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Artefacts of occupation: the enduring archaeology of Jersey, Channel Islands

‘We are told that Jersey is the last place the Nazis would attack. It is of neither economic or strategic importance [but] so far from this being the case, I think – nay, I am sure – that the exact opposite is true, and that at the present juncture no part of the Empire is in greater peril.’

Letter from Jersey islander Frank Johnson, published in the *Jersey Evening Post*, May 1940.

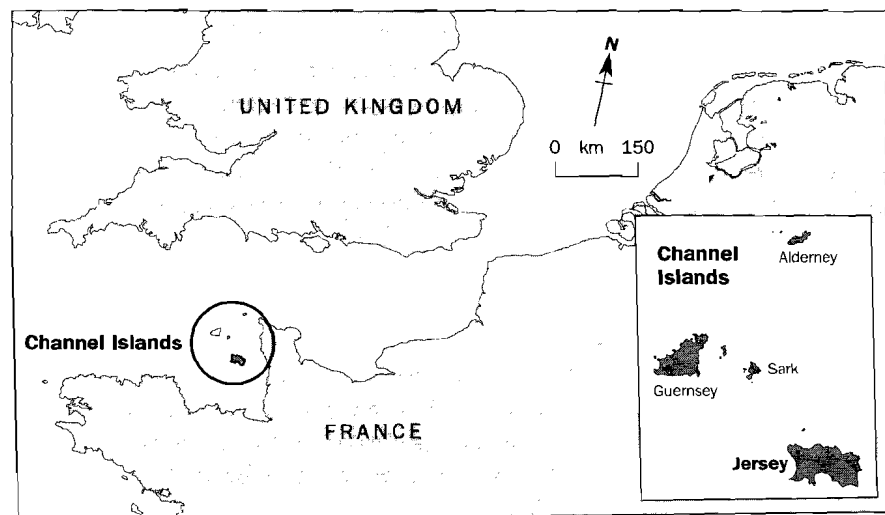
‘We were ditched by the UK government. We felt stripped naked. After demilitarisation, we had no means of defending ourselves.’

Jersey schoolteacher Harry Aubin¹

Introduction

The small, bay-rich islands of Jersey, Guernsey, Alderney, Sark, Herm and Jethou lie in the English Channel off the northwest coast of France, considerably closer to that country’s regions of Normandy and Brittany than to the south of England (Figure 1). The islands’ geographical position has proved to be a crucial factor in their cultural identity since prehistory: their proximity to the European mainland, their endowments of rich flora and fauna, semitropical climate and

Figure 1 The location of Jersey.



the variety of their landscapes have given the islands a unique value, resulting in a complex history of possession over millennia. Jersey is the largest island, with an area of 44 square miles (114 km²), while the next largest, Guernsey, measures 24½ square miles (63½ km²); both have international airports and frequent sea crossings to the UK and France.

Artefacts found on the islands suggest habitation over several millennia, and the islands' history encapsulates not only the fortunes of waves of invaders, but also the fate of those forced to flee their homes on mainland Europe. For years, the islands have provided a refuge; in the twentieth century they welcomed new waves of émigrés, northern Europeans lured by the sun and the prospect of new lives, banking professionals seeking to make their fortunes from the islands' offshore tax status, and Madeira islanders in search of seasonal work in the hotel trade, who brought with them an enduring Portuguese population. The islands also hoped, but failed, to repel those who arrived by force, and it is the marks left by this activity with which this chapter is most concerned. Visitors to the islands today will still find 50-year-old remains of metalwork and concrete, many of them perched incongruously next to ancient sites, and at locations of extraordinary natural beauty (Colour plate 8).

From AD 933, the Channel Islands belonged to the Duchy of Normandy and, as a result of William the Conqueror's claim to the English throne after the Battle of Hastings in 1066, the islands became the property of the British monarchy, a situation which prevails to this day. However, the islands are also independent: they have their own jurisdiction, coinage and stamps, and boast other cultural anomalies, including the prevailing use of Norman French. They are not controlled by the British government from Westminster, and they also lie outside the dictates of the European Union. They have resisted the pressure of change, although, at the time of writing, there are measures planned which would bring the islands in line with Europe in those areas of finance and taxation which have benefited Jersey and Guernsey in particular, and which, together with tourism, have created the islands' healthy economy. Despite the prospect of any possible reforms, the islands have entered the twenty-first century maintaining the unique quality of being both distinctively Continental while projecting an aspect of quintessential Englishness.

However, this dual culture, exemplified in the easy confluence of French street names and surnames and British customs, acquired a different aspect with the onset of war and the question of loyalty to a British government which, many islanders felt, had simply chosen to leave them vulnerable to the German forces. The islanders' ambivalence towards the United Kingdom needs to be closely borne in mind when considering the events of the Second World War and the artefacts that were left behind.

