

Chapter 2

Militaria: Collecting the Debris of War

1940 to The Present Day

Two German helmets, featuring images painted on the side, entered the collecting market in the Channel Islands in 2009. They had apparently been painted by Bert Hill, a cartoonist who worked for the Guernsey Evening Press during the Occupation. The images were two well-known Bert Hill classics: A V-sign next to a Guernsey donkey, who was kicking a German soldier out of the island (Fig. 2.1). The words 'Liberation, 8 May 1945' were written underneath. The second helmet featured a lion, dressed as a British Tommy, breaking a chain which shackled a Guernsey donkey to a swastika. The figure of Churchill stood looking on in the background. Above this scene were written the words: 'Freedom! 1 July 1945'.

These helmets caused instant controversy. Were they genuine? Were they forgeries? Did Bert Hill paint them or were they copies done by someone else more recently? Were they worth what the collector paid for them? For me, an archaeologist with an interest in trench art, it was not important whether the helmets were forgeries or not, nor whether Bert Hill did the cartoons. What was important was that classic and locally significant symbols of victory, freedom and liberation had been painted on top of the ultimate symbol of oppression and occupation. Some collectors in the Channel Islands disagreed: whoever did the cartoons had potentially ruined two good helmets, but perhaps if they were real Bert Hills, then this might be partially excused. In any case, the helmets would now be of more interest to a Guernsey collector than one from Jersey. Besides, they said, the cartoons were not technically very good—not quite as good as Bert Hill's originals, which did not help. And the new owner of the helmets, a Jersey collector with an interest in liberation souvenirs, was thought to have paid over the odds for them. There was also something suspect about the markings on the helmet—were they really from German soldiers who had served in the Channel Islands?

This case study proved instrumental in giving me an insight into local concepts of value and authenticity. A German helmet, that most symbolic of all items of militaria from the Second World War, could clearly be valued in a number of ways. Even between collectors within the islands, different features of the same helmets attracted some and put off others.¹

¹ The helmets are currently on display in the German Occupation Museum in Guernsey.

Fig. 2.1 Trench art German helmet (© Gilly Carr)



Introduction

No visit to the Channel Islands today is complete without a trip to an Occupation Museum. Since 1946 and over the decades that have followed, a number of these museums have opened, primarily as venues for the display of collections, but also as tourist facilities. Nearly all of them have followed a formulaic pattern of display since the earliest days, where pride of place is given to uniforms, swastikas, guns and sometimes even pictures of Hitler. For those visitors from outside the islands, and especially from outside Britain, such exhibits can be faintly shocking, especially for the priority and dominance given to the material culture of the occupier (or ‘perpetrators of Nazism’), rather than its victims (Vitaliev 1998: 4).

The aim of this chapter is to explore the phenomenon of collecting German militaria in the Channel Islands. Rather than using superficial interpretations of political incorrectness or interpreting militaria as symbols of closet neo-Nazism, I approach this chapter from a contextual and historical vantage point with the intention of understanding the motives behind this long-lived interaction and interception in the biography of objects which date to the Occupation. The vast majority of the kinds of objects or artefacts discussed in this chapter are items of German militaria such as helmets, guns, badges and paperwork (such as photographs, the *Soldbuch* and the *Wehrpass*).

The history of the post-war biography of these objects has not been written down before now; rather, it lies in the past and present actions, collections and memories of collectors in the islands today. They have been the people who, from childhood, have tracked down and ‘rescued’, ‘liberated’ or ‘souvenired’ the objects, swapped them in the school playground, and persuaded friends and relations to part with them or source them and who continue to trade them today. Thus, the prime source of information in this chapter has been gleaned from interviews with the collectors today.

In conducting interviews with collectors, my aim has not been to analyse or interpret individual private collections or museums, interesting though this would have been. Rather, I wanted to discover five key things. First and foremost, what has been this history, the collective 'biography', of items of German militaria between the Occupation and the present day? How have they come to survive in the islands until today? Second, how can we understand and interpret the collection of German militaria over time? Third, how does the trade in militaria 'work' in the Channel Islands, and what does this tell us about the associated concepts of authenticity and value? Fourth, where collections have been placed in private museums, what does their content tell us about visions of the past and how this has been affected by nostalgia? Fifth, finally and in their own words, why have collectors decided to collect such potentially controversial items? Why have they sought to own and trade the very instruments and symbols which once were part of a system of oppression enacted against their own people? Is this how they see them or have these collectors been thoroughly misunderstood by passing journalists (e.g. Vitaliev 1998: 4) who have been critical and uncomprehending of this all-consuming hobby?

In order to find out the answers to these questions, I have taken two lines of enquiry. First, I have carried out interviews with thirteen collectors of varying degrees of prominence in Jersey, Guernsey and Sark and the son of one of the best-known but deceased Jersey collectors. A young but active collector in Guernsey who has played an important role in inter-island trade declined to be interviewed and so his role unfortunately cannot be documented here. No collectors in Alderney were identified as part of this study, although one of the Guernsey collectors was active in his youth in collecting items from this island. Given the limited number of collectors available to interview on these small islands today, the interviews have been analysed for their qualitative and not quantitative content. These people were self-selecting or were recommended to me by others.

Each of the collectors interviewed has very specific interests or sub-fields of speciality within the wider range of militaria or objects dating to the Occupation (e.g. guns, medals, helmets or ammunition boxes, etc.) and has built up specialised knowledge such that many of these collectors also consider themselves to be local historians. When items come into their possession which fall outside their specific interests, those objects will often be sold or traded in order to acquire items which will stay in their collections.

These collectors have all expressed a cultural conservatism when it comes to collections and museums. All remember the days of their youth, before the beginning of modern, professional museums. They express great nostalgia for the small, private Occupation Museum which was packed full of German equipment which could be touched or handled. There was no need for 'interpretation' or information panels in these museums: they presented an image which is perceived today as 'authentic', as if the Germans had just left. They had the all-important 'atmosphere' which they believe cannot be synthetically produced in modern museums through the use of computer screens or artistic/architectural installations.

My second source of information has been the Occupation museums of the Channel Islands. While collectors often refer to earlier collectors who have died, or

other museums which have now closed, these have been incorporated into the story of collecting only in so far as they remain present in the memories of current collectors. While some museums which have closed have left behind a photographic record of their collections, or are accessible today through old guidebooks, I focus mostly on those still open. The names of collectors have not been anonymised at their own request: they are proud of their collections and the role they have personally played in the history of their islands in saving these objects for posterity.

It is also important to explore who these collectors are. The average collector of Occupation artefacts or German militaria in the islands today is male. As most of the collections began in childhood, to facilitate playing soldiers, one of the collectors expressed the gender division in simple terms: '*It was a natural thing, I suppose, as boys. Girls weren't interested but of course all the boys got excited*'.² Another echoed the gender division in similarly stereotyped terms: '*As you grow up, girls have dolls and boys play British and Germans*'. Some of the German equipments were sealed up in dark tunnels after the war, and while this did not deter schoolboys from breaking into them, one collector commented to me, tongue in cheek, '*of course, you'd never have got a girl doing that, would you?*'. Another remarked that, in the 1950s, '*I didn't find any girls in the tunnels [collecting militaria]. I must admit their interest was not in that particular stuff*'.³

The link between gender and collecting has been explored by Belk and Wallendorf (1994: 251), who have found that 'gender is a component of collecting activity' and is 'reflected in ... the objects that are collected'. Pearce, too, has noted that militaria and weapons are very common collecting material for men and that seldom do people collect outside the gender roles on offer to them (1995: 212 and 219). It would be both a generalisation and a stereotype to say that men are more likely than women to collect weapons and instruments of war; however, this observation is true for the Channel Islands, for historically specific reasons that will be explored here. It will also not escape the reader that women are virtually excluded from this chapter, including by the use of gender-exclusive language. This is simply a reflection of the reality of collecting German militaria in the Channel Islands. Those who encouraged, facilitated or helped young collectors were also almost exclusively male, particularly male members of the family. Those who played a cameo role in the history of collecting in the Channel Islands, perhaps by running antiques or collectables shops, or who dealt privately in German equipment, were similarly male.

Only one collector talked about the help they had received from their mother, and I observed that another collector's mother runs his museum for him. It is likely that the exclusion of women from this study is more apparent than real. I did not hear references to any female collectors or dealers in German militaria in the Channel Islands, which is not to say that they may not exist somewhere; they are not, however, discussed by the male collectors who I interviewed.

² Interview between author and Alan Allix, 21 June 2009.

³ Interview between author and Richard Heaume, 16 March 2009.

The age of collectors is also significant. None of the collectors interviewed was younger than 45 years old. The oldest were children during the Occupation, making them what Suleiman (2006: 179) refers to as the '1.5' generation, who she defines as being fourteen years old or younger during the war. For Suleiman, this generation was, specifically, the 'child survivors of the Holocaust, too young to have had an adult understanding of what was happening to them, and sometimes too young to have any memory of it at all, but old enough to have *been there* during the Nazi persecution of Jews'. It can be seen that, in a Channel Islands context, it could be used to describe the children who lived through the Occupation and who were old enough to have *been there*, even if they did not understand all that they experienced.

In their study of fifty years of memory politics since the Second World War, Fogu and Kansteiner (2006: 297) observed four overlapping age cohorts, each united by a common experience rather than by age. They list these as 'the war generation proper, that is, men and women who were in their thirties and forties or older during the war and thus politically responsible for it; the war-youth generation, those born before the war but too young to be responsible for the war and Nazism; the first postwar generation, those born during or right after the war and coming of age between the late 1960s and early 1980s; and the second postwar, or boom, generation, those born in the 1960s and currently coming of age'.

