

GUERNSEY OCCUPIED 1940-45

5

RATIONING & SHORTAGES

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

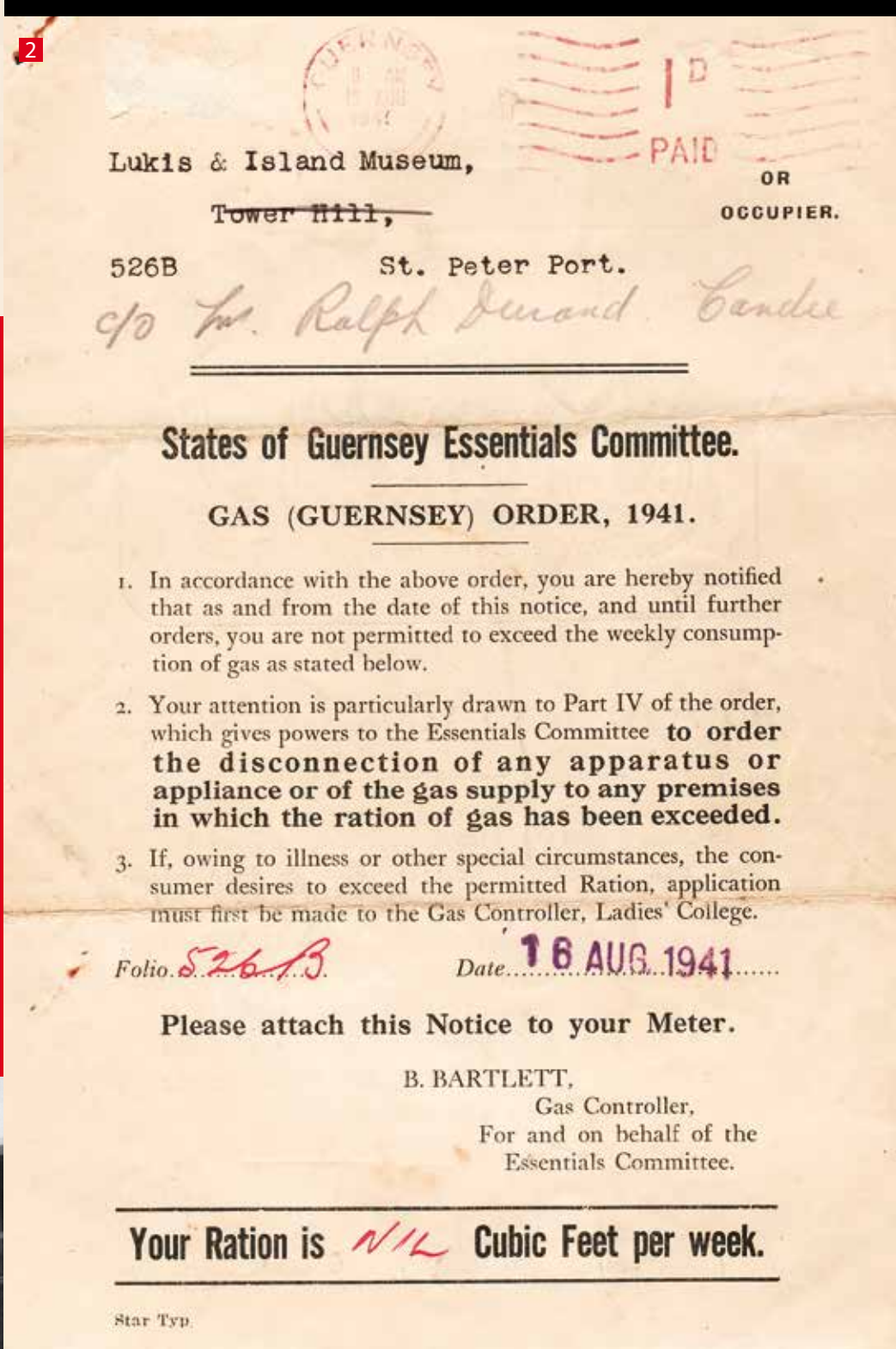
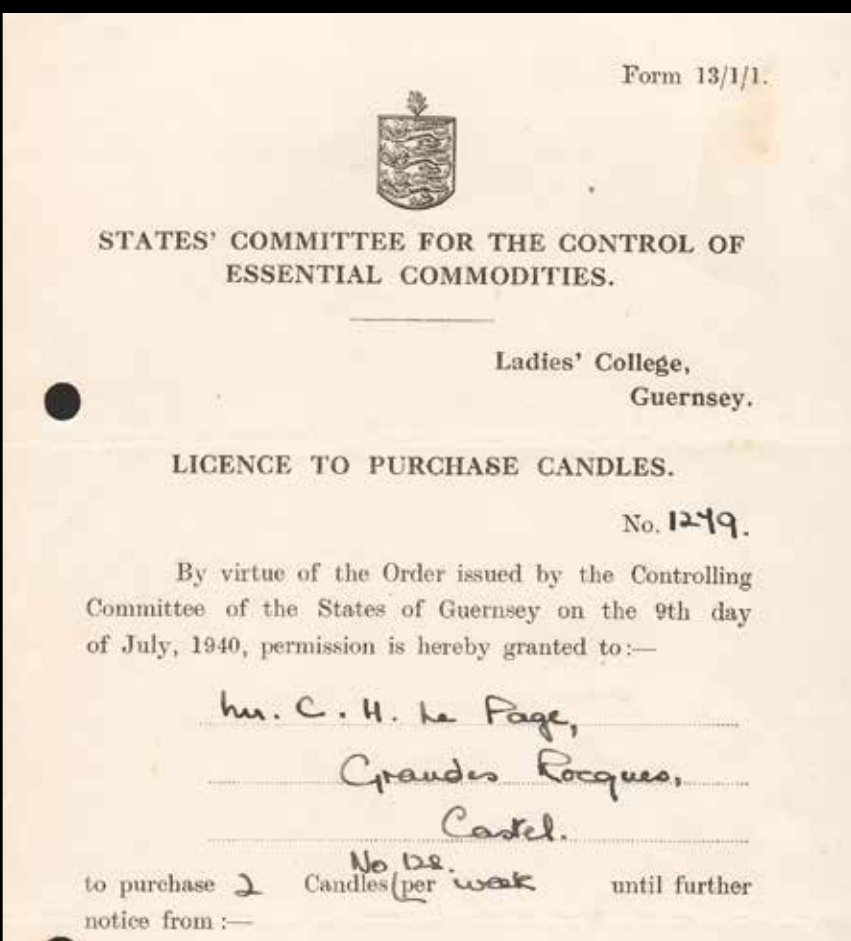
Rationing of food, fuel and clothing was introduced in 1940. A black market developed as a result. By 1945 the price of sugar had risen from the equivalent of 2½ pence per pound to £1. Ingenious substitutes for non-existent foodstuffs were invented, many supplied from the hedgerows. Bartering became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