The narratives of Jersey

The historical and archaeological literature of the Channel Islands reflects the enduring challenge of understanding the nature of 'invasion' and 'occupation'. The sought-after, or now lost, antiquarian works, which describe dolmens, druid sites, castles, pleasant cliff-top walks, and bestow on Jersey the earlier name of 'Caesarea', find their balance in other rare works – the unpublished diaries and memories kept by those who lived out the Occupation on the islands. Many of these works will have been kept at times of indescribable conditions, and many will have gone for ever, being either too painful to be kept, and hence destroyed, or simply lost. Nevertheless, some accounts have made their way into print, such as Audrey Anquetil's privately-published and undated *Wartime Memories*, John Dalmau's *Slave Worker*, privately published in 1946, and Frank Stroobant's *One Man's War*, published only in 1992. The printing presses of the Channel Islands' newspapers have also produced invaluable source material, notably Leslie Sinel's *The German Occupation of Jersey: A Complete Diary of Events, June 1940 – June 1945*, published in 1945 by the *Jersey Evening Post*, and VV Cortvriend's *Isolated Island: A History and Personal Reminiscences of the German Occupation of Guernsey June 1940 – May 1945*, published in 1946 by the *Guernsey Star and Gazette*. The titles of other volumes, such as *Islanders Deported*, reflect the utter transformation undergone by the once-blessed Channel Islands during the war.²

Before the Second World War, the numerous cultures which made up the distinctive character of the Channel Islands could be identified traditionally, through the vestiges of material culture displayed in the islands' museums, much of it coming from excavations carried out by antiquarians and archaeologists: coins from the Continent, ceramics and potsherds, and other familiar archaeological artefacts which helped to build a picture of the earliest inhabitants. Other less tangible remains were left to be discerned through the roots of the language and personality of the people, who continued to speak and write a patois of old Norman French and to harbour a historic grudge toward the other islanders.

For this chapter, however, I am largely drawing on the works of two women writers, researching 60 years apart: Jacquetta Hawkes, the archaeologist, whose monograph on Jersey prehistory was researched and written just as Europe was descending into the Second World War, and Madeleine Bunting, whose book *The Model Occupation* exposed the many layers of island life during the traumatic Occupation years for a postwar generation and was published to mark the 50th anniversary of the Liberation. I will also concentrate on the island of Jersey.

From 28 June 1940, when the Channel Islands were invaded by German forces, through an Occupation lasting the duration of the Second World War, to the aftermath, modern archaeological evidence

is shaped by the context of those engaged with these artefacts. This chapter is inspired by the idea of ‘modern archaeology’, which I have explored elsewhere, but not to such a personal degree.³ It is also important to note that I am a Channel Islander who grew up in Jersey surrounded by the material culture of this and other occupations, not least via my mother and grandmother, who lived on Jersey throughout the war and for many years afterwards. This has necessarily produced a different sensitivity to the subject matter, about which – crucially – no oral testimony from family members is available.

The British historian Madeleine Bunting, author of *The Model Occupation*, who conducted hundreds of interviews for her critically-acclaimed, and controversially-received, book on the Channel Islands under the Occupation, introduces the process of gathering such memories from those still coming to terms with their own history: ‘memories they had celebrated and memories they had denied’.⁴ She writes: ‘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 person who had lived it.’⁵

Fifty years after the Occupation of the islands began, the events of that time remain a controversial issue. Often, those making gentle enquiries on the islands, or pursuing deeper investigation, receive short shrift from those islanders who have lived there all their lives, and many resent repeated questioning, particularly on the issues of collaboration and black-marketeering, not least for the manner in which they are judged for actions carried out during what they regard as a state of siege. However, the questions continue to be asked, and this chapter will also describe the delicate balance of presenting this difficult history on an island where some of those who lived through it are still alive.

Adolf Hitler’s grand design for the islands was to create fortresses which would be both an example of Anglo-German cooperation and a devastating blow to British morale, being the only part of the British Isles under Nazi rule.

On 20 June 1940 the last of the British troops were evacuated from the Channel Islands. The demilitarisation was kept secret by the British government, with the consequence that the Germans treated the islands as a legitimate target for the bloody air raids that followed. From this event came the feeling of ‘being abandoned’ by Britain, particularly given the sense of chaos surrounding the evacuation of some 30,000 islanders between 19 and 22 June. Documents revealing this were only made public in 1992.⁶ The histories and anecdotes from this period need to be seen through various filters, depending on whether the narrator was one of those who remained on the islands during the war, or who was forced to leave, or who suffered losses as a

result of the Occupation, or, particularly controversially, could be said to have gained in some way, notably financially, from the war.

Retelling the events which led to the Occupation of Jersey in June 1940 presents a challenge to those engaged with informing the public, particularly those from the younger generation of Jersey islanders, or from abroad, who are often new to the idea that any part of the British Isles was occupied during the Second World War. The way in which this challenge is being met, and the innovative presentation of this recent past to the public, forms the central theme of this chapter. While the more traditional archaeology collections on the island, such as that gathered and displayed by the Société Jersiaise at its museum in St Helier, and the artefacts shown at the prehistoric site of La Hougue Bie, are indeed significant, this chapter concentrates on a more recent museum, a prime example of a less orthodox collection of artefacts, housed at the visitor attraction called the Jersey War Tunnels.

Jersey ‘things’

To bring the German Occupation into context, as being the latest of several incursions of the islands since prehistory, this chapter also considers how these earlier occupations, and the artefacts they left behind, have been discussed and perceived. These artefacts in some respects may not be regarded as ‘artefacts’ at all, being seen as items of historical interest, but not evidence of past social process. However, echoing the sentiment of Arjun Appadurai’s *The Social Life of Things*, objects of any age might be used to construct biographies, and indeed they are given life, socialised, by that conjunction of ‘thing’ and ‘human activity’.⁷ For many years after it ended, the Channel Island Occupation was a piece of lost history. Its reconstruction is a unique aspect of the growing interest in the recent military past, but, unlike the records of the British Isles, which have spawned a largely open disclosure, the traumatic events in the Channel Islands have led to a more fragmented and difficult approach to the recent past. Many of the thousands who died in prison camps, or constructing the concrete edifices of Hitler’s ‘fortress island’ ideal which still stand today, have been nameless for decades. It is only now, through the process of reconstituting the history of the Occupation, in which every scrap of material from that period is significant, that the Channel Islands are memorialising their past.

