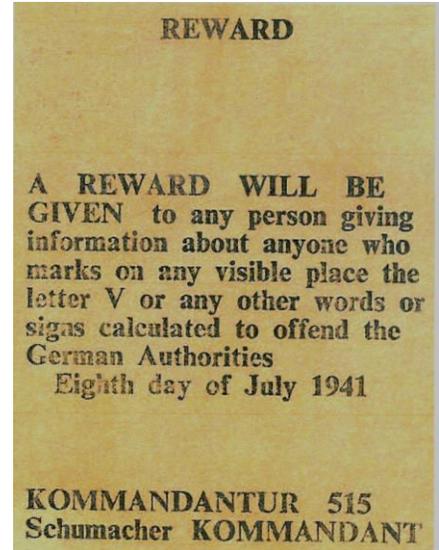


German Occupation of the British Channel Islands

Part 3 - Odds and Ends By Robert Fisher

When German military forces occupied the Channel Islands in July of 1940, they immediately began to issue rules to control the civilian population. This was followed by severe restrictions on travel, issuance of identity papers, curfews, and rationing of food and other necessities.

The islanders had no weapons or means of forming an armed resistance against the Germans, so they resisted by flaunting the restrictions, painting the letter V on fences, buildings and other public places. The Germans took this passive resistance seriously and issued new edicts such as shown to the right. Well over 1,000 islanders (men, women and children) were deported to prison camps in France and Germany for offences, real and imagined. Very few ever returned.



One employee of the Royal Hotel in Guernsey replied to each "Heil Hitler" with "Heil Churchill". On one occasion the pro-German chef of the hotel told her to say "Heil Hitler" before receiving a helping of rice pudding. Her response was "to hell with Hitler for the sake of a rice pudding - and one made with skimmed milk at that". She was denounced by the chef and sentenced to be deported to a prison camp in Caen France, where she died of starvation and ill treatment.

Into this environment of German over-reaction to insults on their sensitive natures, came the Guernsey and Jersey occupation stamps that were described in the prior two parts of this article. I have already mentioned that the three lions or leopards that were prominent on the shields of both Guernsey and Jersey stamps (figures 1 and 2) were actually from the Arms of England. They had been since Richard the Lion Hearted in 1198 (figure 3), and indeed they are still on the current Arms of England which has not changed since 1837 during the reign of Queen Victoria (figure 4).



Figure 1



Figure 2



Figure 3

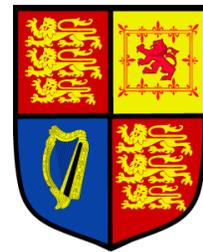


Figure 4

Closer inspection of the two stamps reveal additional slights to German sensitivities. On the Guernsey stamp, each of the four corners contains a barely disguised letter V as shown in figures 5, 6 and 7.



Figure 5



Figure 6



Figure 7

Major Rybot, who designed the Jersey shield stamps took even more liberty with his stamp designs. He hid masked insults to the Germans in the red 1d stamp, which was the first of the Jersey stamps issued. He inserted a small letter A into each of the four corners of the stamp (figures 8 and 9). He later explained that they stood for 'AD AVERNUM, ADOLPHE ATROX', which means "To hell with you, atrocious Adolph".

In the green 1/2 d stamp which appeared later he inserted "A" into the upper corners (figure 10) and "B" in the lower corners (figure 11). The meaning of the letters were "Atrocious Adolf" and "Bloody Benito".



Figure 8



Figure 9



Figure 10



Figure 11

In 1943, when the set of local scenes were commissioned, the artist (Edmund Blampied) went to even greater lengths to embed subtle insults to the German authorities. A cursory glance at the triangles containing the denominations reveals that they are all inverted Vs (figures 12 - 18). The final insult is shown in figure 19. The scrollwork in the denomination triangle is really a representation of the Royal Cipher "GR".



Figure 12



Figure 13



Figure 15



Figure 16



Figure 17



Figure 18



Figure 19

The Channel Islands were the last occupied territory liberated by the Allies. They were liberated on the 9th of May, 1945 which was the day AFTER Victory in Europe had been declared. Thus ends an interesting and tragic yet little known era of British and German postal history. That is a lot of history for a baker's dozen of short lived stamps.

[Editor's Note: The previous two parts of this series appeared in the February and March editions of this newsletter.]