It can be seen that Fogu and Kansteiner's war-youth generation and first post-war generation overlaps with Suleiman's '1.5 generation'. This chapter focuses predominantly on the war-youth, first and the second post-war generations. As will be seen, each of these generations had different experiences with and attitudes towards German militaria, but was heavily influenced by those who came before them. My first aim is to chart and analyse this. As these are the three generations of collectors who are still alive in the Channel Islands today to be interviewed, it is likely and, indeed, inevitable that I have placed undue emphasis on their role in collecting, ignoring those who were adults during the Occupation—the 'war generation proper'. However, interviews with collectors today have led me to conclude that this generation was not nearly as active at collecting as those who followed. While they may have kept some items as souvenirs or for personal use, very few—with notable exceptions—actually acquired them for collecting's sake.

When questioned about why younger people in the islands—the third post-war generation—are not interested in collecting today, the answer seems to be fivefold. The first reason was suggested to me by collector Damien Horn. '*It's a disposable world. You don't keep anything now ... collecting came about because people had nothing come the end of the war. Things became important ... you gathered things up because you never had things. As we've got more money and things have moved on, people don't keep anything now*'.⁴ The second reason is that things from the Occupation are no longer circulating among the general population, in the home or in bunkers. The vast majority are now in the hands of increasingly smaller numbers

⁴ Interview between author and Damien Horn, 8 April 2010.

of private collectors. Third, they are now too expensive and cannot be paid for with pocket money. Fourth, young people are perceived as being interested only in computer games; they can play out their fantasies on particular war-themed computer games and so do not need to dress up or act out their games with real items; they are all available online. Also, neither their parents nor (increasingly) their grandparents lived through the Occupation; the crucial first-hand link has disappeared, leaving nothing to fire their interest or imagination in the war years.

The role of first-hand stories of the Occupation should not be ignored. For most collectors, they provided the crucial impetus which started their interest in the Occupation; these years held a certain amount of 'glamour' for a generation or more of schoolboys. Many grew up believing that they had missed the most 'exciting' thing ever to happen in the Channel Islands.⁵ As we shall see later, their desire to collect was wound up in a similar desire to recreate or relive the event that they had missed.

It is also important to define what I mean by the term 'collector', a term which does not preclude the collector also working as a dealer or trader in militaria in order to finance their collection. One of the collectors in particular was strict in his definition, describing his collecting bug in terms of addictive drug [a common feature among collectors, as noted by Belk (1994: 319)]. *'Twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. That's me ... If it was cocaine or heroin I would be getting all the help in the world and I would be being looked after!'*⁶ Another collector also phrased it in similar terms. *'Once you start collecting there is a little bit of the hunter-gatherer which goes on, of course. You do get a bit of a high if you're hunting for something and you suddenly actually come across it. Once you've got it the interest drops quite dramatically.'*⁷

For some collectors, collecting (even if you can no longer afford to do so), and seriously and proactively searching for new items, was part of the definition of what made a serious collector. While not all of the men interviewed could fit such stringent criteria and acknowledged that they had a life outside of collecting, there are several different shades of 'collector' in the Channel Islands, as summarised in Table 2.1. Over six years of fieldwork in the islands, it is clear that while very few people today fit into criteria 1 or 2 (and nearly all of the collectors discussed here do so), it is probably correct to say that most island families (excluding immigrants who have come to the islands since the war—although one of the collectors interviewed fits this criteria) would qualify for criteria 4 or 5, although they would not qualify as 'collectors' strictly defined in the purest sense. While the objects in question in category 4 may be items of militaria (loosely defined), in that they once belonged to German soldiers, items from category 5 tend to belong to the civilian realm. Items in categories 4 and 5 play an important role as memory objects in recounting a family story relating to the Occupation.

⁵ E.g. Interview between author and Martin Walton, 31 August 2009.

⁶ Interview between author and Damien Horn, 8 April 2010.

⁷ Interview between author and Martin Walton, 31 August 2009.

Table 2.1 Criteria of collectors, collections and owners of Occupation objects in the Channel Islands

Smallest numbers of islanders	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. People who freely admit to being proactive and obsessed about collecting 2. People who continue to regularly add to their collection when items 'come their way' 3. People who have a small collection of items dating from their childhood or later, and who infrequently or rarely add to their collections but still retain a latent interest 4. People who have a German object from the Occupation that they keep as a souvenir and/or as a working/practical item (e.g. binoculars, spade, helmet)
Largest numbers of islanders	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. People who have a non-German souvenir of some sort from the German Occupation, perhaps kept in the family as an heirloom (e.g. ID card, jam jar of bramble tea, reheelled shoes)

It is useful at the outset to define what I mean by a collection. I favour a common-sense approach which dictates that a collection is only a collection when the owner perceives it to be such. Pearce suggests that, 'at some point in the process the objects have to be deliberately viewed by their owner or potential owner as a collection, and this implies intentional selection, acquisition and disposal. It also means that some kind of specific value is set upon the group by its possessor' (1994a: 159).

Throughout this chapter, I also differentiate between the 'collection' and the 'souvenir'. At its most superficial level, and in the way that I have observed it in the Channel Islands, the primary distinction is in the number of objects owned: it takes many souvenirs to form a collection. However, there is something special about the souvenir. They are 'intrinsic parts of a past experience ... they alone have the power to carry the past into the present. Souvenirs are samples of events which can be remembered but not relived' (Pearce 1994b: 195). They are keepsakes, often reminders of childhood, mnemonic objects that trigger memories in the owner of a nostalgic, bitter-sweet past which, in this case, is preferably *directly* related to the Occupation. A souvenir is *personal* and linked to the self and personal history in a different way to other items in the collection. Most of the collectors interviewed here referred to souvenirs as the most precious things in their collection. On the memory of being given such an item, one collector remembered it as '*a rare event in my life and one I am sure will not be repeated*',⁸ clearly stating that the souvenir in question would never be for sale.

Lest it be thought that a collection is *only* a larger group of souvenirs, in practice a collector will only own a few such special objects linked to specific personal memories, as will be discussed later. The majority of items in the collection will be anonymous or ideally linked to specific German soldier or Occupation-related story. This is probably why Susan Stewart argues that 'While the point of the souvenir may

⁸ Email to author from Damien Horn, 25 July 2011.

be remembering ... the point of the collection is forgetting—starting again in such a way that a finite number of elements create, by virtue of their combination, an infinite reverie' (1984: 152). The experience of the collectors I interviewed, however, undermines Stewart's distinction between the souvenir and the collection. While items may be sourced, traded and sold on, potentially mitigating against memory and promoting an 'infinite reverie', the small number of collectors in the Channel Islands and the degree to which they trade among themselves means that a relatively large number were able to identify items that once belonged to them in the collections of others; they also remembered how they acquired them. While these biographies may not be attached to particularly 'special' objects, we may perhaps distinguish between the types of memories associated with souvenirs and those with non-souvenir items in the collection.

Although I discuss this issue later in the chapter, it is important to iterate at the outset that the items of German militaria in a collection, referred to by collectors as 'bits and pieces' of German 'stuff', 'gear', 'kit' or 'relics', are never referred to, by those I interviewed, as 'Nazi' equipment. This would lend it a connotation that it rarely possesses for collectors, despite perceptions to the contrary of some other islanders or visitors. As collector Damien Horn says, *'I always collected German kit, stuff, memorabilia. It's never Nazi. It's never been Nazi. It's just German. It's German military, it's not a political thing, it's just German kit. They were German and they were here and that's what they had'*.⁹ Similarly, the German Occupation itself, and all the debris it left behind, is similarly rarely referred to as 'Nazi'. It is probable that this is due to the fact that islanders lived in very close proximity to German soldiers, often in the same house, throughout the Occupation and inevitably got to know many of them. They do, however, make the distinction between the soldiers or officers who expressed Nazi sympathies and the 'ordinary German soldiers' who were seen as *'plain, simple country folk who were just doing what they were told to do. The average man on the street'*,¹⁰ who *'didn't want to be in the army'* or who *'would rather have been back on the farm'*.

The Birth of an Obsession: The History of Collecting in the Channel Islands

Phase 1: Militaria as Pilfered Booty

The thirst for collecting militaria began during the Occupation itself and, in its first incarnation, was spawned through the relationships between German soldiers and small boys or teenagers. Where the relationship was a positive one, it was not uncommon for soldiers billeted in islanders' houses to make and give small gifts to

⁹ Interview between author and Damien Horn, 8 April 2010.

¹⁰ Interview between author and Damien Horn, 8 April 2010.

island children. These were often toys or items of recycled war matériel, such as trench art [as defined by Saunders (2003: 11)]. Soldiers in the street, too, would sometimes give casual gifts to children, such as the soldier who threw an empty cartridge case to the young Leo Harris, who was watching him carry out a drill (Harris 2000: 36). Children were also responsible for souveniring ‘military junk’ from air crashes in the islands (e.g. Harris 2000: 117), and shrapnel and leaflets dropped by the RAF (e.g. Winterflood 1980: 12).

King (1991: 28) suggests that schoolchildren were especially vulnerable to the German presence as they were sometimes given gifts of food and sweets and taken for rides in cars and military vehicles. He describes, perhaps with a little artistic licence, how ‘boys were soon practising and playing at soldiers, doing the German drills, the goosestep, and marching four abreast, bowing from the waist, heel-clicking and glorying in it!’