Elsewhere, I have discussed the movement of things over time, and how changes in the practice of archaeology itself have resulted in a re-viewing of the same object.⁸ However, given that it is only in recent years that there has been genuine information available about the Occupation, and the problem of obtaining information from the many people who still experience prevailing discomfort when asked to remember the details, such artefacts as there are – documents, photographs, radios, foodstuffs – take on an added poignancy.

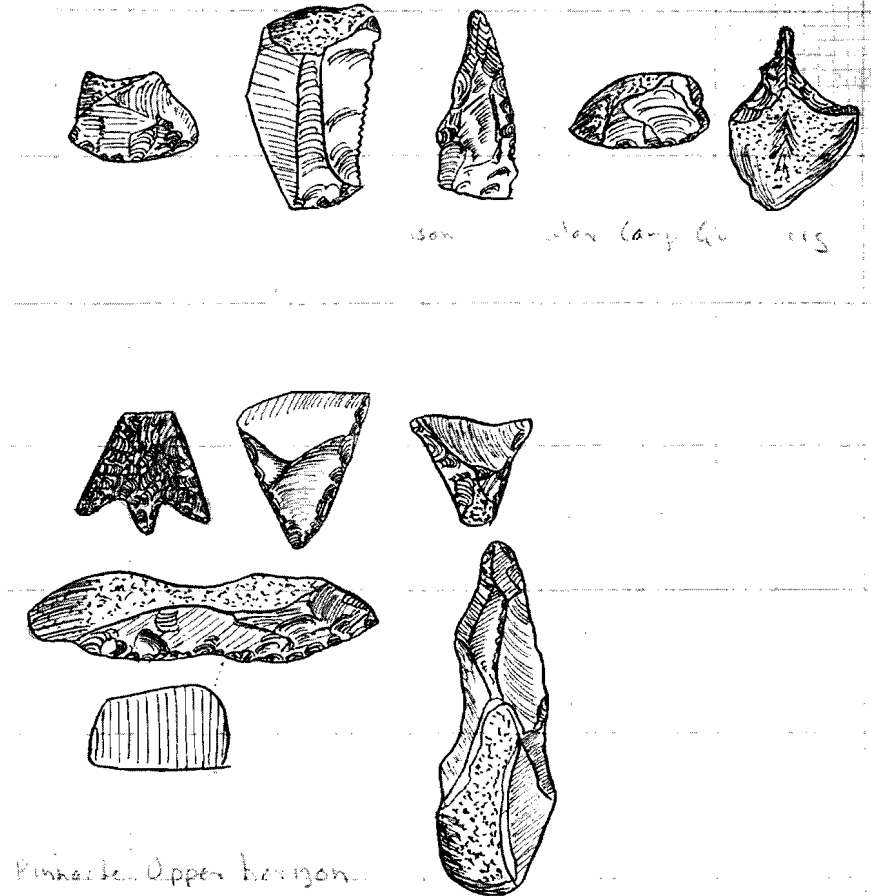
Not only have they survived the long war years, but also they have not been destroyed by those who have found their presence too difficult to bear. Liberation Day must surely have created many such reminders. Likewise, in the days before and at the beginning of the Occupation, fleeing islanders left a desperate trail of artefacts such as furniture and suitcases, and sometimes even pets, in their abandoned homes and at the quaysides.

The first work I will consider is one of traditional archaeology. In 1937, the archaeologist and writer Jacquetta Hawkes (Figure 2) visited Jersey to write a major volume on the island's ancient remains. The book was published in the summer of 1939 as *The Prehistory of the Channel Islands, Volume II: The Bailiwick of Jersey*.⁹ The publication helped to make Hawkes's name as a leading archaeologist and earned her the Fellowship of the Society of Antiquaries of London. What is interesting to consider in the context of this chapter is the timing of the publication, and how Hawkes's use of the terms 'occupation' and 'invasion' was prescient for the events which were to come: the volume's map of the island's prehistoric and historic sites would soon be augmented by the military artefacts of German Occupation. Hawkes also includes in the volume a rather portentous illustration



Figure 2 The author and archaeologist Jacquetta Hawkes, with Christopher Hawkes (left) and an unnamed man. (Jacquetta Hawkes Archive, Special Collections, J B Priestley Library, University of Bradford, ref. HAW/18/1/3/2/9)

Figure 3 Drawings of stone tools found at the site of a First World War 'Prisoner of War camp', attributed to the archaeologist Jacquetta Hawkes. (Jacquetta Hawkes Archive, Special Collections, J B Priestley Library, University of Bradford, ref. HAW/1/14)



from one of her own drawings: 'Flints from "chipping areas": prisoners of war camp sites' (Figure 3). This, it transpires, was a First World War prisoner-of-war camp, active from 1915 to 1919 at Les Blanchés Banques.¹⁰ Hawkes writes: 'A considerable piece of ground in the sandy terrain of the Lower Quennevais is still scarred by the last traces of the Prisoners-of-War Camp which was established there during the Great War. The disturbance of the occupation and dismantling of this camp, followed by a severe storm, revealed a very extensive area of prehistoric occupation marked by pottery, flint and stone implements, and shell middens. [...] To judge from the pottery, the occupation was at least roughly contemporary with the period when the Ossuary was in use, that is to say probably towards the very end of the megalithic period.'¹¹ Aside from the contextual significance, this military usage had performed a type of 'excavation'.¹²

