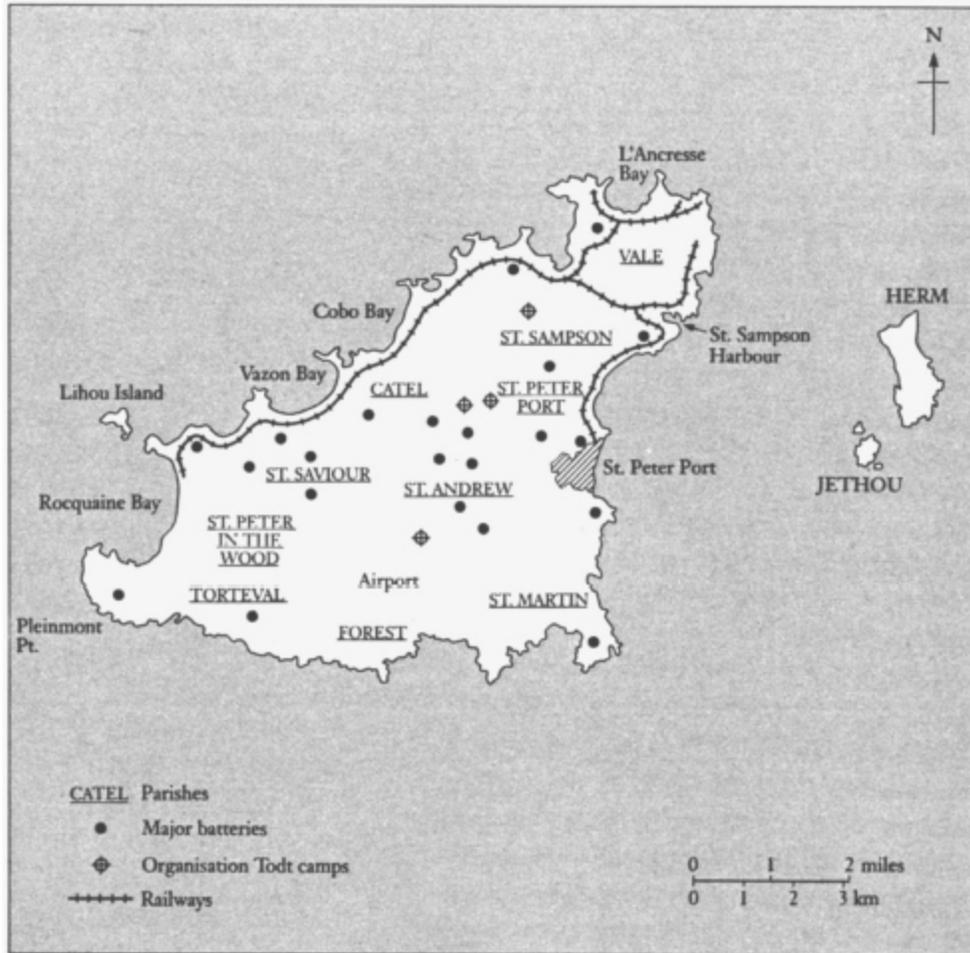
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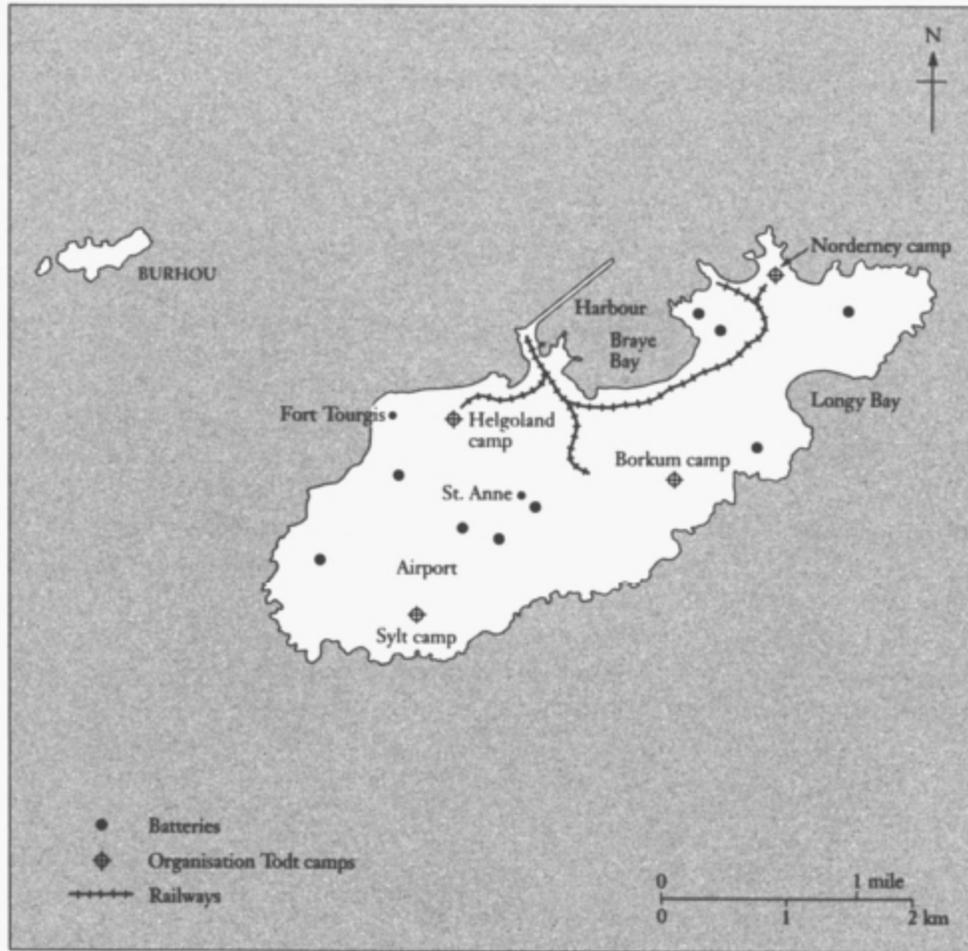
The Channel Islands