There are only a few collectors in the islands today who belonged to this age group. Alan Allix from Jersey is one of them. He explained how the German soldiers would never or rarely give away any of their military equipment. *‘If they lost anything, even a button off their jacket, they had to account for it. And woe betide them if they lost any small arms or anything like that ... if any of the soldiers fell foul of either the law or regimental orders, their feet didn’t touch the ground’*.¹¹

Many accounts exist of schoolboys who stole items from Germans, such as caps, helmets or guns (e.g. Harris 2000: 130–131 and 134–135, 2002: 63 and 83; Willmot 2000: 71). While some were taken as souvenirs, others were taken as an adventure or an act of patriotism (Harris personal communication 2010). Sometimes weapons were taken with the intention of keeping them until the Allies arrived, after which time they could fight alongside them. While it never occurred to some of the schoolboys that they could get caught (Harris personal communication 2010), many teenage boys were arrested by the *Geheime Feldpolizei* and imprisoned locally or deported to the continent for such thefts. Not all of these boys survived their imprisonment.

After the Occupation, the appetite for militaria continued. The Germans left behind huge amounts of items of all kinds in their billets, in their fortifications and in *Soldatenheime*. These were salvaged and souveniried by islanders who had been brought to their knees by five long years of occupation. Anything that could be reused in the home, such as furniture, blankets, clothes, tools, binoculars and typewriters, was taken. Guns, shells, German helmets and other militaria were quickly collected, as described in rich detail by Michael Marshall in *The Small Army* (1957), an autobiographical account of his post-war activities in Guernsey with his gang of friends after they returned from evacuation on the mainland. This book is especially valuable as it gives an unparalleled insight into the activities of the 1.5 generation: those who had been affected by war as children.

¹¹ Interview between author and Alan Allix, 21 June 2009.

Marshall described how he and his friends ‘set about their pilfering of German equipment with relish. All areas which had been occupied by the German garrison were systematically searched and combed for anything of value. In these operations the boys received some support from the British detachments tackling the huge task of clearing up the mess’ (ibid.: 171 and 173). Although the pilfering of stocks of militaria for war trophies continued in the early post-war era, pilfered items were also beginning to be seen as souvenirs.

Phase 2: Militaria as Souvenir

It seems that both departing German prisoners of war and the British liberating soldiers actually stimulated the trade in souveniring. Collector Martin Walton recalls that ‘*Sometimes they [people] had been given them [souvenirs] by German officers before they left [the island] ... I had a Luger which was given to the local garage proprietor in St Martin’s by an officer before he went off ... they had got to know each other over the years and he just handed it over and said ‘I won’t be with this very much longer, it’s a nice thing’.*’¹²

Alan Allix¹³ recalls, ‘*I remember when the Tommies first came here, they were always asking kids, if they saw you ... they’d give you a sweet or something and say to you “do you know where there’s this?” They were always on the lookout for souvenirs. I clearly remember British troops asking my brother if he could get them whatever it was that they were looking for—usually a Luger or something like that ... and they would give him American cigarettes to take to our father ... Gee! What a prize!*’ Boys would be happy to sacrifice objects from their newly acquired collections for cigarettes because at that time, German equipment was easily replaceable, but cigarettes were hard to come by.

In the immediate post-war period, after years of hardship and shortages, adults took items left behind by the Germans that they could use. Peter Le Vesconte remembered that ‘*People used to keep all the leather and the boots and shoes for repairs.*’¹⁴ Paul Balshaw was able to vouch for the acquisition of German boots through the story of a friend of theirs. ‘*When the King and Queen came to visit just after the war, his dad took him. But his father had to stand behind everybody else because he had on a pair of jackboots and he didn’t want the King to see them! His father realised he was standing there in a pair of jackboots!*’¹⁵

A lot of German items were simply left behind in the islands. Richard Heaume suggested that ‘*people had held on to things because there was so much German material around; Germans billeted on households and on the farms; the things people had collected in the bunkers ... the Germans couldn’t take anything with*

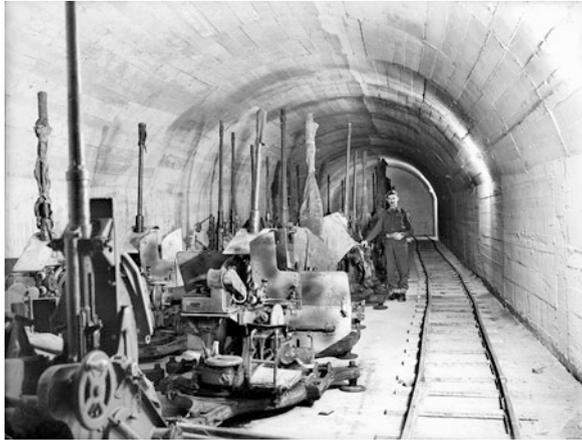
¹² Interview between author and Martin Walton, 31 August 2009.

¹³ Interview between author and Alan Allix, 21 June 2009.

¹⁴ Interview between author and Peter Le Vesconte, 6 April 2010.

¹⁵ Interview between author and Paul Balshaw, 16 March 2009.

Fig. 2.2 British soldier standing in Ho1 alongside anti-aircraft guns, which are about to be sealed inside the tunnel complex, February 1946 (© and courtesy Jersey Evening Post)



them apart from their personal belongings, so all that stuff was still in the island ... there was still a sizeable amount of stuff in the island in people's private possessions ... and I was able to get a fair chunk of it'.

With all the militaria hanging around in the islands, post-war tourists also played their part in encouraging islanders to trade. Ian Channing remembers a period from his own childhood in the 1950s. *'We used to play cowboys and Indians and everybody had German helmets. And this visitor came up to my mate and he said "Oh, would you sell me that helmet? I'll give you two bob for it". And within ten minutes there were about six kids there giving them another one'.*¹⁶

As part of the clear-up operations, boat loads of German mines, shells, bombs, mortars, machine guns, ammunition and landmines were dumped at sea, in the Hurd's Deep which lies just off the island of Alderney. At least, this was where they were supposed to have been dumped, but former shipwreck diver, Tony Titterington, saw large numbers of 10-cm gun barrels half a mile out in St Bre-lade's Bay in Jersey. *'As soon as the Navy cleared the harbour, they waited till they got past Noirmont Point and then started flinging stuff over so they could get back quicker to their beer in the evening! They said, in those days, once it was in the sea in about 60–70 ft of water, nobody wanted to know about it'.*¹⁷

During the clear-up, the British army presented to the States of Jersey one example of every type of weapon used by the Germans with a view to setting up a war museum. Although the weapons were accepted, they were supposed to be kept in a room at Mont Orgueil Castle, in the east of the island, but were actually placed instead in the German tunnel *Hohlgangsanlagen* 1 (Ho1) for 22 years (Fig. 2.2).¹⁸

¹⁶ Interview between author and Ian Channing, 2 May 2010.

¹⁷ Interview between author and Tony Titterington, 10 April 2010.

¹⁸ Interview between author and Tony Titterington, 10 April 2010.

Eventually, they were put on display at the Hougue Bie Occupation Museum in 1968 (Ginns 1985: 42).

The guns fixed in bunkers were rendered inoperative and left in position, but many of the light artillery pieces and anti-tank guns were thrown off the cliffs (Ginns 1978: 73). Some of these are still visible today. Such destruction of items that later were to become valuable to collectors can easily be understood: not only were many dangerous but the population could not wait to get rid of the hated machinery of oppression and occupation. As Allix recalled, *'Most adults weren't interested, so kids had a field day ... I suppose understandably people were fed up with the sight of the stuff'*.¹⁹

The son of a collector who lived through the Occupation remembers his father telling him that, for the first few years after the war, on 5 November every year, Guy Fawkes was dressed in a German uniform and perched on top of the bonfire before it was lit.²⁰ This epitomised the relationship between adults and many items of German militaria in the post-war period.

But not all adults felt this way. While much valuable material was being consigned to the bottom of the sea or burnt, the local population began to complain in the local press about the waste when they, themselves, were still in such need. A halt was called to the destruction, and auction sales were arranged. Those interested were able to purchase not just ordinary items such as knives, bowls, scrubbing brushes, chairs, scissors and lamps,²¹ but also 'relics' of the German Occupation to replace items lost or broken during the war years or to build up their collections. As traumatic as the Occupation had been, items of militaria were beginning to be recognised as souvenirs with a value.

Although adults had mixed feelings about these objects, youths had very clear attitudes towards items of militaria, as shown by an event that took place just five months after the end of the Occupation, described by Marshall (1957: 178–179). His aim, and that of his gang of teenage boy soldiers, was to track down and punish 'Guernsey Quislings'. After successful looting, they dressed in a mixture of German and British uniforms and 'now drilled in the public roads, to the amusement of the islanders, the Tommies and the German prisoners of war ... On one occasion Marsh marched the whole of his Army, wearing German steel helmets, calf-skin packs and green camouflage smocks, up the Grange, the busiest thoroughfare of St Peter Port'. Such a description sounds shocking to us today, but it seems that such roaming gangs of armed and uniformed teenage boys, probably traumatised by war, were probably not atypical of the post-war era; Marshall alone lists around 60 boys in his wider gang (ibid.: 195).

During this period, as in later years, the urge for youths to acquire military equipment was, in part, a desire to play (at times in a very serious way) at soldiers. While it was relatively easy for the young to acquire actual loaded weapons for

¹⁹ Interview between author and Alan Allix, 21 June 2009.