Hawkes, then the wife of the leading prehistorian and Roman archaeologist Christopher Hawkes (Figure 2), had taken over the project from Tom Kendrick, one of her husband's colleagues at the British Museum, who had written *Volume I* on the neighbouring

Bailiwick of Guernsey. The islands had intrigued archaeologists for years, given their unique culture. Despite the close proximity of Jersey and Guernsey, there is a geological difference which is crucial for consideration of any 'invasion' hypothesis in prehistoric times. Jersey is formed from a landmass that includes the coast of what is now Brittany, while Guernsey has a different geological origin. Hence, the two islands can be discussed distinctly in terms of their earliest colonisations and relationship with the mainland. It is these remains of occupation – in both prehistoric and modern times – with which this chapter is concerned.

The complex prehistory of Jersey presents a series of particularly rewarding sites. Jacquetta Hawkes was working from notes made by Kendrick, and these in turn were compiled from archaeology carried out by the earliest archaeologists and antiquarians on Jersey. Occupation and invasion was also a concern in the nineteenth century. *The 'Complete' Guide to Jersey* by 'A Jerseyman', published in 1896, includes a section called 'Druidical Remains' which concludes that the dolmens and cromlechs 'scattered all over the island especially in the undisturbed moorland districts of Grosnez and La Yoye, are evidence of still much earlier races. These consist of innumerable flint chippings and wrought flint tools and weapons, with axes, mullers etc, in syenite and greenstone.'¹³ The writer continues with descriptions of thousands of chippings and cores found at an archaeological exploration in 1881, an event in which he apparently took part. There is comment also on the ancient name of Jersey, 'Caesarea', commonly interpreted as 'Caesar's Isle' and related to the conviction that there had been a Roman occupation of Jersey nearly 2000 years before.¹⁴ Furthermore, a ruin known as 'Caesar's fort' formed a part of the later Mont Orgueil (or Gorey) Castle on the west of the island; he also notes the remains of another, 'la petite Caesarée', found near Rozel, a 'Caesar's Wall', and the arms and coins dating from the Roman period in the collection of the Société Jersiaise.

The unknown author of a volume entitled *Caesarea, the Island of Jersey* published in 1840 appears to have been convinced of Caesar's presence on the island.¹⁵ In the section on 'Antiquities, druid temples, Roman works, Early Christian edifices, ancient privileges of Sanctuary (perquages)' he notes of Jersey's origins: 'It has been contended that it was known by the name of Augia previously to its occupation by the Romans, and that this was changed to Caesarea by that people.'¹⁶ He goes on: 'Although there can be no doubt that the Romans had possession of Jersey, history does not furnish any account of the time that they first invaded the island, or the period at which they quitted it.'¹⁷ Citing again the evidence of Roman coins and the 'Caesar's Wall', the nineteenth-century author writes: 'there was a tradition, which has been preserved, that Julius Caesar crossed over from Gaul to some islands, and took possession of them.'¹⁸

A century later, Jacquetta Hawkes overturns this idea: ‘The Roman name of Jersey is doubtful,’ she writes, ‘but it certainly was not Caesarea.’ She suggests instead that this name was ‘wantonly selected for it from the Antonine Itinerary by early antiquarians’.¹⁹ She further updates the antiquarian hypothesis of a Roman invasion of Jersey using the benefit of new finds and a broader archaeological perspective, suggesting it was not Romans per se who had lived on the island of Jersey, but refugees fleeing from Rome. The evidence for this, Hawkes argues, included the building of a strong promontory fort not *by* the Romans but *against* the Romans. Not least, ‘the burial of a huge numbers of coins’ on Jersey was significant, and to support this Hawkes lists the artefactual evidence of Roman coins from Gaulish hoards and the finds of Roman Imperial coins.²⁰ Further, she notes this evidence and ‘the apparent absence of settled burial places’, all of which points to the conclusion that the invaders were fugitives whose effective occupation of the island may have been brief and unstable. The exact date of their arrival is not perfectly clear; as the hoards include late and degenerate looking Armorican pieces and Roman coins of Octavius and Marcus Antonius, one of which is as late as 32 BC, they cannot be invariably connected with Caesar’s defeat of the Armorican insurrection of 56 BC.²¹

Developing the idea of a north–south cultural fringe – ‘a new human highway, the sea route along the Atlantic coasts’ – Hawkes ponders who built the island’s megaliths, and who comprised a native population of Jersey when explorers arrived from the Iberian peninsular to the south. Given Jersey’s geological continental connection, was there a repopulation of the island by settlers from Brittany to the southwest, or did the occupiers come from a newly-established Morbihan centre?