Jersey, showing parishes, German fortifications and railways, and labour camps



Guernsey, showing parishes, German fortifications and railways, and labour camps



Alderney, showing German fortifications, railways and Organisation Todt camps

Chronology

1940

15 June

War Cabinet decides to demilitarise the Channel Islands.

16–20 June

All military equipment and personnel evacuated from the islands.

19 June

Island governments informed of the decision to demilitarise. Preparations for evacuation begin.

21–23 June

Thirty thousand islanders evacuated to Britain.

28 June

Germans bomb St Peter Port, Guernsey and St Helier, Jersey, killing forty-four people.

30 June

Germans land at Guernsey airport. The island surrenders.

1 July

Jersey occupied.

2–3 July

Alderney and Sark occupied.

9–28 July

Philip Martel and Desmond Mulholland land on Guernsey, but are forced to give themselves up and are sent as prisoners of war to France.

1 August

Ambrose Sherwill, President of Guernsey's Controlling Committee, broadcasts on Radio Bremen.

4 September–21
October

Hubert Nicolle and James Symes hide on Guernsey. On their

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| | surrender, fourteen islanders who had helped them, including Ambrose Sherwill, are imprisoned in France. |
| 27 September | Anti-Semitic laws are registered in the islands' parliaments. |
| December | The islanders imprisoned for helping Nicolle and Symes return from France. |
| 1941 | |
| 24 May | Bread rationing starts. |
| 15 June | Hitler orders the fortification of the islands. |
| 8 July | Victor Carey, Bailiff of Guernsey, offers a £25 reward for information leading to the arrest of anyone found guilty of painting 'V for Victory' signs. |
| November | Dr Fritz Todt, founder of the Organisation Todt, visits the islands as part of the planning for the fortification programme. The first OT workers arrive. |
| 1942 | |
| January | Four camps - Helgoland, Norderney, Sylt and Borkum - are set up on Alderney for the OT workers. RAF bombing raids on St Peter Port harbour kill several islanders. |
| March | Eighteen Guernsey policemen are arrested for stealing from German and civilian stores and selling the goods on the black market. |