²⁰ Interview with author, name withheld, 26 August 2009.

²¹ 'Captured German Material Sold', Jersey Evening Post, 15 February 1946.

their war games in the immediate post-war era, with time these became scarcer, and the danger they posed to islanders who had acted as informers or who had made a profit on the black market lessened. As Marshall puts it, 'the boys had grown up. They now had to earn their living. Life was more than just careering about with pistols and knives ... the glamour had disappeared. Like the spirit of the British people after the war, enthusiasm petered out' (1957: 193).

While this may have been the case for older teenagers, who were slowly acquiring the responsibilities of adulthood, younger boys continued to play with German militaria. Local papers published 'dire warnings of the legal consequences' to 'large numbers of island youths in possession of a considerable quantity of German weapons and ammunition' and announced an amnesty if the 'souvenirs' were handed in Marshall (1957: 191). Having sold much of their extensive stores to scrap merchants, Marshall's gang handed over what they had left. Within their combined collections, they had 'high precision optical instruments, pistols, steel helmets, compasses, radio sets with accessories ... a motor-cycle and side-car, complete with a water-cooled machine gun'. One member of the gang even slept with two stick grenades under his pillow (ibid.: 186). Alan Allix also recalls similar advertisements in the Jersey papers, calling in all German military equipment. '*There was a notification in the paper: anyone that had obtained German equipment by whatever means had to hand it all in ... but children of course have their ways of hiding things!*'²²

The late 1940s and 1950s became an era of salvaging and souveniring, such was the density of artefacts still sitting around. What had once belonged to the enemy was fair game and was not considered stealing; rather, it constituted the spoils of war (Marshall 1957: 178). Islanders still remember this period with fondness. Richard Heaume, owner of the German Occupation Museum in Guernsey, recalled that, in the 1950s, '*most of the bunkers were open and phones and doors were still attached to walls. They and the German tunnels were Aladdin's caves ... These were the exciting places to visit and were where some of the contents of my museum came from. It was the thing to go treasure hunting then!*'²³ Alan Allix remembers swapping '*Anything ... bayonets ... any equipment if you could get hold of it, not necessarily arms ... bullet pouches and belts, caps, things like that. There were always swaps going on in the schools!*'²⁴ Tom Remfrey, Chair of the Guernsey Deportee Association, had similar memories. He recalled crawling down ventilation shafts of bunkers and retrieving bayonets.²⁵

In the 1950s, collecting had not yet become the serious pastime that it is today, and most items of militaria continued to circulate in the domain of children and teenagers rather than adults. For adults, such items were still seen as souvenirs rather than collections. Those few who did collect in this decade were '*considered*

²² Interview between author and Alan Allix, 21 June 2009.

²³ Informal conversation between author and Richard Heaume, summer 2007.

²⁴ Interview between author and Alan Allix, 21 June 2009.

²⁵ Informal conversation between author and Tom Remfrey, summer 2007.

a bit of a crank',²⁶ although to keep souvenirs or, even better, to give them away to the young was quite acceptable.

Children were able to acquire many souvenirs from the adults who owned them, a practice that went on for decades. Many of the collectors interviewed particularly valued these early gifts from adults. It was indicative that they and their collections were being taken seriously and not just treated as a childish hobby.

It seems clear that children and adults valued them differently in the 1940s and 1950s. For many of the children, their interest in the early days was not '*so much on collecting; it was on finding and exploring*'.²⁷ And while it was acceptable for children and teenagers to use militaria in war games, this would have been seen in a very different way had adults used them for the same thing. But, with the passing of time, even this has become acceptable—although controversial—today. A number of the collectors I interviewed are members of vintage arms' associations or have been involved in living history or re-enactment which has involved dressing up in German uniform.

Between the 1940s and 1970s, it was perfectly acceptable for adults to give weapons and other equipment to children, something that would be unacceptable today. Richard Heaume recalled that '*my parents were very supportive in the early 1960s to accommodate my hobby. My father used to come out and help me salvage things with the tractors and my mother actively used to go around asking her friends who were here during the Occupation if they had any souvenirs, and she brought back all sorts of interesting items, including guns*'.²⁸ Mark Lamerton, too, remembers the role of adults in his family in getting him items. '*My grandfather ... had these containers full of German motor oil which he still used, and he gave me an empty container once and I was over the moon with this ... and I can remember an uncle of mine going into in his workshop and finding a wooden box for a fire extinguisher ... and I said, "Can I have it?", and he said "I'll give it to you for your birthday", and on my birthday I got this big thing wrapped up ... that was the way I got a number of things, I'd get them for birthdays and Christmas*'.²⁹

For Damien Horn, his father would make enquiries on his behalf of friends and customers at his men's clothing shop in St Helier. '*Dad would ask, "Have you got anything?", and people would come into the shop and we'd always get talking to the locals and ask them if they had anything. And we'd pop up on a weekend and see what they'd had on their farm or in their sheds, and inevitably ... I was given quite a lot of kit. My dad would take me to see his mates if they had something, and the odd bits he'd always pick up. I remember him coming back from the pub one night and he'd played darts with a guy for a German helmet*'.³⁰

²⁶ Interview between author and Ian Channing, 2 May 2010.

²⁷ Interview between author and Richard Heaume, 16 March 2009.

²⁸ Interview between author and Richard Heaume, 16 March 2009.

²⁹ Interview between author and Mark Lamerton, 8 May 2009.

³⁰ Interview between author and Damien Horn, 11 May 2010.

Although adults sometimes gave their souvenirs to children as gifts, or parents were able to buy or trade on behalf of their children, the actual *trade* in militaria was kept going by children and teenagers in the 1950s. *'It was quite difficult in those times'*, Martin Walton remembers. *'Apart from Dickie Mayne who started it off, there weren't really any collectors as such ... there were one or two antique shops in town who used to have some military things but a lot of it didn't appear on the market until later years. I would buy things from other schoolboys. I do remember that'*.³¹

Swapping objects in the school playground was popular, although teachers tried to ban this practice. Alan Allix remembered that *'you weren't physically searched but they used to look you over when you came into see if you had any stuff on you'*.³² If they were found with objects, they would be told to take them back home. Tony Titterington, on the other hand, who was a little older, recalls that there were so many children bringing German equipment into school that nobody worried about it. Perhaps the teenagers were given a freer hand than the younger boys to indulge their hobbies.

Smuggling militaria into the school playground is something that continued in Jersey until the 1970s, and almost all of the collectors interviewed remembered doing this. Speaking of the 1950s, Martin Walton recalled that *'They didn't bother to smuggle them, particularly! Obviously they didn't wave them in front of the teacher's face ... you just kept it under covers ... Not that much came through the school to be honest. It was mainly someone said "Oh, I've got this", and then you'd go round to their home'*.³³ Collector Peter Le Vesconte remembers, in the 1960s, *'one kid coming to school with a cross band of live ammunition wrapped around his body, and the police arriving up there and taking it off, and another kid coming to school with a pistol. I do remember that'*.³⁴ At school in the same decade, Mark Lamerton recalled that *'it seemed at school that everybody had something relating to the Occupation ... I remember having a Walther P38 pistol and having to hide it from my parents ... by the time I was ten my bedroom was covered with it [German equipment]; I had tables with artefacts on them or underneath, or hanging up or whatever'*.³⁵ (Fig. 2.3). By the 1970s, collecting had come full circle; some of those teachers who had been schoolboys during the Occupation were interested to see the German items that their pupils brought in.³⁶ It was not unknown for teachers to actually donate items to their pupils outside school grounds.³⁷

The situation in Guernsey, at least at some schools, was very different; here, teachers were much stricter about what was brought into school. Richard Heaume

³¹ Interview between author and Martin Walton, 31 August 2009.

³² Interview between author and Alan Allix, 21 June 2009.

³³ Interview between author and Martin Walton, 31 August 2009.

³⁴ Interview between author and Peter Le Vesconte, 6 April 2010.

³⁵ Interview between author and Mark Lamerton, 8 May 2009.

³⁶ Interview between author and Graeme Delanoe, 25 May 2010.

³⁷ Interview between author and Paul Balshaw, 16 March 2009.

Fig. 2.3 Collector Mark Lamerton as a schoolboy with his fledgling collection of German militaria, 1969 (© and courtesy Jersey Evening Post)



remembers his school days at Elizabeth College in the 1950s, where the principal declared that *'Any boys collecting German militaria or going in German tunnels and bringing stuff to school would face expulsion'*.³⁸ This followed the accidental shooting of a policeman by a schoolboy several years earlier, and so collecting had to be done secretly. *'I found other people interested in collecting these things and we used to go round together and explore German bunkers and German tunnels and we collected things. We formed a little society in 1956 ... we used to meet in the farmhouse, in the attic, about once a month. We planned activities and outings and it was a very organised group of youngsters, and everything was done with almost military precision ... so the society was called the German Occupation Research Department, after the departments we had at the college—we thought we'd add an extra one! A secret one! ... and we always met outside school'*.³⁹

Guernsey was not the only island where accidents among schoolboys took place. Alan Allix remembers that, in Jersey, *'In about '45 or '46, this boy was playing with bullets. What he'd done, he'd put one in a vice and hit it and taken three fingers off. Well, we were all at it. We thought he was a hero!'*⁴⁰ Tony Titterington recalled a similar incident. *'Several of my friends shot themselves with guns ... one was sold a Polish cavalry officer's pistol by our school barber ... there was probably something wrong with it ... it went off and the bullet went into his liver and they couldn't get it out. He very nearly died. There was another one later on, he had a nice little German pistol. A friend came to see him and they were playing with it and his friend shot him. He died'*.⁴¹

³⁸ Interview between author and Richard Heaume, 16 March 2009.