Hawkes’s consideration of the movement of peoples, a continental drift of culture into, and out of, the island, is most pertinent when she is summing up archaeologists’ ability to find Jersey’s ancient peoples from the artefacts they left behind. ‘Graves, weapons, tools, and pots, all the surviving material possessions of the prehistoric inhabitants, have been used as documents to tell the story of Jersey from a time when the island was peopled by creatures differing from modern man even in the structure of their bodies, down to the first contact with written history and the humanizing breath of remembered names: gaul, Roman and Norseman.’ Hawkes hoped that even if, over the ensuing many thousands of years, the narrative had been lost, ‘this chapter has served to show how the patient efforts of modern Jersey men to recover the relics of former islanders from the soil, has not merely meant the infilling of museum cases, but has provided material for a history, already intelligible, which the future will make better and more vivid’.²²

Jersey underground

One of the places described and photographed by Hawkes during her research on Jersey was the site of La Hougue Bie (Colour plate 9), which serves here as an unlikely bridge between the island's prehistory and its modern wartime past.²³ The site is best known for its prehistoric burial chamber, or dolmen, which has survived in excellent condition and was, according to Hawkes 'fully famed beyond any other prehistoric monument in Jersey [...] [possibly] one of the finest memorials of its time surviving in Western Europe'. Atop of the dolmen, the ground rises steeply to a medieval building. 'The great circular mound crowned with two medieval chapels' is vividly described by Hawkes, who recounts the 'fantastic framework of medieval legend' surrounding it, involving dragon-slaying and a servant's treachery. She then provides an explanation for the site arising 'among a people cut off by the curtain of time from any knowledge of their prehistoric forerunners, but who felt the need for some heroic explanation of the great monument which stood among their fields'.²⁴

However, within a few years of her writing, the inland rural site of La Hougue Bie had an additional feature; a German underground bunker was dug deep into the ground beside the site and concreted in, complete with an entrance door and steps. It survives today as a memorial beside the megaliths as part of Jersey's modern archaeology, and opens up an interesting phenomenon. Given that Jersey's prehistoric monuments were often constructed at exceptional vantage points overlooking the Channel, it is of little surprise that the German gun emplacements, bunkers and other observation posts should follow suit. Thus the visitor to Jersey today will often encounter the curious collision of 4000 years of island occupation at its most attractive coastal viewpoints.

As Hawkes had noted sagely of Jersey's earliest invasions: 'Contact with the outside world was relatively as significant a force in the cultural development of Jersey in prehistoric times as today when she lies an hour's journey from London by air.'

Hawkes's prehistory is still in use today, but the landscape of the sites has altered irrevocably. As noted earlier, the sites of many of the monuments Hawkes described were used in the 1940s as German gun emplacements. Others, such as La Hougue Bie, now share their position with the other vestiges of the war, either visible above ground or concealed underground. In recent years, the value placed on the artefacts of military history, in particular the remains of the Second World War and the Cold War, has given a new currency to the bunkers of the Channel Islands. Unique in being German defences in the British Isles, rather than British defences against the German forces, these have rapidly become assimilated as part of the material culture of the islands. Perhaps there has been more of a focus on preserving this form of archaeology given the context: the vestiges of war – from

Figure 4 The author of this chapter, aged three years (centre), with her mother, Phyllis, left, and a family friend, pictured at the German Underground Hospital (now the Jersey War Tunnels) in 1962. (Allan Finn)



barbed wire to concrete constructions – were being promoted as part of Jersey's tourist attractions long before such defences were protected or similarly promoted in Britain.²⁵

As noted above, I have a particular fascination for Jersey's cultural palimpsest: I was born on the island in 1959 and my mother and grandmother both survived the Occupation, the latter choosing to stay rather than be evacuated to the mainland. I grew up, and played, among the remains of the Occupation, notably the site known then as the German Underground Hospital, which is inland at St Peter's (Figure 4). Even at that time the site, now known by its wartime name