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| 21 April | Three Jewish women, Auguste Spitz, Therese Steiner and Marianne Grunfeld, are deported to France. All are to die in Auschwitz. |
| May | 'Guernsey Underground News Service' starts publication. |
| June | All civilian radios banned. |
| 16-27 September | Two thousand islanders deported to German internment camps for the duration of the war. |
| 3-4 October | British raid on Sark. Two Germans killed, one captured. |
| 1943 | |
| January | The <i>Xaver Dorsch</i> and the <i>Franka</i> run aground off Braye harbour, Alderney, leading to the loss of hundreds of slave workers' lives. |
| 18 January | Teaching of German made compulsory in all island schools. |
| 12-25 February | A second deportation of just over two hundred islanders. |
| March | SS Baubrigade I, commanded by Maximilian List and Kurt Klebeck, arrives on Alderney. Sylt camp passes to the control of the SS. |
| 22 June | Louise Gould and Harold Le Druillenec sentenced for hiding a Russian slave worker. Le Druillenec narrowly survives Belsen; Gould dies in Ravensbrück in February 1945. |
| 23-24 October | HMS <i>Charybdis</i> and HMS <i>Limbourne</i> sink off the islands with the loss of |

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| 17 November | 504 British lives. Forty-one bodies washed up on Guernsey and Jersey are buried with full military honours. |
| 1944 | |
| 6 April | Members of the 'Guernsey Underground News Service' put on trial. Five are imprisoned in France, where two of them die. |
| 6 June | D-Day. The Allied invasion of Normandy begins. |
| June–August | The Allied capture of Cherbourg, Granville and St Malo cuts the islands off from all supplies. |
| July | The remaining slave workers on Alderney are evacuated to France. |
| 7 July | The <i>Minotaure</i> , carrying slave workers and French prostitutes, is sunk by British torpedoes with the loss of 250 lives. |
| 9 September | Gas supply on Jersey comes to an end. |
| 19 September | The German government informs the Swiss, as intermediary power, that civilian supplies on the islands 'are exhausted'. |
| 7 November | Britain agrees to allow the Red Cross to provide food parcels for the islanders. |
| 2 December | Suzanne Malherbe and Lucille Schwab are sentenced to death for spreading anti-German propaganda. |

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| 21 December | Gas supply on Guernsey comes to an end. |
| 27-30 December | The <i>Vega</i> arrives with 750 tons of food and medical supplies for the islanders from the Red Cross. |
| 1945 | |
| 13 January | Milkless days introduced. |
| 7-11 February | The <i>Vega</i> brings more supplies. |
| 17 February-12 March | No bread available. |
| 7 March | An unexplained explosion at the Palace Hotel, Jersey, kills nine Germans. |
| 25 March | Admiral Hüffmeier, now Inselkommandant, declares that there will be no surrender of the islands. |
| 8 May | VE Day. The Liberation Force holds talks off the islands with the Germans. |
| 9 May | The Germans surrender the islands. Brigadier Alfred Snow sets up a military government. |
| 14-15 May | Home Secretary Herbert Morrison visits the islands. |
| 18 May | Major Haddock begins his investigation into the treatment of slave workers on Alderney. |
| 7 June | King George VI and Queen Elizabeth visit islands. |
| 25 June | The first evacuees return from Britain. |

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| August | 2190 deportees begin to return from Britain after being repatriated from Germany. |
| 25 August | Brigadier Snow's military government hands over power to the island governments. |
| October | Captain Theodore Pantcheff completes his report on atrocities against slave workers on the islands. A copy is sent to the Soviet Union with a view to the prosecution of certain German officers. However, no further action is taken. |
| 1946 | |
| November | Home Secretary James Chuter-Ede announces to the House of Commons that the Director of Public Prosecutions has decided that there will be no trials of collaborators as 'there are insufficient grounds to warrant the institution of criminal proceedings'. |

The Model Occupation

The Channel Islands under German Rule
1940-45

Madeleine Bunting



PIMLICO

Preface to the Pimlico Edition

The writing of history is akin to a relay race: the baton is handed on to the next researcher who comes to the task with new energy and determination. Each researcher builds on the insights and material of predecessors, revising, adding and, in turn, bringing their own interpretation and understanding to events. To my great satisfaction, this book – first published in 1995 on the fiftieth anniversary of the liberation of the islands – proved a springboard for further research into this period of the islands' history.

