

# A CHILD IN JERSEY

Today we are interviewing Rose James about her past in Jersey, between 1940 and 1945. She was 10 years old when the Germans invaded Jersey.

## How did you know the war began ?

I was listening to the BBC and my parents were very worried because Jersey is next to France. In France the war started in 1939. I was 10 years old when Germans landed in Jersey . In 1940 Germans attacked Jersey island. After this, the population understood the war had arrived.

## What was the evacuation like ?

They learnt with the radio Germans were going to land. The islanders had to make the hard decision of whether stay or leave their homes and possessions and flee to England. My family decided to stay in Jersey. There were 6000 inhabitants who left Jersey but many people couldn't leave because there was a long queue to leave the island.



## Can you explain the life in Jersey during the Germans' occupation ?

The life in Jersey wasn't brutal and the Germans implemented rules. For example they imposed a curfew ; we had to drive on the right. We couldn't listen to the BBC because it gave information to the resistance. My father was in the resistance . He sent some photographs of German weaponry and organization but he was arrested by Germans. They sent him in forced labour camp in Germany. Jersey was a shame for Britain because Jersey was the only English territory occupied by Germans.

## Did you describe the forced labour camp in Jersey ?

There was a labour camp in Grouville marsh. We could see slave workers going to work in Lager franco. They were working on the Atlantic wall and bunkers. The slave workers came from France, Spain and Northern Africa. The slaves lived in houses made of wood and they were packed. Their lives were terrible. There were 4000 forced workers in Jersey.

## Did you go to school ?

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Yes, we went to school but my brother didn't get his certification because we were under German occupation.

## When did the Allies land ?

The Allies landed in Normandy on June 6th 1944 but Jersey wasn't liberated at that time. We were only freed on May 9th 1945.

## What about food?

The shops closed earlier because we had nothing but we ate bread without flour and drank tea with carrot leaves, we had very little meat. We grew our own fruit and vegetables, including beans and peas. Our supply of coffee beans and tea leaves had soon run out.

We didn't have much fish because the fishing boats were restricted to certain areas, and daylight hours. We couldn't go fishing because Germans were worried that people would try to escape. They forbade boats to sail too far from the bank and we just could fishing. If you got caught you were shot. We sometimes collected shellfish and crabs.

## How did you survived ?

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in 1944 the islanders were about to die from starvation with many supplies not expected to last more than a few months. The Red Cross organised supplies from Scotland, and from Canada which arrived in the SS Vega, over the early months of 1945. The ship brought essentials which seemed like luxuries after the years of privation. Tinned and packet foodstuffs were shared out to each family, who collected their rations in whatever they had available, as most private cars had been requisitioned at the beginning of the war.

## How did you live this 1940-1945 period?

Looking back I'm sure many of the islanders felt abandoned, but they realised that many more would have died if Britain had fought to defend the Channel Islands.