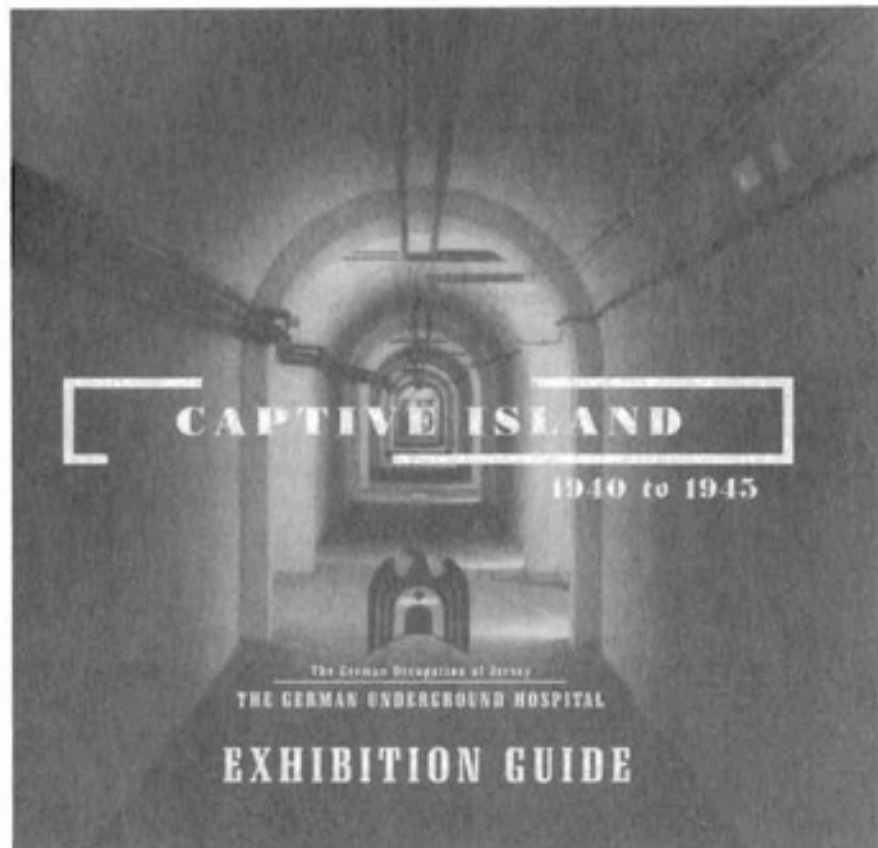


Figure 5 Ukrainian slave workers, pictured during the German Occupation, from the Jersey War Tunnels brochure. (Jersey War Tunnels)

of Ho8 or Hohlzugsanlage 8 Tunnel Complex, was an unadorned site on the tourism route: it was a simple and stark reminder of the construction work carried out over three years by prisoners of war, many of whom were injured or died in the process of building the 1 km defence work. Six thousand tonnes of concrete line the tunnels, for which thousands of tonnes of rock was blown out, the raw edges of this now left in poor light as a reminder of the conditions in which the prisoners worked. The Jersey War Tunnels Website states frankly that the workforce 'included hundreds of forced labourers from all over Europe, including Russian and Polish prisoners who were treated little better than animals'.²⁶ Many of them were labourers of the Organisation Todt, foreign workers who were billeted at a vast seaside dance hall, before facing the appalling conditions at Ho8. The West Park Pavilion was later restored to its prewar glory and has only recently been demolished.

The Germans regarded the Ukrainian Russian workers in particular as literally 'sub-humans' or *Untermenschen*, and the Jersey War Tunnels provide a graphic reminder of their slave conditions (Figure 5). The latest edition of Madeleine Bunting's account reinforces this most forcefully with hitherto untold testimonies of many who worked at

Figure 6 Cover of the Jersey War Tunnels brochure. (Jersey War Tunnels)



Ho8 and on other defence works in the Channel Islands. Ho8 was originally intended to be a bombproof barracks, store and workshop, but it was converted into a casualty clearing station, capable of operating on and treating 500 casualties should there be an Allied invasion of Jersey. Hence it was known locally and generally as the 'German Underground Hospital' until 2003.

Over the years, the original site has been modified, mindful of a need to provide a context for this traumatic episode in history. Its sensitive redevelopment as 'The Jersey War Tunnels', opened in 2001, produced an award-winning visitor attraction that deals with the challenge of providing a narrative to satisfy those who lived through the war on the island and have personal recollections (Figure 6). It also engages the broader public by presenting a lesser-known aspect of Second World War history. It is not the only Occupation exhibition on Jersey, but it is the largest. Its main exhibition space, called 'Captive Island' (Colour plate 10), is sited within an artefact, the galleries of the Ho8 complex. At a cost of £1.5 million, the exhibition used traditional artefact displays and recreated room settings, film, photographs and the latest technology to give a moving account of the Occupation. Visitors are confronted first by the sounds and

atmosphere of prewar Jersey, where visitors – among them Jacquetta Hawkes – were delighted by the Continental ambience of a place so close to home; Londoners, including my grandparents, left the grey of England for this island warmed by the Gulf Stream, many entertaining lavishly in the grand manor houses they built in the undeveloped inland of the island, or in villas overlooking the sea. In ‘Captive Island’ the jazz of the halcyon days of the 1920s and 1930s gives way to the sound of newsreels and air-raid sirens.

Given the islanders’ sensitivity about the Occupation, and particularly wartime collaboration, the *Captive Island* display does not shy away from raising the issue. This has led to an unusual (re)telling of Jersey’s wartime story. The reality of the invasion and Occupation is relived in newsreels and tableaux, some using traditional reconstruction techniques, others demonstrating a revisionist approach to Channel Island history, which asks visitors how they would have responded during the Occupation. A life-size tableau asks what they would have done if faced with a German soldier offering an ice cream to their child. Other artefacts include letters to the German command informing on those who possessed strictly forbidden radio sets, or were thought to be planning escape: the informants were sending their fellow islanders to certain imprisonment and possible death.

The Allied invasion of the Channel Islands never came, and the ‘hospital’ was not required. However, the islands’ final liberation, when Germany surrendered on 9 May 1945, brought new dilemmas which are also addressed through the Occupation documents, letters and press cuttings: the end of the war led to swift retribution for those known to have profited during the war years, and many of those women who had had relationships with the German soldiers – some marrying them, some bearing children – are recalled in graphic detail by the use of the name ‘jerrybags’. These women were tarred and feathered, and chased through the streets, even as their fellow islanders were celebrating the Liberation.

The Jersey War Tunnel complex is swiftly becoming an island institution, with a wartime research centre, a visitor centre and café – featuring photographs assembled by retired curator Joe Mière, who was imprisoned by the German secret police – a Jersey War Trail, and a Garden of Reflection, which includes plaques dedicated to commemorate the Jersey residents who died as a direct result of the Occupation: some 50 people have been named so far, and research continues. Visitors also walk through the galleries *with* an artefact, a tangible reminder of a human story: in exchange for their ticket they receive a reproduction of an actual Occupation identity card relating to one of the real-life individuals featured in the *Captive Island* (Figure 7).