³⁹ Interview between author and Richard Heaume, 16 March 2009.

⁴⁰ Interview between author and Alan Allix, 21 June 2009.

⁴¹ Interview between author and Tony Titterington, 10 April 2010.

Any discussion of the era of souveniring, especially by schoolboys, would not be complete without an account of the important role played by the German tunnels. These were one of the key sources of militaria in the Channel Islands, and nearly every collector discussed in this chapter has broken into them at one time or another in search of objects. This is because, during the clean-up of the Channel Islands after the war, the galleries of German tunnels became ideal places to dispose German equipment that the British army did not have time to dump at sea, such as anti-tank guns, anti-aircraft guns, steel helmets, field kitchens, range finders and gas cylinders. The ends of the galleries were then blown up, and the tunnel entrances sealed (Ginns 1993: 16 and 18). Although much of this material was later removed by scrap merchants, the tunnels were destined to become places of pilgrimage to generations of schoolboys intent on hunting for treasure. The key tunnels which all collectors mention are those in St Peter's Valley in Jersey, principally Ho2,⁴² and Ho12, the tunnel under St Saviour's Church in Guernsey.

Tony Titterington, who was a young teenager in the late 1940s, recalled how he and his friends used to cycle at weekends to St Peter's Valley to explore the tunnels. *'They'd been sealed up, but very poorly, simply by piling earth at the entrances, so we scrambled over the hump [of earth] and there were all kinds of things in there ... they were very good ... but we were only interested in guns.'*⁴³ Martin Walton recalled of the 1950s that *'at that time the tunnels were fairly free and accessible; people used to go up on their bicycles and if you'd gone outside the tunnels you'd see bits of German relics in a trail down the valley road.'*⁴⁴

The trade between schoolboys was so keen in the 1950s that, incredibly, young teenagers could walk around quite openly with weapons and equipment without getting into trouble. Walton remembers trying to acquire a Panzerfaust (a type of rocket launcher) from a friend when he was about 12. *'I was determined to buy this thing from him... I couldn't take it on my bicycle ... so I went up there by bus to buy the thing off him ... then I got onto the bus with this thing standing up and I wasn't thrown off by the conductor or anything. I took the bus all the way down to St Helier, changed buses, and then came up to St Martin's and then walked down the road from the bus stop at St Martin's Church with this thing above me ... it didn't get very much comment at that time.'*⁴⁵

The German tunnels in Jersey became harder to break into in the early 1950s after an incident. After their torch failed, two boys got lost overnight in Ho2⁴⁶ (Fig. 2.4). Although the entrance to the tunnel was sealed immediately after they were found, this did not deter those who were searching for equipment, who promptly made a hole in the sealed entrance. Between 1954 and 1962, the Public Works Department in the island spent more than £500 on continual efforts to keep

⁴² 'Ho' is an abbreviation of 'Hohlgangsanlagen' or 'cave-passage-installations'.

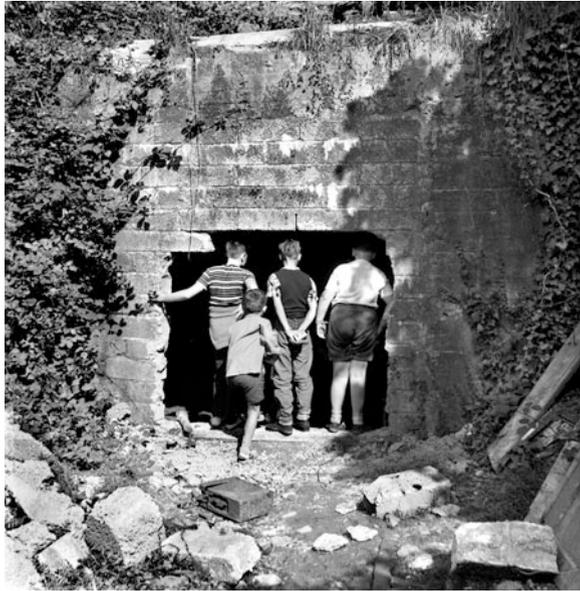
⁴³ Interview between author and Tony Titterington, 10 April 2010.

⁴⁴ Interview between author and Martin Walton, 31 August 2009.

⁴⁵ Interview between author and Martin Walton, 31 August 2009.

⁴⁶ *Jersey Evening Post*, 19 March 1952.

Fig. 2.4 Schoolboys peering inside the lower entrance of Ho2, 1962 (© and copyright, Jersey Evening Post)



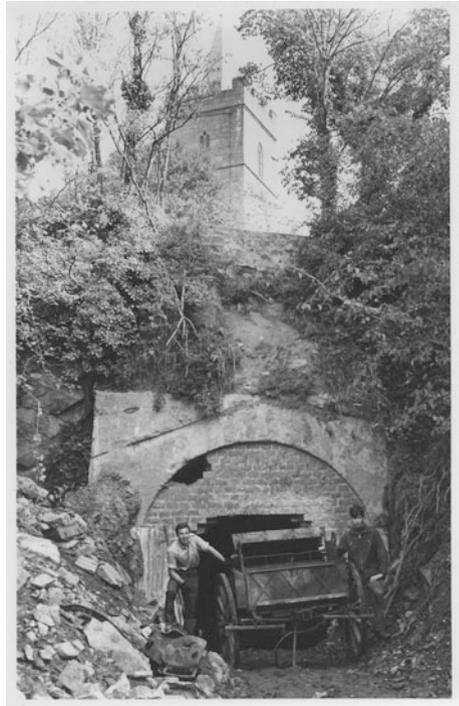
the tunnel sealed, but each time the concrete was put in place, at night someone would remove it before it had time to dry (Ginns 1993: 21). By 1960, it was not unusual to see anything up to 20 bicycles outside the tunnel entrance as their owners explored the interior (ibid.: 19).

The dangers of these tunnels were no more off-putting to young boys in Guernsey. Richard Heaume remembers one occasion when he was in St Saviour's tunnel in 1958. *'I was there on a wet afternoon when the people were actually sealing the front of the tunnel with concrete, and I'd slid in down an eight-foot shaft and I couldn't see the light to get out ... but I knew that if I made a commotion to these workmen then they would not report me because I made them feel irresponsible for not having checked the tunnel ... it was a nasty fright!'*

Teenage boys were determined to get into the tunnels, no matter that they were being sealed up as fast as they broke into them again. Peter and Paul Balshaw recalled the methods used. *'They'd seal it up every week but before the next weekend, the boys had unsealed it ... [they used] bricks and concrete blocks. And then you'd kick it in again ... you'd go at night-time with a hammer and chisel ... they'd come back a week later and seal it up again ... kids were still going in up till ten years ago. You won't stop them ... if you put a notice saying "free entry", they won't go in. If you brick it up, they'll want to go in. "Please keep out" means you want to go in, doesn't it?'*⁴⁷ Lest it be thought that the Balshaws were the only collectors to do this, even the most respected of collectors interviewed here

⁴⁷ Interview between author and Paul and Peter Balshaw, 16 March 2009.

Fig. 2.5 Richard Heaume removing horse-drawn ammunition trailer from the St Saviour's tunnels in the late 1960s (© and courtesy Brian Green and German Occupation Museum, Guernsey)



admitted to similarly breaking into the tunnels. *'We had to physically dig in all the tunnels'*, confirmed Richard Heaume.⁴⁸

The St Saviour's tunnel was still well stocked with equipment in the 1950s. *'Mostly ammunition, boxes, belts, a lot of German helmets. Thousands of German helmets, which was a prize thing ... and there was a lot of bigger things: horse-drawn equipment, still on wheels'*.⁴⁹ Later on, when Richard Heaume returned to Guernsey from agricultural college at the end of 1963, he began to collect more seriously. He opened his museum in 1966 and, in 1969, gained permission from the church authorities to open up the tunnels under the church and purchase all the equipment there⁵⁰ (Fig. 2.5). *'There were all manner of items ... it was all things to be scrapped or disposed of, as most of the things of value had actually gone for sale ... or people had taken as souvenirs ... It was the debris of war; it was the scrap things which had very little interest for most people'*.⁵¹

⁴⁸ Interview between author and Richard Heaume, 16 March 2009.

⁴⁹ Interview between author and Richard Heaume, 16 March 2009.

⁵⁰ The law in the Channel Islands dictates that the contents of underground tunnels or bunkers belong to the person who owns the land above them.

⁵¹ Interview between author and Richard Heaume, 16 March 2009.

The German tunnels did not lose their allure with time, even though their contents were beginning to decay. Ian Channing remembers visiting the tunnel in St Peter's Valley in Jersey around 1960. *'They were full of gear ... and there was a white mould over everything so it was like a grotto when you went in there ... the stuff was thrown in there and kids searching for stuff were throwing stuff all over the place, and you had drums of oil, big drums with a big eagle and swastika on the top ... but when that stuff's all piled up you've got to be careful because it's rotten. You stand on stuff and the next thing you've fallen through it ... when you touched stuff it was all crumbling, so you knew it was like walking through a minefield'*.⁵² However, not all the items were decaying at an equal rate. 'Some of it was like new', Ian Channing told me. *'It was amazing. You could pick stuff up—there were hundreds and thousands of boxes, ammunition boxes, full of little spares and bit and pieces like that, and everybody was looking for guns. So the kids would go in and pick up the boxes ... and there was a wall of helmets, but over the years, all the kids climbing over them and looking in them had pulled them down'*.

