

GUERNSEY OCCUPIED 1940-45

5

RATIONING & SHORTAGES

Without Britain to supply it Guernsey had to become self-sufficient.

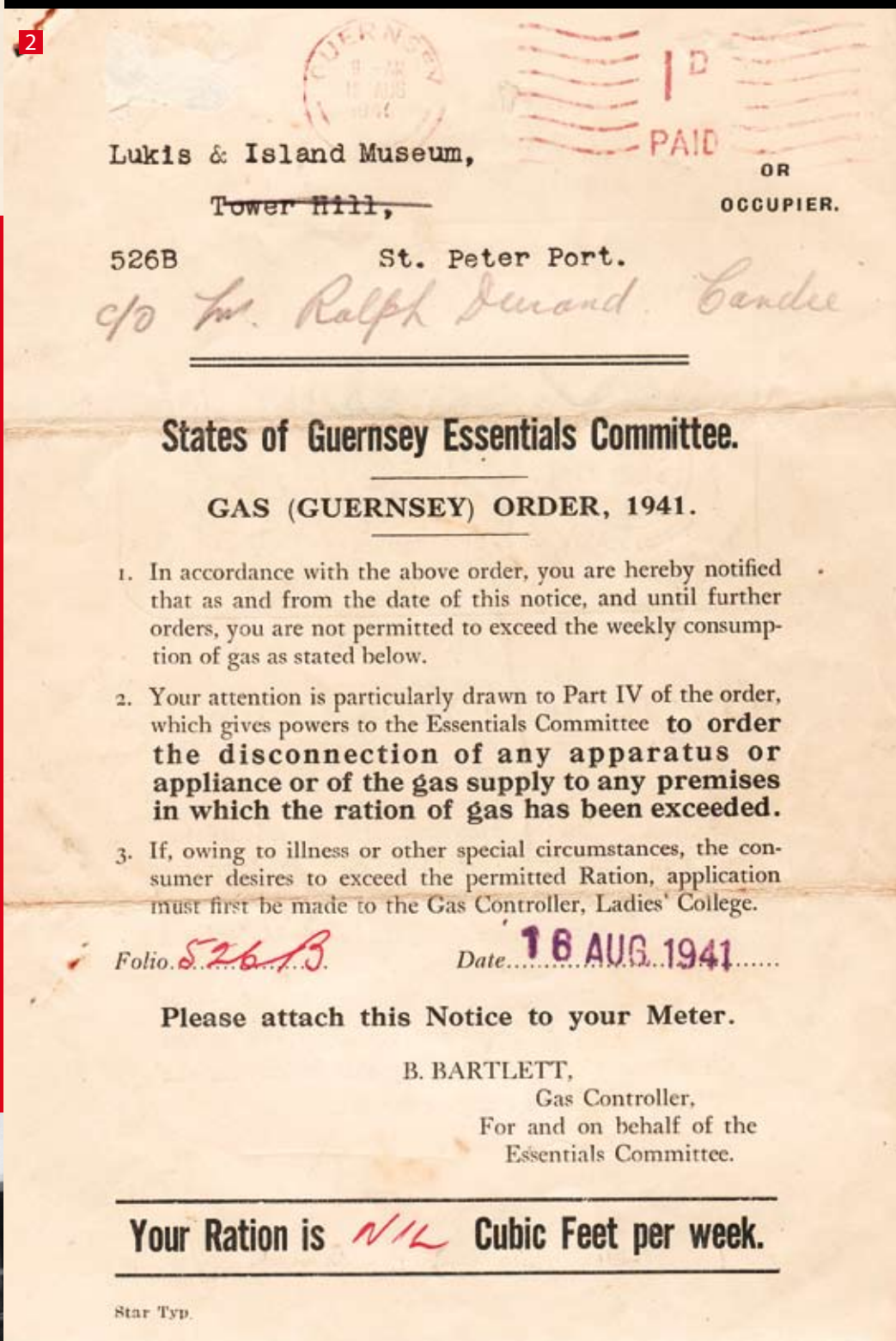
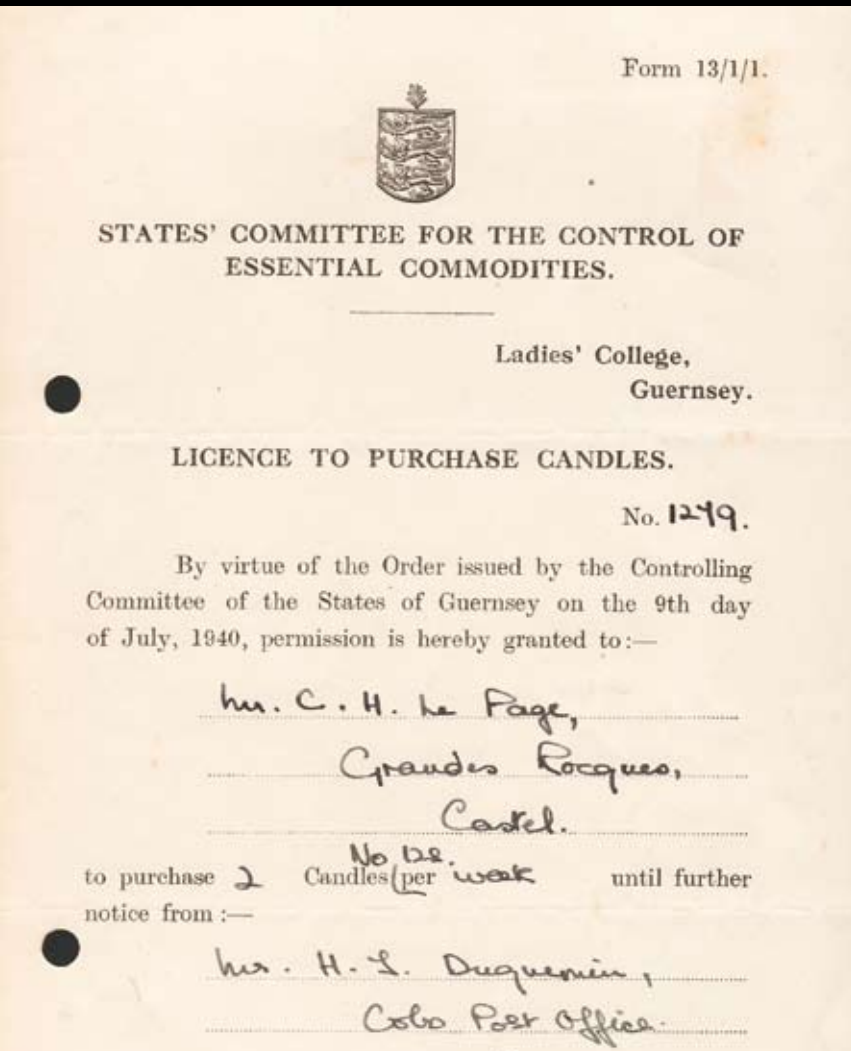
Rationing of food, fuel and clothing was introduced in 1940. A black market developed as a result. By 1945 the price of sugar had risen from the equivalent of 2½ pence per pound to £1. Ingenious substitutes for non-existent foodstuffs were invented, many supplied from the hedgerows. Bartering became a way of life; pyjamas were swapped for bicycle tyres, cigarettes for vegetables.

