

GUERNSEY OCCUPIED 1940-45

THE INVASION LOOMS

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At the outset of World War II the British government's policy towards the Channel Islands was muddled and indecisive.

The War Office maintained that the Channel Islands had no strategic value and would not be invaded. By June 1940, however, invasion was imminent. On June 18th the Prime Minister, Winston Churchill, reluctantly accepted that the Channel Islands could not be defended without great loss of life and ordered all troops to be withdrawn. Germany was not immediately told that the Islands were demilitarised.

Plans for the evacuation of islanders were also announced on 18th June 1940. However, arrangements were not in place and this left people bewildered and frightened.

Islanders faced the agonising choice of leaving their homes or staying to face the Germans. There were chaotic scenes at the harbour as people waited for the evacuation ships. Families were separated, houses and belongings were abandoned and hundreds of pets were put down. In the end around 19,000 people left Guernsey, just under half the island's population. Five thousand of these evacuees were children. Some children who left on early ships spent many months waiting in England for their parents to catch up with them. Some families sent their children on ahead of them whilst remaining on the island to tie up their affairs before themselves departing. For some this plan was never realised as the German advance halted the evacuation process and no more boats came. Some parents became separated from their children for the duration of the war.

Many evacuees felt that they had made the right decision when on 28th June German aircraft raided Guernsey, not realising that the island had been demilitarised. Tomato lorries on the harbour quay were mistaken for army lorries by the German Luftwaffe and were bombed and machine gunned. Thirty three civilians were killed.



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Illustration by a Jersey person interned at Biberach. It is a record of interned at Biberach. It is a record of number

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the journey that the person made from Jersey to the camp. interned at Biberach. It is a record of number

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