On 27 May 1962, two teenage boys died of carbon monoxide poisoning after exploring inside tunnel Ho2 for souvenirs. This time the authorities built a concrete wall over the makeshift upper entrance, but it was soon breached. As it was realised that boys would continue to find their way inside the tunnel as long as German equipment remained, much of the tunnels were emptied and sold off in 1970s and 1980s (Ginns 1993: 21–22).

Tony Titterington took part in the clearance of the tunnel in 1972 (Fig. 2.6). *'We were given a lorry to fill up, to save the stuff like tin hats for example. We found a whole big pile of tin hats that we hadn't known were there ... they were covered with petrol tins and junk ... and if you could bang them together and no hole came, then we kept them. If a hole appeared, we flung them. About six or seven lorries of tin hats went to St Ouen's to be buried and we kept 2,200. That will show you the scale ... I don't know what happened to them in the end'*.⁵³ Collector Graeme Delanoe was able to tell me about the tin hats taken to be buried in the parish of St Ouen. He was just beginning his collection as an 11 year old at that time. *'A lot of the kids that were in the know went out there and dug the stuff up again and that's how it appeared in circulation'*.⁵⁴ In this way, cycles of burial and excavation by adults and children meant that militaria continued to stay in the public domain.

While a lot of the German equipment in good condition that came out of the tunnels at that time was taken to Elisabeth Castle in St Helier, some of it was sold on and other pieces were stored in a large room in the castle. However, after some items were stolen,⁵⁵ everything that remained was moved on. The majority was taken to the house of collector Martin Walton after his friend and fellow collector, Paul Clothier, was given permission to take them. From there, after they had been

⁵² Interview between author and Ian Channing, 2 May 2010.

⁵³ Interview between author and Tony Titterington, 10 April 2010.

⁵⁴ Interview between author and Graeme Delanoe, 25 May 2010.

⁵⁵ Interview between author and Tony Titterington, 10 April 2010

Fig. 2.6 German militaria inside Ho2, 1972 (© and courtesy Tony Titterington)



restored, items were moved into the new island Fortress Museum in St Helier. In the early 1980s, Clothier was also given permission from the landowner of Ho2 to finally clear what remained in the tunnel. Martin Walton was present at the opening. *'It was a big event for me to go into the tunnel at the re-opening. And the only thing that was really there were these field kitchens ... they'd left half the field kitchens in'*.⁵⁶ The young Graeme Delanoe, also present, was overwhelmed with the anticipation of entering the tunnel after hearing so many stories about them. *'It was like Aladdin going into the cave with all the jewels and things! But unfortunately by the time we were going in there it was just what people had pulled out from corners to try and find the good stuff that people had neglected. There were machine gun belts, gas mask cases, remains of helmets, optical range finders ... nothing that you could class as valuable and important'*.⁵⁷

Although the war-youth generation and first post-war generation to enter the tunnels were in search of souvenirs, as these boys grew up, their pile of souvenirs began to become serious collection and they took their hobby more seriously. Thus, it is to the era of militaria as serious collection that we must turn next.

⁵⁶ Interview between author and Martin Walton, 31 August 2009.

⁵⁷ Interview between author and Graeme Delanoe, 25 May 2010.

Phase 3: Militaria as Serious Collection

By the early 1960s, equipment was circulating in huge numbers around schoolboy collectors (who regularly visited the German tunnels) and, increasingly, adults. Many of the first post-war generation of collectors had reached adulthood and began to be more serious about building up their collections in both quantity and quality. Although today's collectors look back at the 1960s and 1970s as a halcyon age of ubiquity and volume of material, Ian Channing remembers thinking, in 1960, *'It's finished now, it's been too long since the Occupation; I'm only getting 20 or 30 pieces a week'*.⁵⁸ Compared to later decades, these numbers were huge.

For those who had established a reputation as collectors, items of German militaria were flooding into the market and directly into their hands. In Guernsey, Richard Heaume recalled that *'a lot of things people were happy to dispose of for a nominal sum. They were not looking at the value of things then; the value was not so great because there was so much of it around, you couldn't put a value on anything'*.⁵⁹ A generation after the Occupation, people were getting rid of the souvenirs they had earlier acquired; they were still perceived as neither particularly desirable nor valuable to the wider population.

The late Richard 'Dickie' Mayne was a well-known collector and museum owner who played a large role on the Jersey collecting scene. His son recalls that the Occupation became a predominant obsession for him because it was commercial. *'In the early 1960s, there was only the German Underground Hospital—they had a very extensive collection. There was La Hougue Bie [Occupation Museum] which had some artefacts ... tourism was really in its heyday ... because he'd lived through the Occupation, he had a foot in it already, had a good network of acquaintances ... And I think he saw a niche that he could open up somewhere and collect, which would satisfy his collector's side but was also a way of making money'*.⁶⁰

Richard Mayne is acknowledged by other collectors as having been one of the first serious adult collectors who did not start in childhood. He established the St Peter's Bunker War Museum in 1965 (Fig. 2.7). As with Richard Heaume in Guernsey, once people knew that Mayne was interested, they brought items to him. *'Either they came along with a pair of German leather boots and asked "what are these worth?" or ... a number of people who had arms ... because their father had got them or their grandfather had got them or whatever, or it was under the bed or it was in a box or in the loft ... and what do you do with it? What do you do with a German horse's saddle? Or a German horse's gas mask?... All they do is sit, usually in the garage or in a loft, gathering dust ... and I think maybe it was*

⁵⁸ Interview between author and Ian Channing, 2 May 2010.

⁵⁹ Interview between author and Richard Heaume, 16 March 2009.

⁶⁰ Interview with author, name withheld, 26 August 2009.

Fig. 2.7 Interior of St Peter's bunker in its heyday (© and courtesy of the family of Richard Mayne)



families moving or people dying, and their lofts were being cleared out, and they knew someone who was collecting and so might be interested.⁶¹

While some islanders had hung onto items of German equipment as souvenirs, others were using them on their farms. Peter Le Vesconte recalled that there was still a lot of German equipment on farms in the 1970s. *‘My father said that during the Occupation, a German lorry went past him and they dropped a bundle of spades ... so my father had this German spade. He was using it right up until the 70s. He’d never even told me it was German! And in the 70s, he said to me “that’s a German spade, that”, so I nicked it out of his garage!*’⁶² Damien Horn also acquired items from farms and farmers. *‘I know a lot of farmers used the stuff ... I know farmers used the Germans’ Zeltbahn, camouflaged ponchos the German soldiers wore. They buttoned them together and they used them for covering the cows in the bad weather as cow covers! They were utilised and that’s why they’re still in existence, whereas most stuff was burned, buried and dumped ... A lot of people kept binoculars because there weren’t any around at the end of the Occupation and they were useful ... We used to find bayonets on farms because they used to use them for cutting cauliflowers ... Anything from the farm that had been used was the secondary part of your collection. It was never the best*’.⁶³

The era of the souvenir did not end when the serious collectors began; they continued to stimulate the market for decades. What was once a souvenir was slowly becoming a family heirloom. Damien Horn contrasted the situation between the 1970s and the present day: *‘The stuff was still hidden away [in the 1970s]. People had taken it and put it away and weren’t ready to let it go. A lot of people took German helmets as souvenirs, and 20–25 years ago they still had them as a souvenir. They weren’t at a stage in their life where they’re thinking “what do I want this rubbish for?” ... People say “I’m keeping it for the grandkids” ...*

⁶¹ Interview with author, name withheld, 26 August 2009.

⁶² Interview between author and Peter Le Vesconte, 6 April 2010.

⁶³ Interview between author and Damien Horn, 11 May 2010.

[but] in some cases it comes your way in a few years' time anyway, because the grandkids don't care about it and they do want a few quid ... or it goes back to the grandkids and it stays there until they reach a stage in their life where they decide, 20 years down the line, "what do I want it for?" I don't think there are many people hanging on to kit who had it passed down from grandparents ... if you say 100 grandparents gave their children something, I think you'd be very lucky to find two or three who actually do hang on to it for a lifetime'.

In the 1970s, the prices were rising and militaria was still circulating in quantity. Peter Le Vesconte, who opened his own collectables shop in the mid-1970s, described collecting during the 1970s as *'easy then, because there was just so much stuff around ... You'd pick up a good German helmet for about twenty, twenty-five quid, which at the time for me was two weeks' wages, which was affordable ... every single week we were picking up two or three items. I was buying from three different antiques shops at that time'*.⁶⁴ Items were still so ubiquitous that even serious collectors did not hang on to items permanently. Tony Titterington explained that *'you collected something and then you swapped it on within a few months when you got tired of it. And there was so much going around, it wasn't hard. I mean, you didn't hold on to a thing as if it was a jewel'*.⁶⁵

The opening of antiques and collectables shops in the 1970s took the trade and collection of militaria to a new level. Martin Walton recalled how Peter Le Vesconte *'had a tremendous contact with people who had German relics, because he was buying all the time. He was the only person dealing in it at the time, he had a tremendous amount of material going through his hands from everyone who knew that he was working'*.⁶⁶ Other collectors in the antiques business would also pass items on to him. Once items were for sale at such a venue, many items were sold to visiting tourists, English collectors and collectors from other islands. The previous militaria economy which thrived on gift-giving, barter and exchange between family, friends, neighbours and acquaintances had now expanded to include sale between strangers.