One man in particular took on the challenges thrown down in my final chapter. Frederick Cohen, then president of Jersey's Jewish Congregation, began the painstaking research into the lives of all the Channel Island Jews during the Occupation which resulted in the publication of a monograph, *The Jews in the Channel Islands during the German Occupation*. After years of work, he has pieced together the circumstances of their lives and what happened to them.

One of the most extraordinary stories he unearthed was that of Albert Bedane. On Holocaust Memorial Day (27 January 2004), a small ceremony took place in the Occupation Tapestry Gallery of the Jersey Museum in St Helier. The Bailiff, the head of the Jersey government, unveiled a cabinet displaying the certificate and medal awarded to Albert Bedane, an islander, recognising him as a 'Righteous Among the Gentiles' by the Yad Vashem, the Holocaust Centre in Israel.

Albert Bedane makes a rather unlikely hero. As rumour has it, he was something of a 'ladies man', a physiotherapist

and masseur to the island farmers. But for two-and-a-half years, he hid a Dutch Jewess, Mary Richardson, from the German authorities and Jersey police. He also offered refuge to escaped Russian forced labourers. If he had been caught, he would have been deported and would probably have died in a concentration camp (the fate of fellow islander, Louisa Gould). After the war, he was not one to blow his own trumpet and when he died in Jersey in 1980, few attended his funeral. By the time I began my research in the early nineties, no one mentioned Bedane's name to me - he merits only a footnote in my history. Now he is an island hero and his story is even featured in study packs produced by Britain's Holocaust Education Trust.

Nor was Bedane the only islander to shelter a Jew. Dorothea Weber hid Hedwig Bercu for over 18 months. The risks were enormous, and the difficulty of feeding such guests considerable. Bercu and Weber were helped by a German officer: an extraordinary story of friendship across enemy lines. Bercu subsequently married the officer and moved with him to Germany where they raised a family.

But while Bedane and Weber's bravery has given Jersey reason to be proud, the new material uncovered by other researchers such as Paul Sanders (*The Ultimate Sacrifice*) and David Fraser (*The Jews in the Channel Islands and the Rule of Law 1940-45*) has raised more difficult questions about the conduct of the islands' governments. Was there more they could have done to protect individual islanders, in particular the Jews? Why did they put such effort into protecting the Freemasons but not the Jews? Why did they agree to the German decision to make the possession of a wireless a criminal offence - an agreement that led the island authorities down the slippery slope towards collaboration? Their handing over to the Germans of islanders caught with wirelesses sometimes had tragic consequences.

The most egregious example was the case of Frederick Page, an English-born First World War veteran who was prosecuted for listening to an illegal wireless and, under a particularly harsh sentence, deported to Germany where he died of ill-treatment in 1945. More evidence has emerged in the last few years that some island officials were aware of the moral dilemmas they faced. They justified their actions on the grounds that they had to consider the greater good of the island populations, and that on a few occasions that required the sacrifice of individuals. The debate over the merits of this policy will continue; some historians will point to the decision of the Danish government to resign rather than implement the German order to deport the Jews; others will argue that the island authorities acted as a buffer, protecting islanders from the full force of direct German rule. Yet others will argue that this is a discredited position - one used in the sixties to defend the behaviour of the Vichy government in Occupied France but which has now been exposed as having little basis in contemporary records.

One of the most difficult aspects of the Occupation for the islanders to come to terms with was the close involvement of island officials in implementing the German orders against the tiny Jewish community. The new material shows that in Jersey at least, officials attempted to mitigate some of the anti-semitic measures: they refused to implement the wearing of gold stars; through an elaborate subterfuge, they Aryanised businesses by 'selling' them but returned them to their rightful Jewish owners after the war. But that is only one small part of the picture. Other documents give new detail of how island officials made no attempt to protect the few Jews on the islands. They quizzed frightened individuals about their Jewish ancestry, and imposed strict curfews on Jews - they were only allowed to shop between three and four o'clock in the afternoon. Jewish businesses were closed

down and families struggled to survive without their livelihood.

