

## **Synopsis --- British and Guernsey Stamps and Their Use during German Occupation; 1940-45**

**Background:** Guernsey and other Channel Islands are British, but not part of the United Kingdom. They owe allegiance to the English crown, not the UK Parliament. Since the mid-1800's, mail service to the Channel Islands was provided by the British postal system. Connection to the British system was severed during the German invasion. Throughout occupation, local mail service on Guernsey was provided by the Guernsey post office under supervision of the German military. The Guernsey sub-post office on Sark, a small associated islet, operated a few hours each month to process local and inter-island mail franked with British and/or Guernsey stamps. Therefore, mail of Sark is considered Guernsey mail for purpose of this exhibit.

**Purpose:** German occupation and the severe material shortages it created had significant consequences for postage stamps and covers of Guernsey. The exhibit shows how occupation affected the design, printing, and use of British and local Guernsey postage stamps.

**Treatment:** This 5-frame exhibit is presented chronologically beginning with the German invasion on June 30, 1940 and concluding with British liberation on May 9, 1945. The exhibit is divided into seven sections as described in the *Exhibit Plan*. Because Guernsey local stamps issued during occupation remained valid for several months after liberation, post-occupation 'Last Day of Use' covers dated April 13, 1946 are shown in the final section to bring closure to the exhibit.

Exhibit viewing space is allocated upon: (1) the relative importance of particular British and Guernsey stamps and covers in depicting the Island's mail service during occupation; and (2) the number of printings for various Guernsey local stamps and the length of their validity for postal use.

**Philatelic Importance:** The exhibit serves as a window into an era when Guernsey postal officials, postal workers, and islanders themselves demonstrated innovation, resourcefulness, and improvisation necessary to keep local mail service operating and efficient during a bleak period of island history. Occupation saw the use of authorized bisects, multiple color shades, paper and roulette varieties, mixed and combined postage, date canceller retrofits, and re-used and homemade posted covers --- all due to severe material shortages. Examples of these innovations and improvisations are presented throughout the exhibit.

**Completeness:** The exhibit does not include pre-production material such as artwork, essays, proofs, color trials, etc. because very little survived occupation. Gerald Marriner, Fellow of the Royal Philatelic Society London and acknowledged expert in Channel Islands philately, writes that the Guernsey post office did not follow standard practice during occupation and save such material. According to Marriner, only a couple of proofs of the 1d Arms in black are known to exist. Marriner's writing corroborates the exhibitor's own experience in searching for pre-production material. Much is available for sister island Jersey, but virtually none for Guernsey.

**Completeness (continued):** The exhibit presents nearly all Guernsey local stamp printings necessary to show differing color shades, paper varieties, and other production features. Unused imprint blocks for thirty-two of the 33 printings are shown. An imprint block absent from the exhibit is the *Pale Ultramarine* color shade of the Guernsey 2½d Arms stamp. This shade was produced in very small quantity during the 3<sup>rd</sup> stamp printing. Less than a handful of *Pale Ultramarine* imprint blocks are known to exist. However, Section 7 of the exhibit does present *Pale Ultramarine* 2½d Arms stamps on covers.

**Philatelic Knowledge & Personal Research:** The exhibitor has devoted the past 15 years searching worldwide for suitable philatelic items. Much has been learned during this search permitting the exhibitor to author two articles regarding postmarks for *Les Iles Normandes*, the Channel Islands Specialists' Society (London) quarterly journal.

Information for the exhibit come from multiple sources including philatelic books and articles, auction catalogs, websites, the British Postal Museum & Archive, Channel Islands historical societies, the Channel Islands Specialists' Society, and correspondence with collectors, auctioneers, and dealers overseas. Literature on the subject of this exhibit can be obtained from the following website, book, and articles:

1. Channel Islands Specialists' Society website, [www.ciss1950.org.uk](http://www.ciss1950.org.uk) , London, *Current*.
2. Newport, William; Stamps and Postal History of the Channel Islands, William Heinemann Ltd, London, 1972.
3. Buchan, James; "The Occupied Channel Islands: Their Stamps in Use Part 1-Guernsey", *Gibbons Stamp Monthly*, London, March 2001, p37-41.

**Rarity:** The exhibit includes several scarce covers franked with bisected British King George V 2d stamps. These stamps were officially authorized for bisected use by German military authorities. Only about one thousand (1000) of various King George V 2d stamps were in the Guernsey post office inventory at the time of invasion (Newport, 1972). Stocks were quickly depleted. Only a handful in bisected form on cover has survived. These and other scarce and uncommon items are framed in violet.

**Condition:** All unused postage stamps in the exhibit are in *Mint Never Hinged* condition. All covers are genuine. Most covers are in *Very Fine* or better condition with the exception of *Re-Used and Homemade Covers*. Material shortages during occupation, including ink and paper suitable for postage stamps and envelopes, became increasingly acute. Homemade envelopes constructed from paper such as moisture-resistant butcher wrap often produced exceptionally light or poor cancelations. Some re-used covers suffer from multiple handling and processing.

**Presentation:** The entire exhibit is presented on 11"x 17" pages. This is to maximize space for large and complex items, and to compare and contrast more easily stamp color shades, production features, and similar stamps on covers. Stamp color shades and paper varieties in the exhibit are referenced from the 2016 Stanley Gibbons specialized publication, *Collect Channel Islands & Isle of Man Stamp Catalogue*.

Rev.6: 02/3/2017