Although by the 1970s many of the first-generation schoolboy collectors were now adults with still-growing collections, museums or shops out of which they conducted a trade in German militaria, the age of the schoolboy collector was still continuing thirty years after the end of the Occupation. The second post-war generation, born in the 1960s, was probably the last to experience this phenomenon. Their experiences still had much in common with the schoolboys of earlier decades, although the items available were less ubiquitous and not in such good condition as the adults passed on to them less valuable pieces.

Graeme Delanoe remembers buying items from the respected Richard Mayne in the late 1970s, when he was still a teenager. *'There was an area [in his attic] where it was tradable pieces and stuff that wasn't so significant ... but I had the*

⁶⁴ Interview between author and Peter Le Vesconte, 6 April 2010.

⁶⁵ Interview between author and Tony Titterington, 10 April 2010.

⁶⁶ Interview between author and Martin Walton, 31 August 2009.

*pick of these boxes, I was just told to go up there and he would just say “Yep, you can have that, you can have that”, and so when I left this house the first time, it was like I’d gone to heaven. It was an amazing experience. And when I look back at it now and see the stuff I was given compared to what I had in the collection in later times, you could see why Richard had passed it on. Because to me it was gold; to him it was silver’.*⁶⁷

Damien Horn testified that boys were still bringing militaria into school in the 1970s. *‘People were bringing in German helmets and different bits and pieces that their parents and grandparents had given them... A lot of the stuff when I was seven or eight was just rusty stuff, stuff that had come from the German tunnels and, not knowing any different, I thought that all German stuff from the war was in that condition, because that’s all I ever saw ... different stuff was coming to school all the time and I was trading for it [with] marbles, sweets, money, whatever was wanted ... I ended up with a small collection of rusty German equipment’.*⁶⁸ Children of the 1970s also had to look harder for their items of militaria. Damien recalled that *‘as time went on, I got to know people who had the better stuff ... in garages and sheds and tracked it down any way I could ... I’d go cycling in the countryside, and as you cycled past you see, in garages and sheds, German helmets hung up or a carbide lamp or a field telephone’.*⁶⁹

Another stimulus to trade and collecting in the 1970s was the market for mass produced Occupation and Liberation souvenir kitsch, some of which was available at a price that children could afford. The kinds of items produced were invariably souvenirs marketed to be released at the time of Liberation Day each year.

An indication of taste among collectors at this time is perhaps best exemplified by an item which came out in 1973. This framed plaque, designed in the same colour scheme as the swastika flag, incorporated historic quotations relating to the Channel Islands made by King George VI, Churchill and Hitler. At the top, flanking a German eagle with a swastika in its talons, were the dates of occupation. The plaque was designed by Michael de Havilland Geraghty, a former public relations consultant, who gave copies to island leaders and to the German Chancellor, Herr Willy Brandt.⁷⁰ It is perhaps fortunate that history does not record what they thought of it.

On the twenty-fifth anniversary of liberation, souvenir swords, knives and daggers were produced, but in the years that followed, these were replaced by ash trays, mugs, plates, plaques, thimbles, coins, Zippo lighters, key rings and teddy bears.⁷¹ Such tourist kitsch to commemorate war has parallels with the items produced in America following national disasters such as the Oklahoma bombings and the destruction of the World Trade Centre. These have been documented by

⁶⁷ Interview between author and Graeme Delanoe, 25 May 2010.

⁶⁸ Interview between author and Damien Horn, 11 May 2010.

⁶⁹ Interview between author and Damien Horn, 11 May 2010.

⁷⁰ *Jersey Evening Post*, 10 May 1973: 11.

⁷¹ My thanks to Mark Lamerton for showing me the liberation souvenir items in his collection.

Marita Sturken, who interpreted them as objects produced for what she calls ‘tourists of history’, a ‘particular mode through which the American public is encouraged to experience itself as the subject of history through consumerism ... souvenirs, popular culture ... a form of tourism that has as its goal a cathartic “experience” of history’. Sturken is particularly concerned with the subjectivity of the tourist of history, ‘for whom history is an experience once or twice removed, a mediated and reenacted experience, yet an experience nevertheless’ (2007: 9).

This description is not entirely inappropriate for members of the post-war generation, for whom history (or the Occupation) was experienced second hand or at a distance, mediated through material culture. However, there are differences between the role of souvenir kitsch in America and in the Channel Islands, with the former being used as part of a ‘comfort culture’, to encourage people to see themselves as innocent victims of unprovoked attacks and the latter playing upon a long tradition of souveniring and collecting war trophies.

Phase 4: Collecting as an Investment/Currency

Although those who still collect have remained every bit as passionate about their collections, many have detected a change in the collecting scene in the Channel Islands from about the mid-1980s onwards. The chief problem is that fewer and fewer items are now circulating. Martin Walton has observed that ‘*there is a lot less about and some of the people who used [to collect] ... the contacts I had ... are always saying, “ah, it’s finished, it’s finished, it’s all gone now, it’s finished, there’s nothing around”, but they keep popping up with the odd thing actually, but not to the extent that it used to be—no, you’d have something turning up almost every week about 20 or 30 years ago*’.⁷² Damien Horn has also observed this. ‘*The number of collectors in the last ten years has dropped right off. There was always a sort of group of maybe six or eight people who were collecting ... most people have really quietened off in the last ten years. It’s died, it’s died. There’s been a couple of people who’ve packed up and between us we’ve kept the ball rolling. There was always something new, always a turnover. There was always something turning up that one or the other wanted, and that meant that something else came out. But now it’s gone really quiet*’.⁷³

The number of collectors has sharply dwindled, which Peter Le Vesconte puts down to price. ‘*If you wanted a nice German helmet, you’d be looking at £550, £600 ... recently a German paratroop helmet came up for sale, and it fetched £3,600. Those prices, your ordinary person can’t afford them*’.⁷⁴ As Graeme

⁷² Interview between author and Martin Walton, 31 August 2009.

⁷³ Interview between author and Damien Horn, 11 May 2010.

⁷⁴ Interview between author and Peter Le Vesconte, 6 April 2010.

Table 2.2 Summary of phases of perception of militaria among those who collect it

Phase 1 (1940s)	Militaria as pilfered booty/war trophy
Phase 2 (1940s to present)	Militaria as souvenir and (later) heirloom
Phase 3 (1950s/1960s to present)	Militaria as serious collection
Phase 4 (1980s/1990s to present)	Militaria as investment/currency

Delanoe commented to me, *'it's got to a stage that you're not going to get new collectors now because it's too expensive'*.⁷⁵

As is clear to all collectors, the cost and value of items of militaria have only increased with time. Those who still collect now view their collections as valuable investments. Some are involved in the trade of German militaria nationally and internationally, and will buy and sell items surplus to their requirements in order to fund the purchase of items that fit their collecting criteria.⁷⁶ These collections are highly unlikely to be donated to local island museums or archives in the future, but are instead perceived as pensions⁷⁷ or nest eggs for retirement. Those who have sold their entire collections speak of using German helmets (used in this sense as a metaphor for all types of equipment) as a currency for conversion into holidays or time with the family.⁷⁸

When asked about the future of his collection, Damien Horn said that, *'at the end of the day, with no local interest, I may be faced with putting the collection to a major auction to be sold off in Europe where I would be assured that the items would firstly all sell and secondly attain the true worth on the day and set my kids up with a few quid to get them started'*.⁷⁹ The perception is that, at some point in the future, the collection can be cashed in.

The time has already arrived when some island collectors are forced to source their items overseas, from Germany, within the families of former soldiers of occupation. They have to look outside the islands in order to 'bring home' or 'rescue' any and all surviving local objects. Although a very small numbers of souvenirs from local families are still entering the market, these are few and far between. Increasingly, collectors are sitting on treasuries of their local heritage and an end to the intra- and inter-island trade in militaria is already in sight.

While the way in which German militaria has been perceived has changed through time in a series of overlapping phases (Table 2.2), this can also be seen as a series of stages which describe the flow of military goods in the islands between tunnels, museums and antiques shops, and between adults and children (Table 2.3). Although the tables are not directly equivalent, chronologically we

⁷⁵ Interview between author and Graeme Delanoe, 25 May 2010.

⁷⁶ E.g. www.festungjerseymilitaria.com, accessed 24 July 2011.

⁷⁷ Telephone interview with Danny Wakley, 26 July 2011.

⁷⁸ Interview between author and Graeme Delanoe, 25 May 2010.

⁷⁹ Email from Damien Horn to author, 24 July 2010.

Table 2.3 The typical flow of German equipment in the Channel Islands

Stages	Domain of adults	Domain of children/teenagers
1	Militaria in the hands of German soldiers	Militaria pilfered
2	Militaria stockpiled by liberating forces and souvenired by adults	Militaria pilfered
3	Militaria sealed in tunnels/stowed in attics and barns	Militaria stolen from tunnels and circulated among children
4	Tunnels emptied in successive waves and contents buried or removed	Militaria excavated, given or pilfered and circulated among children
5	Militaria taken to museum/shop	Militaria continues to circulate; some acquired from adults
6	Heyday of museum; some items sold to collectors	Militaria continues to circulate; some acquired from adults
7	Museum closes; items sold to collectors or other museums	Militaria continues to circulate; some acquired from adults
8	Number of museums and collectors diminish; increasing amounts of items in hands of the few	Militaria becomes too expensive and scarce to collect

can broadly equate Phase 1 to Stage 1 and 2; Phase 2 to Stage 3 onwards; Phase 3 to Stage 4 onwards; and Phase 4 to Stage 8.