Some of those working at the site have personal links with the Occupation through parents or other surviving relatives, or have



**PARTICULARS
(NAHERE ANGABEN)**

The holder of this Card TURNER Belza Althea
(Inhaber dieser Karte ist)

Residing at Rochelle, Bopet Road, St. Saviour
(Wohnort)

Born on the 1. 7. 1923
(Geboren am)

Single, Married, Widow or Widower S
(Ledig, Verheiratet, Verwitwet)

Colour of Hair Brown
(Farbe des Haars)

Colour of Eyes Blue-Gray
(Farbe des Auges)

Signature Belza Althea Turner
(Unterschrift)



**Take your identity card to the Sanctuary
and find out more about your character
in the Joe Mière Collection**

*Figure 7 The 'ID card'
distributed to visitors to
the Jersey War Tunnels.
(Jersey War Tunnels)*

heard the stories of that time directly from those who lived through it. Some will acknowledge the silence of their parents' generation, largely a concern about being misjudged or their actions misunderstood. (Madeleine Bunting's book was not universally well received on the islands, although critically acclaimed elsewhere.)²⁷

Considering Jersey's artefacts

Contemplating the remains of the built artefacts of the Occupation, Bunting offers a reminder of the fragile state of nascent modern archaeology, where the past is not yet fully formed as 'history': 'The concrete bunkers are now overgrown with brambles, and the anti-tank barriers serve as seawalls. It is hard to imagine the suffering their construction entailed now, especially on a sunny summer's day, families picnic on their concrete bulk and the beaches are dotted with the brightly coloured towels of holidaymakers. Even the dank, dark tunnels of Guernsey, Jersey and Alderney, used for fuel and ammunition depots and underground hospitals, have almost lost their power to disturb. Having survived the depredations of generations of inquisitive children and memorabilia hunters, several have been converted into highly successful museums, bustling with coachloads of tourists snapping up souvenirs and scones.'²⁸

As a journalist and a modern historian, Bunting has performed an act of archaeology, redeeming the nameless in the manner that

Hawkes, 50 years before, urged her fellow excavators to see the individual in a set of bones. Bunting notes: 'A few scraps of graffiti, such as a star of David, or initials scraped into the setting concrete, hint at the hundreds of men and boys who lost their lives building these vast monuments to Hitler's grandiose ambitions. For the last fifty years, most of the individual workers have remained nameless and faceless. Little was known about where they had come from, how many of them were brought to the islands, the conditions of their lives there, how many died or what happened to those who survived the war.'²⁹

Bunting, who carried out her initial research in 1992 and 1993, revisited the subject to look in particular at the fate of the Jews on the islands, publishing a revised version of *The Model Occupation* in 2004. She used that opportunity to reflect on how the islanders had responded, and were continuing to respond, to their personal histories becoming public. She notes: '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 [...] is how far Jersey has come.'³⁰ Bunting attributes much of this to the Bailiff of Jersey, Sir Philip Bailhache, one of the postwar generation of Channel Islanders, who has spoken openly about the need to acknowledge all aspects of the Occupation, not least the role of the islands in Holocaust history, and the moral dilemmas faced by the islanders who knew of Jews living nearby.³¹

In recognition of this, the collection of artefacts of Jersey's Occupation put on show to the public has been expanded to include items relating to this hitherto buried – and painful – part of the islands' wartime history. The Occupation Tapestry Gallery in the Jersey Museum at St Helier now includes a display of a certificate and a medal awarded to Albert Bedane, an islander who was honoured – 24 years after his death – by the Holocaust Centre in Israel for hiding a Dutch Jewess at his home. When Bedane died in 1980, his heroism was unnoted. Only in recent years was his life illuminated by the president of Jersey's Jewish Congregation, Frederick Cohen, during research for the monograph 'The Jews in the Channel Islands during the German Occupation'.

Bunting, so haunted by the subject to return to it after almost 10 years, also gathered additional stories from Occupation survivors in places as far as Russia, Ukraine and Poland – people 'who were astonished', she writes, 'that anyone was interested in the memories they had buried in their hearts for half a century, and which some of them were telling for the first time'.³² In this respect these traces of cultural identity, if not as prominent as those of Jersey's thriving Portuguese community, nor as elusive as those of the ancient Iberian

settlers, nevertheless extend the degree to which the Channel Islands are mapped onto the world.

Conclusion

As Julius Caesar's heroic telling of the Gallic Wars has been scrutinised and revised over time, so will re-evaluations of the Occupation continue, with the benefit of multiple stories and the perspectives of both the occupied and the occupiers. But before long, those islanders who lived through the events will no longer be alive to tell their story, to illuminate the artefacts of Occupation contained in homes and museums. These vestiges and remains – from buildings, to documents, to memorabilia – will become part of the interpretational process, to be reviewed and considered broadly, in the larger context of war heritage and military archaeology, and also as micro-histories particular to person, place and situation. As the research centre at the Jersey War Tunnels develops, the range of researchers will add their perspectives to those things behind glass. Those objects that cannot be scrutinised today will have an accruing value which grows out of detachment: the dis-connection of objects allows a reinterpretation which, although sensible to the personal context is, I suggest, less sensitive to it. Over time then, these artefacts of Occupation will gain meaning as the various interpretations – those of the German Occupiers, the islanders, the British mainlanders – offer up their take on the events of 1940–45. There is a poetic resonance to this: the sense of an object offering up a touchstone to many histories is the stuff of artefacts which reach beyond the ascribed meaning and into the realm of the personal and particular. The museum scholar Susan Pearce has noted: 'The object is inexhaustible, but it is this inexhaustibility which forces the viewer to new decisions.'³³

