



Use of British and Guernsey Stamps During German Occupation; 1940-45

Purpose

World War II German occupation and the severe material shortages it created had significant consequences for the postage stamps and covers of Guernsey. The exhibit shows how occupation affected the design, printing and use of British and indigenous Guernsey postage stamps on this island from June 30, 1940 to May 9, 1945.

Introduction

Guernsey is one of three principal islands of the British Channel Islands. It lies in the English Channel, about 30 miles from the northwest coast of France. Jersey and Alderney are the other two principal islands. The Channel Islands were the only British territory in Europe to be occupied by the Germans in World War II.

WWII was going badly for Britain in 1940. The British could not muster military resources to defend the Islands. In mid-June, the British demilitarized the Channel Islands and citizens were given the opportunity to evacuate. Within five days, over 22,600 Islanders were evacuated. Among this number was about one-half the population of Guernsey. This resulted in closing several sub-post offices and substantially curtailing Guernsey postal operations.

The Germans invaded Guernsey on June 30, 1940 to prevent its use by the Allies as a staging area for a possible invasion of Europe. Guernsey post offices ceased being part of the British postal system and began operating under supervision of German military authorities. During the next five years, the people of Guernsey, and eventually their German occupiers, became increasingly isolated from the rest of world. Shortages of food and material goods became increasing acute. By mid-1944, both the people of Guernsey and their German occupiers found themselves virtually imprisoned together and facing considerable hunger and privation. The production of postage stamps, processing of mail, and scope of postal services mirrored these difficulties. Occupation ended with British liberation on May 9, 1945, a few days after the final surrender of Germany on mainland Europe.

Exhibit Plan

Section 1: Use of British postage stamps during occupation including authorized bisects.

Section 2: Indigenous Guernsey One Penny (1d) Arms postage stamp; Color shades and paper varieties; Use on covers including mixed and multiple franking.

Section 3: Indigenous Guernsey Half Penny (½d) Arms postage stamp; color shades and paper varieties; Use on covers including mixed and multiple franking.

Section 4: Combined use of Guernsey One Penny and Half Penny Arms postage stamps.

Section 5: Guernsey Arms postage stamps on re-used and home-made covers.

Section 6: Indigenous Guernsey Two Penny Half (2½d) Arms postage stamp; Color shades; Use on covers including mixed franking.

Color Matting Scheme: Key and uncommon items matted in violet.