The Jews were terrified. On Jersey, two committed suicide, one was admitted to a mental asylum where he died, the cause of death recorded as 'maniacal exhaustion, insanity'. A Guernsey Jew, Elisabet Duquemin remembered, 'every day for a year-and-a-half until I was deported to a German concentration camp, I lived in fear and terror. I was in trauma all the time. Every day I was frightened, and did not know if they would take me away, or my baby daughter, or my husband.' Elisabet, her eighteen-month-old daughter and her husband were all deported but mercifully survived.

What makes the documents so painful to read is the deference of these frightened individuals and their naive faith in the island authorities. Many of them made no attempt to hide their Jewish background and some attended the island government offices to volunteer information on their grandparents' ethnicity. One, Esther Lloyd, even did so erroneously and found herself deported to an internment camp where she fought to correct her mistake: 'never shall I be honest again. If I had not declared myself this wouldn't have happened' she wrote in a diary.

This is the kind of material which makes the Channel Islands' wartime history such a unique and vital part of Britain's Holocaust history. The level of petty detail pursued by island officials calls to mind Hannah Arendt's phrase, the 'banality of evil'. It was small actions on the part of thousands of local police and town officials all over Europe, unquestioningly obeying authority, which had terrible, evil consequences. What has always made the Channel Islands' record so important is that it punctures that British complacent assumption of a national immunity to this combination of amoral bureaucracy and anti-semitism.

For many countries occupied by Germany in the Second World War, facing up honestly to their wartime record has been a slow, piecemeal and painful process, because

communities were so bitterly divided. What is evident since I published *The Model Occupation* in 1995 is how far Jersey has come. Key to that process has been the leadership of the Bailiff, Sir Phillip Bailhache. Born after the war, he has brought a new understanding of the imperative of accepting the 'warts and all' history of the Occupation as a way to shape his ideal of a 'socially inclusive identity' for Jersey in the twenty-first century. His innumerable speeches delivered at Holocaust Memorial Day services and other official occasions in recent years show clearly a man who has thought deeply about the issues. While he vigorously defends the island authorities, he also acknowledges openly the 'moral ambiguities' which confronted many islanders in the Occupation and which brought out both the 'worst and the best of human nature.'

Jersey now has a prominent memorial on the harbour quayside to the 22 islanders who died as a result of imprisonment in German prisons and concentration camps. In 1998, the first memorial service for all the islands' Occupation Jews was held in the Jersey synagogue; it was attended by the heads of the three island governments. A plaque has been put up on Jersey to their memory. A website, launched in 2003 and dedicated to the Occupation (www.occupationmemorial.org), carries information and photographs of each individual's story. Schoolchildren in Jersey are no longer just taught about the 'guns and tin-hats', but about the suffering of many islanders and of the thousands of forced labourers brought to build the huge concrete fortifications on the island - many of whom died from exhaustion and malnutrition.

While Jersey has done much to face up to its past, Guernsey has been more reluctant: a small plaque was finally put up in 2001 to the memory of the three Jews deported from the island who died in concentration camps. But at the 1998 memorial service for all the islands' Jews, the short speech of the Bailiff of Guernsey, Sir Graham

Dorey, referred only to the fact that the Jews on Guernsey were foreign-born and their deportation was implemented by Germans without any reference to the role of the island authorities. There are other gaps due more to indifference and apathy than any active wish to forget. There is still no memorial on the site of the SS Sylt camp in Alderney. The concrete ruins which once housed many of the forced labourers - including many French Jews and German political prisoners who died there from ill-treatment - are barely visible under the bracken. As the Bailiff of Jersey himself said in his 1998 address, it was the carelessness and indifference of people which enabled the Holocaust to happen, and it is to combat those characteristics that the duty of remembrance lies so heavily on ensuing generations.