Unlike what might be regarded as the more traditional artefacts of archaeology, that is those ancient ones that are invested with a history and biography by the archaeologist and the museum visitor, the Occupation material sits in a liminal state: known by those who lived through the event, while also passing into history.³⁴ When an appreciable time has passed since the events of the 1940s, it will be interesting to see whether the artefacts become more (or less) 'understood' by those working with documents to guide them and, perhaps, the perspective of a revisionist history of the Channel Islands Occupation.

Less conceptually, the wartime bunkers, now seen as significant monuments to be catalogued and conserved, exist today both as tourist attractions and as symbols of five years of islanders living with an enemy with whom they shared a small and bounded landscape. Once the first-hand memories are lost to the present, the memories will join other narratives of those who recorded their stories in journals and books, or had them documented on radio and television, or gave

them in oral history interviews. But what will be missing is testimony from those who have no desire to collaborate with the demands of history. My mother is one of a generation of Occupation survivors who either cannot discuss, or choose not to discuss, those years under German Occupation, and for whom artefacts – and the stories of Hawkes, Bunting and others – have formed my personal past.³⁵

Acknowledgments

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Notes and references

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- 3 Finn, C, *Artifacts: An Archaeologist's Year in Silicon Valley* (MIT Press, 2001/02)
- 4 Bunting, M, note 1, p4
- 5 Bunting, M, note 1, p4
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- 7 See in particular Igor Kopytoff's essay 'The cultural biography of things' in Appadurai, A, *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective* (Cambridge University Press, 1986)
- 8 See discussions of the poetic treatment of objects over time in Finn, C, *Past Poetic: Archaeology in the Poetry of W B Yeats and Seamus Heaney* (Duckworth, 2004); Finn, C, 'A little souvenir: the Marquis and the Mycenaean Columns', *Oxford Journal of Archaeology*, 21 (May 2001), pp1–12.
- 9 Hawkes, J, *The Prehistory of the Channel Islands, Volume II: The Bailiwick of Jersey* (Société Jersiaise, 1939)
- 10 Hawkes, J, note 9, p66
- 11 Hawkes, J, note 9, pp179–80
- 12 In a similar fashion, clearance of modern human ash at the Chaco Canyon prehistoric pueblo site in New Mexico, USA, revealed previously unknown and only marginally less contemporary artefacts. See Finn, C, 'Leaving more than footprints', *Antiquity* (March 1997).
- 13 *The Complete Guide to Jersey* (London: Elliot Stock, 1896), p27
- 14 Note 13, p29
- 15 *Caesarea, the Island of Jersey* (London: T Baker, 1840)
- 16 Note 15, p195
- 17 Note 15, p218
- 18 Note 15, p222
- 19 Hawkes, J, note 9, p18
- 20 Hawkes, J, note 9, pp128–9. Hawkes's evidence came not least from a lengthy correspondence with H L Stapleton, on the Jersey finds of Roman and Gaulish coins, and with Stapleton, NV L Rybot of the Société Jersiaise and Derek Allen, on the St Brelades coin hoard.

- 21 Hawkes, J, note 9, p17
- 22 Hawkes, J, note 9, p19
- 23 See <http://www.jerseyheritagetrust.org/sites/hougue%20bie/hougue.html>. The site's modern intrusions also include a Victorian well and latrine, found during excavations by Mark Patton and George Nash in the 1990s. See <http://www.georgenash.freemove.co.uk/neolithic.html> and Patton, M, Rodwell, W and Finch, O, 'La Hougue Bie', excavation report, Société Jersiaise, 1999.
- 24 Hawkes, J, note 9, p198
- 25 See the regular publications from the Defence of Britain project, which is a long-term scheme to catalogue the mainland's wartime monuments. See also article on the subject by the present author in *Archaeology* .
- 26 For this and other references, see <http://www.jerseywartunnels.com>.
- 27 Bunting, M, private communication, May 2003
- 28 Bunting, M, note 1 (2004), p154
- 29 Bunting, M, note 1 (2004), p154
- 30 Bunting, M, note 1 (2004), pxv
- 31 Bunting, M, note 1 (2004), pxv. Bunting notes Sir Philip Bailhache's remarks made in speeches at Holocaust Memorial Day services, and on other official occasions.
- 32 Bunting, M, note 1 (2004), pxv
- 33 Pearce, S M (ed.), 'Objects as meaning or narrating the past', in *Interpreting Objects and Collections* (London: Routledge, 1994) p26
- 34 In a similar way, the material of the computer age at the Computer History Museum in Silicon Valley, California, is both historic and within remembered usage. See the epilogue to the revised edition of *Artefacts: An Archaeologist's Year in Silicon Valley*, note 3.
- 35 In 2004 the author was invited to make a film for the BBC's digital storytelling project on the subject of family histories which dealt with the knowledge of pasts lost, not in time, but in modern context. See 'Fragments' at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/digitalstorytelling>.