1 Candle purchasing licence. Many consumables were in such short supply that they could only be purchased in small quantities. Islanders had to have an official licence from the Controlling Committee in order to do so. GMAG D 1975.68

2 Gas rationing notice. Gas was metered and strictly rationed. All non-essential uses of gas were curbed in order to preserve stocks for as long as possible. This notice was sent to the Lukis & Island Museum informing them that they were no longer permitted to use any gas. GMAG 3497a

3 Photograph of Channel Islanders collecting their food rations during the German occupation. The empty shelves in the shop illustrate the dire shortage of practically every consumable. Photographic Archive - Guernsey Museum & Art Gallery



4 Photograph of Red Cross supplies. German troops transferring Red Cross food crates from the SS. Vega to a supply train on the White Rock Jetty, St. Peter Port. Circa December 1944. Photographic Archive - Guernsey Museum & Art Gallery

5 Photograph of Guernsey women collecting Red Cross food parcels in St. Peter Port. Circa December 1944. Photographic Archive - Guernsey Museum & Art Gallery

6 Photograph of the Red Cross ship, S.S. Vega, berthed in St. Peter Port harbour. Circa December 1944. Photographic Archive - Guernsey Museum & Art Gallery

7 Photograph of a Guernsey man using a pram chassis to carry as many Red Cross food parcels as he can manage. Circa December 1944. Photographic Archive - Guernsey Museum & Art Gallery