Madeleine Bunting
January 2004

Additional Bibliography

The Ultimate Sacrifice Paul Sanders. Jersey Museums Service 1998

The Jews in the Channel Islands during the German Occupation 1940-45

Frederick Cohen. Jersey Heritage Trust 2000

The Jews in the Channel Islands and the Rule of Law David Fraser, Sussex Academic Press 2000

Note on Sources

This book is based on nearly a hundred interviews with islanders and labour camp survivors. This oral history is supported by a wealth of newly released archival material. In December 1992 the Home Office released twenty-eight files which were to have remained closed until the year 2045. Pressure in Parliament and newspapers persuaded the Heritage Secretary, William Waldegrave, to open the files to the public as part of Prime Minister John Major's 'open government' initiative. Their early release followed an agreement with the Channel Islands, and in January 1993 the Guernsey States Archives, with their unparalleled documentation of the Occupation government and the German military administration, were finally opened to the public. The Jersey archives were not opened until March 1994, the delay being largely due to the fact that in November 1991 the entire collection was stolen from an attic cupboard in the island's parliament building. The majority of the documents were recovered, and were held as police evidence for nearly two years, but by special permission of the Bailiff of Jersey, Sir Peter Crill, and the Jersey police headquarters, I was given full access to them.

I was the first researcher to see documents concerning Alderney in the Russian State Archives in Moscow, which had been declassified only a few weeks before my arrival in May 1993. This new material added to the large volume of documents, which had never been properly researched, in the Centre de Documentation Juive et Contemporaine in Paris, in the Imperial War Museum in London, and in the Public Record Office at Kew.

Many documents in Britain and on the Channel Islands have been destroyed, some probably as a matter of routine, but others possibly to prevent embarrassment.

I am very grateful to a number of islanders and historians who have provided new information or made suggestions following the publication of this book in hardback. I have incorporated a large number of their points in this paperback edition, which also includes a new appendix on 'The Jewish Question'.

INTRODUCTION

AN ISLAND PEOPLE

'Newspapers write about the Channel Islands' Occupation in the way they do because this was the only bit of the British Isles which was occupied, and we're supposed to have reacted like the British would. But we didn't behave as British people should. Since the war we have felt like a woman must feel in a rape trial. People accuse her of having led the rapist on. But just as a woman might cooperate for fear of not surviving, so did we.'

*Guernseyman Rollo Sherwill, a
boy during the Occupation*

WHAT IF HITLER had invaded Britain? Who would have plotted resistance? Who would have made a handsome profit selling guns and uniform cloth to the Germans and trading in black market whisky? How would the majority of the British people have muddled their way through? A German invasion so nearly came to pass that such questions have intrigued every generation since the war. The Channel Islands were as close as Hitler got; they were the one bit of British soil he conquered. That is why those blurred black-and-white photos of the Channel Islands' Occupation are so riveting: German soldiers marching past Lloyds Bank or flirting with island girls outside Boots the Chemists, or getting directions from a smiling British bobby. This is what life could have been like in Britain, with Germans on British streets and in British shops. What happened on the Channel Islands could have happened in the rest of Britain.

The Channel Islands' occupation, Hitler decided, was to be a model of Anglo-German co-operation. This was to be the testing ground for the occupation of Britain. For very

different reasons, the islanders also wanted a model occupation. They wanted peace, a semblance of normal life, and the continuation of their own governments. It was an uneasy convergence of interests. But over the course of five years, the islanders were painfully to learn that there was no such thing as a model occupation under the Nazis.

In the scale of the history of the Second World War, the Channel Islands, with a total population of just under a hundred thousand, are little more than a footnote. But their fate warrants attention. Here, British communities lived under Nazi occupation, and their social fabric was stretched to breaking point. Since the war, that fabric has been darned and patched, and its unity has been reconstituted by the development of a collective memory which erases divisions, and formulates a past most can accept.

This book is a study of how small, tightly-knit communities cope with a traumatic event like occupation, and how such a divisive event is then defined in the communal memory. Islanders have sifted - and are still sifting - through the facts of the Occupation, and selected those which support their current understanding of it. Collective memory is not static, and this history is not finished. The islanders themselves have been the richest source of information for this book; as they spoke to me over the course of 1992 and 1993 they revealed both the memories they celebrated and the memories they had denied. Interviewing them was like an archaeological investigation into collective memory; digging down into the recesses of individual recollections, piecing fragments together with diaries and documents to build a history which had never been recorded before, and was in danger of going to the grave with the generation who had lived it.

There have been islanders who have resented my questions, such as the Jerseywoman who rounded on me in fury: 'I have two uncles who died fighting in the war, and their names are on the war monuments here. No one can