Some essential supplies were painstakingly sourced in occupied France by a Purchasing Commission based in Granville, supervised by German officials and led by Raymond Falla. It provided an invaluable lifeline until it was ended in June 1944 by the Allied invasion of France. With their last supply lines cut off, official reports in Guernsey stated that there was only enough food, fuel and medicine to last until the end of November.

By December 1944 the situation had become desperate. The average daily calorie intake per person was down to one-third of that on the mainland. People had become very weak and many were sick. The Germans had nearly run out of food to feed their own troops.

After complicated international negotiations a Swedish ship the SS Vega, chartered by the Red Cross, was allowed to bring in emergency supplies to the islands. She arrived on 27th December 1944 with thousands of food parcels donated by Canada and New Zealand. The Germans were asked to distribute them because it was felt that their discipline would make looting less likely. They were not permitted to receive any parcels themselves.

The Vega made six more visits before the Channel Islands were liberated. Even so, it was not until February 1945 that the Vega brought vital flour, by which time Guernsey had been without bread for three weeks.



Photograph of Winston Churchill, Prime Minister of Great Britain, taken during World War II. Courtesy World Wide Web

Photograph of burnt-out tomato lorries on the White Rock Jetty, St. Peter Port harbour. The aftermath of the bombing raid by the German Luftwaffe on 28th June 1940. Photographic Archive - Guernsey Museum & Art Gallery

Photograph of the ruins of the St. Peter Port harbour clock tower and weighbridge. The aftermath of the bombing raid by the German Luftwaffe on the 28th June 1940. Photographic Archive - Guernsey Museum & Art Gallery



Photograph of Guernsey people gathering at St. Peter Port harbour ready to be evacuated. The people are carrying whatever belongings they can manage to take with them. Courtesy of the Carol Toms Collection, Pinauls Library

Detail of a photograph of Guernseymen gathered in St. Peter Port to await evacuation in June 1940. These men would subsequently volunteer for the British armed forces when they reached England. Courtesy of the Carol Toms Collection, Pinauls Library

Photograph showing plumes of smoke rising from the White Rock Jetty, St. Peter Port harbour. The German Luftwaffe's bombing raid left numerous tomato lorries on fire and many people killed or injured. Photographic Archive - Guernsey Museum & Art Gallery

