

## Temps passé

# First post from a free Island

Historian and collector **Mark Lamerton** looks at Liberation messages and the recommencement of Channel Island postal services in May 1945

Following the Island's Liberation on 9 May 1945, three days later Post Office officials accompanying Force 135 brought 200,000 prepaid 'Reoccupation of the Channel Islands' postcards (75,000 for Guernsey and 125,000 for Jersey) that were to be issued to Channel Islanders so that they could communicate with relatives and friends overseas and in the forces. The officials brought 25cwt of post office stores, which included stamps to the value of £13,000, postal orders to the value of £9,810, and postage due labels.

Mr W A Payne was the postmaster for Jersey and Mr H J Cohu for Guernsey. The emergency postcards were available free of charge to the public at the General Post Office in Broad Street from 14 May, and at all Island post offices and the Evening Post office from 15 May.

Likewise, in Guernsey the postcards were obtainable from the Head Post Office in St Peter Port and also at all sub post offices. On the back of the card was to be written the sender's name and address with their message below, which was to refer to personal and family matters only. The name and address on the front were to be in block letters. It was advised to complete and post the free postcards early, so that the Post Office could get them to the UK quickly. Further announcements regarding mails were made in the local newspapers and by notices in the post offices. Ordinary letters and postcards could also be accepted.

Locally produced examples of Liberation cards soon appeared as Islanders were desperate to communicate with friends and relatives in the UK. Some were handmade and others were prewar Jersey view postcards overprinted with various 'Liberation Greetings' on either the obverse or reverse of the cards.

During the Occupation, the only way of communicating with relatives outside the Channel Islands had been through Red Cross letters, which were censored and restricted to no more than 25 words. However, it was not long before more Liberation-themed stationery became more readily available and, following the celebrations of their newfound freedom, Islanders began to write more in-depth letters detailing their personal Occupation experiences.

One such Islander was Lilian Godeaux, a law clerk, who lived at La Godillie in Trinity with her family Charles, Jeannette, John and Myra Godeaux. The letter contains an insight into the hardships the German Occupation and Second World War had on their freedom and other activities of daily living. The envelope has a printed blue-and-red image in the bottom left-hand corner of Britannia and the Statue of Liberty accompanied by the message 'For World Freedom'. The envelope, postmarked Jersey 19 May 1945, is addressed to Mrs E Osborne, 15 Redvers Road, Wood Green, London, W 22.



■ An example of a prewar Jersey postcard that was overprinted with a Liberation message for Islanders to send to their relatives  
Picture: Mark Lamerton

## Lilian's letter



■ Occupation registration card for Lilian Godeaux  
Picture: Jersey Archive

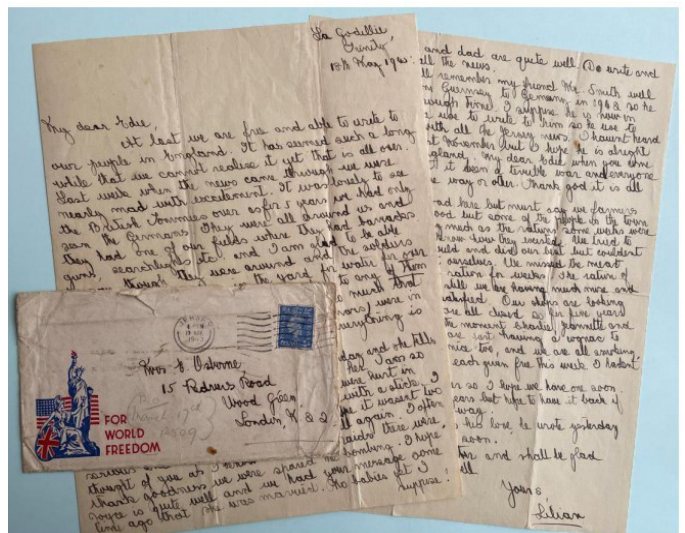
La Godillie  
Trinity  
18th May 1945

My dear Edie,

AT last we are free and able to write to our people in England. It has seemed such a long while that we cannot realise yet that it is all over.

Last week when the news came through we were nearly mad with excitement. It was lovely to see the British Tommies over as for five years we had only seen the Germans. They were all around us and they had one of our fields where they had barracks, guns, searchlights etc and I am glad to be able to say though they were around and the soldiers have come every day in the yard for water for over the years not once have I had spoken to any of them nor as the family. We hated them as much and we ignored them. The soldiers (Germans) were in the field up to yesterday but today everything is free, thank God.

I had news from Bertha yesterday and she tells me that you have kept in touch with her. I am so glad you did. She tells me that you were hurt in the blitz and that you were walking with a stick. I was sorry to hear about this and hope it wasn't [sic] too serious and hope you will soon be well again. I often thought of you as I know the terrible raids there were, thank goodness



■ Envelope and two-page letter written by Lilian Godeaux to her friend in London, dated 18 May 1945  
Picture: Mark Lamerton

we were spared the bombing. I hope Joyce is quite well and we had your message some time ago that she was married. No babies yet I suppose!

I hope your mum and dad are quite well. Do write and let us know all the news. No doubt you will remember my friend Mr Smith, well he was deported from Guernsey to Germany in 1942, so he too has had a rough time. I suppose he is now in England. Bertha use to write to him so he use to keep her in touch with all the Jersey news. I haven't [sic] heard from him since last November but I hope he is alright and is now in England. My dear Edie when you were to think of it hasn't [sic] it been a terrible war and everyone has suffered in some way or other. Thank God it is all over.

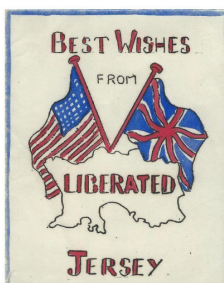
We have been pretty bad here but must say we farmers were the best off for food but, some of the town must have suffered very much as the rations some weeks were hopeless, I really do not know how they existed. We tried to help as many as we could

and did our best but couldn't [sic] spare much as were short ourselves. We missed the meat terribly - haven't [sic] had a ration for weeks. The ration of bread went very low too, still we are having much more and everyone are more or less satisfied. Our shops are looking very bare and our pubs are all closed so for five years we have hardly drunk. At the moment Charlie, Jeannette and the Revd Tabb and myself are just having a cognac to celebrate victory, it is quite nice too, and we are all smoking, having had 30 cigarettes each given free this week. I hadn't [sic] had a smoke for months.

Longing to see a newspaper so I hope we have one soon. Have had no wireless for years but hope to have it back if the Germans haven't [sic] taken it away. Well my dear Charlie sends his love, he wrote yesterday so he is longing for a letter soon.

Hope you will soon be better and shall be glad to know your family is well.

Yours, Lilian



■ Numerous examples of handmade Liberation cards were produced  
Picture: Mark Lamerton