

If you have a story to tell, get in touch with Shaun Shackleton on 240210 or email sshackleton@guernseypress.com

Special forces

It's been called 'the definitive history of the Liberation of the Channel Islands' and it's been 26 years in the making. **Shaun Shackleton** spoke to Mark Lamerton about his labour of love, *Liberated by Force 135*

IT WAS obvious from an early age that Jerseyman Mark Lamerton loved history – especially that of the Second World War. 'As a boy, everyone at my age collected bits and bobs from the Occupation. Relatives very often had things hidden away and I'd say, "Oh, I wouldn't mind that" and they would tell me, "Well, you'll have to wait for your birthday". That way they could clear their clutter and I'd get a great birthday present.' Mark collected both British – his stepfather was in the RAF – and German memorabilia. 'I'd be around 11 or 12 and I kept the collection in an upstairs bedroom. Whenever my parents had a party I'd would ask guests "Would you like to see my museum?" and I would take them upstairs and charge them sixpence entry.' Sometimes one of the guests would say 'Oh, I have something you could have' and Mark's collection would grow. 'I still charged them sixpence entry, though,' he said. Over the years his collection dissipated, ending up in various Channel Island collections, including that of Richard Heaume who owns the German Occupation Museum in the Forest. His love of history, however, never left. 'Having been away for a number of years, living in South Wales, in 1994 I decided to go back to Jersey ready for the 50th Liberation Anniversary in '95. I wanted to find out about Liberation Force 135 and Operation Nestegg but all I could find was booklets.' That was when he says 'an interest became a hobby and turned into an obsession'. By 2000 he realised he had enough information for a book. 'All my friends said "Mark, just get it out there", so I published my initial findings, which focused on September 1943 to 30 May 1945.'



Jerseyman Mark Lamerton has written a book called *Liberated by Force 135*. It describes the planning of Operation Nestegg, the training and objectives of Force 135, and the reoccupation, reorganisation and rehabilitation of the Channel Islands between September 1943 and 31 August 1945. Below left, a postcard which Mark had made. (30026769)

Liberated by Force 135 garnered good reviews and it was described as 'the definitive history of the Liberation of the Channel Islands'. But the story didn't stop there. 'I continued my research, not only adding new information to my original manuscript, but I also completed additional chapters covering the period between June and August 1945. 'I got a lot of information locally, from

Jersey, Guernsey and Alderney, from the JEP, Simon Hamon and Richard Heaume. 'The aim was to publish my research in time for the 75th Anniversary of the Liberation, which describes the planning of Operation Nestegg, training and objectives of Force 135, reoccupation, reorganisation and rehabilitation of the Channel Islands between September 1943 and 31 August. 'The first edition had 300 pages and 97 images, the second has 600 pages and



The liberation of Guernsey, Operation Nestegg. British troops from Force 135 arriving to re-occupy the island three days after the advance guard had taken the surrender of German forces. (Picture: Muggerridge, Daily Sketch, 30027709)



Beermats designed by Mark's daughter to promote the book.

907 images.' While doing his research Mark has been privileged enough to meet former members of Force 135. 'If there are events in Jersey, such as Liberation Day, people know I'm interested so I've often met up with some of the veterans, some of which were the photos in the book.' One of the things he's learned over the years was the huge planning that went into Operation Nestegg and the training of Force 135. 'It's been reinforced to me again and again that the planning was a bit like a mini D-Day. They had a plan for absolutely everything, whether it was communications, banking, rehabilitation of property, air and boat services, every aspect had to be considered. '6,000 men came over, with more than half coming to Guernsey to also take care of Alderney and Sark. There were 26,000 Germans in the islands.' One veteran he met was Noel Cashford, a Royal Navy mine and bomb disposal expert. 'I asked him if it was right to ask other veterans if they were scared. He told me "Mark, we were young, eager and excited. We never even thought about it". 'He often came back to Jersey on holiday and if he had an interview he'd invite me along. "I was the one that was there" he'd say to the interviewer "But Mark here is the one who knows all about it". I was very proud and honoured to have met him.' This edition of *Liberated by Force 135* was published in a limited edition of 500 copies and was issued in a two-volume set – 250 in a numbered limited edition 75th anniversary special commemorative slip case, which is £48, and 250 loose, for £39. Every chapter has an extensive reference section and images are referenced for ease of readers obtaining copies for themselves, and appendices and index are included in volume two. 'I've actually only got 17 left of the ones in commemorative slip case and 200 of the loose sets. I won't be doing another reprint.' Mark has thoroughly enjoyed all the research that has gone into his published work. 'The project is self-funded and published, not a profit-making venture. It is a labour of love and the reward is to see my 26 years of research in print.'

◆ If you are interested in buying a copy, contact Mark Lamerton on email liberationlamerton@gmail.com, telephone 07797 838041 or via the website www.force135.je.

Murder mystery theme for Guille-Alles Reading Group

DURING October the Guille-Alles Library Reading Group will be getting together to discuss murder mysteries. Whether it be a classic 'whodunit' or a modern police crime drama, read whatever takes your fancy and come along and tell the group what you think.

Here's a selection of murder mysteries to inspire you: *The Mysterious Affair at Styles* by Agatha Christie, *The Magpie Murders* by Anthony Horowitz, *The Bat* by Jo Nesbo, *The Hunting Party* by Lucy Foley, *The Thursday Murder Club* by Richard Osman, *The Seven Deaths of Evelyn Hardcastle* by Stuart Turton.

The group will be meeting on Wednesday 6 October from 7.30-9pm and on Saturday 9 October from 3.30-5pm. The reading group is free and you don't need to book in advance.

◆ For more information or to reserve a book, call 720392.