Table 2.3 shows the typical flow of German equipment in Jersey and Guernsey in a series of chronological stages. While some of these stages took place only days apart, others were separated by years. At each stage, the impression gained from talking to collectors is that, unofficially and at all stages, certain items of militaria in the adult domain were being diverted from their supposed path and disappearing into private collections. From there, a few items were given to children, thus fuelling their own collections, or were even sold abroad or to tourists.

There is yet one final stage to the analysis and interpretation of how and why militaria was being collected and understood by different generations. This involves the four-phase model of Table 2.2 being boiled down into two groups: the collecting experiences of those who had some experience of the Occupation (i.e. the war-youth generation) and those who did not (the first and second post-war generation).

The War-Youth Generation: Collecting as a Coping Mechanism

Interviews with those who collected or played with German militaria during or soon after the Occupation clearly show how important this activity was for the young in the Channel Islands. During the Occupation, it was an activity that was driven by children themselves, with no input from adults other than German soldiers. However, after the liberation, adults were much more active in encouraging this activity, although they were perhaps unaware of the full extent of the social worlds young

boys were creating with their arsenal of weapons and equipment. Even though adults were often responsible for ‘seeding’ collections, the degree to which the collections grew out of hand is indicated by the need either to be circumspect about the items brought to school or to keep such activities away from the playground altogether, as collectors Richard Heaume and Martin Walton discovered.

The influence of specific childhood or adolescent experiences on choice and type of collections has been noted by Baekeland (1994: 212–213) and by Belk and Wallendorf (1994) and is something that we must bear in mind as the strongest influence on the collectors discussed in this chapter. Gabriel Moshenska has also explored an example of such collecting in his exploration of the collection of shrapnel among British schoolchildren in the Second World War. He has argued that such collecting was a ‘coping mechanism, a means for children to control or domesticate the material culture of violence by integrating it into their social practices and thereby negating its violent and alien qualities’; it was also ‘a way for children to feel involved and actively in the world at war on a par with the adults around them’ (2008a: 109). The illusion of control of material culture is achieved through ownership and by arranging, classifying and manipulating collections. As Belk and Wallendorf (1994: 248) explain, ‘rather than reflecting the real life of the collector in microcosm, collections also offer the collector an opportunity to construct a fully controllable world of objects in which ... reality can be manipulated’.

Although many Channel Island children who had been through the Occupation had not experienced the trauma of such regular bombing raids as their English cousins, they had been through a period just as terrifying. A large number of island children had actually spent the war years as evacuees in the United Kingdom, and the relationship of youngsters like Michael Marshall and his friends towards militaria is arguably more shocking than that of their friends who were not evacuated. Children (and, indeed, adults) of the 1940s and 1950s were clearly normalised towards militaria; they had grown up surrounded by real weapons and soldiers in large numbers and felt little fear in handling, firing, dressing up in and collecting the relics of war. Like their counterparts in Britain who collected shrapnel, the obvious danger in collecting such items made it a more thrilling, subversive activity (Moshenska 2008: 116).

The First and Second Post-war Generation: Objects, Stories and Collecting as Nostalgia

By the time the post-war generation had begun collecting, particular differences can be seen in the reasons and meanings of their collection. In order to understand this generation, I explore and extend Marianne Hirsch’s concept of ‘postmemory’ or inherited memory. Hirsch coined the term postmemory to better understand the experience of children of Holocaust survivors who grew up ‘dominated by narratives that preceded their birth, whose own belated stories are evacuated by the stories of

the previous generation, shaped by traumatic events that can neither be fully understood nor re-created' (1996: 659). These stories are 'so powerful, so monumental, as to constitute memories in their own right' (1999: 8). This description has strong resonances with my perception of the post-Occupation generation born between the mid-1940 and the mid-1960s, who grew up in an era dominated by stories of the Occupation, stories which took the place of their own experiences.

As I see it, where postmemory differs between Hirsch's children of survivors and the post-Occupation generation is in three key areas. First, for the children of survivors, the world of their parents had been violently erased or irreparably changed. For Channel Islanders, the landscape of occupation continued to exist all around them. Much of it is still intact today although affected by the passage of time and prevailing modes of heritage presentation. Second, the traumatic events of Holocaust survivors cannot be recreated by their children; in the Channel Islands, some events of the occupation can be and regularly are recreated and re-enacted. Third, while memories are mediated by family photos for children of the Holocaust survivors, for Channel Islanders it is mediated by objects, principally, souvenirs and items of militaria.

Both Hirsch's children of survivors and the post-Occupation generation share the fact that their connection to the event which affected both their parents and themselves is 'mediated not through recollection but through imaginative investment and creation' (1996: 662). Again, this is especially apparent in the post-war youth who played imaginative games with the souvenirs of war that they had stolen, found or had received from adults. Their collections of militaria were later translated into Occupation museums where their imagination of war was given free rein, as I discuss later.

Objects and Stories

While family photographs are central to Hirsch as the 'building blocks', the 'medium connecting first- and second-generation remembrance, memory and postmemory' (1997: 2–3), in the Channel Islands the key medium of memory is artefactual, as I noted above. Stories are told through the medium of objects, whether they are carefully curated in the home for the regular telling of stories or whether they are abandoned in the garage, field or attic, waiting until the time that the curious child finds it and starts to ask questions. Artefacts and stories (or, where stories were missing, an imaginative mind) have always gone together for children who wished to learn about the Occupation.

Damien Horn recalled that *'everybody [who was] asked if they had something German [to sell] always had a story'*. Graeme Delanoe emphasised the importance of stories from older siblings and friends. *'You'd speak to older brothers and sisters and friends and everything and they would be telling you how they had helmets from*

their schooldays... I had friends at school who had bits and pieces, legacies from parents and grandparents left lying around, stories from visiting grandparents'.⁸⁰

As Martin Walton's family evacuated before the Germans arrived, he heard his Occupation tales from local farmers who lived nearby. *'I would approach them and ask them ... the Occupation was a medium and this is all to do with part of the collecting—you got hands on... It's much easier to relate to something if there's something you can hold or look at, And then the imagination works on it'*. Ian Channing also emphasised the importance of imagination. In talking about German helmets, he said *'They were everywhere ... it was just something that fired the imagination. And everything you got out of there [the tunnels] was free ... it was the excitement'*.

Collector Martin Walton remembers a time in the late 1950s, a generation before bunkers began to be excavated and restored. *'The fortification part was not really very readily explained at that time, so there was this mystery about what happened under the German Occupation ... but the guns were immediately available at that time ... a lot of these kinds of artefacts stirred the imagination quite a bit'*. So even when other aspects of the Occupation were not being talked about, the ubiquity of German equipment was a way in which children could begin to explore the lost world of the Occupation through their imagination. For example, in talking about a gun battery near his house after the war, Martin remembers that *'a lot of the battery was still intact at that time and when you're very small and you're walking along trenches and suchlike, the whole thing takes on an out-of-world experience ... it's something very mysterious ... and then you have war stories which you get about the Occupation which people were giving you at that time and my interest went in the direction of small arms, guns, firearms, artillery. From quite an early start I was interested in collecting various types of weapons'*.

Ian Channing saw the early post-war years in the same way. He got involved in collecting *'same as other people in the Channel Islands who were brought up hearing stories of ... the Occupation and so forth. And if you're interested in that sort of thing you obviously listen and get interested ... you were brought up on it all ... I was just fascinated and one thing led to another and you ... start collecting and swapping ... everybody thought that "oh, I wish I was there"'. 'I'd love to go back', agreed Mark Lamerton, 'because I've got so many questions'*.⁸¹

This desire of the first and second post-war generation to have experienced the Occupation or even the liberation can be seen as a nostalgic longing for a time before they were born, a longing for the world that their parents or grandparents inhabited and spoke about afterwards when our collectors were growing up. This was a world that they had created through imaginative play during their childhood, a world that they had touched while venturing inside the German tunnels and bunkers and in collecting militaria. It was also a world that some of them would one day recreate inside their Occupation museums.

⁸⁰ Interview between author and Graeme Delanoe, 8 April 2010.

⁸¹ Interview between author and Mark Lamerton, 8 May 2009.

Svetlana Boym defines nostalgia as ‘the longing for a home that no longer exists or has never existed’, a ‘sentiment of loss and displacement’, a ‘romance with one’s own fantasy’ (2001: xiii), but also a ‘yearning for a different time—the time of our childhood’ (ibid.: xv). These are precisely the forms of nostalgia experienced by the first and second post-war generation of collectors in the Channel Islands. Like the nostalgic who desires ‘to revisit time like space’ (ibid.: xv), collectors are able to relate to the items of German equipment in their collections in a way that enables them to encounter the Occupation. However, nostalgia can be dangerous and lead to the confusion of the actual past and an imaginary one.

In her analysis of nostalgic perceptions of the Communist past in Budapest, Nadkarni (2003: 205) defines nostalgia as ‘the uncritical attempt to resurrect past presence and imagined origins that forgets everything that was painful and difficult about that era’. This strikes me as a very good description of the nostalgia which surrounds the collection of German militaria. Although collectors present many good reasons to explain why they collect objects which others might perceive as lacking in taste or as politically incorrect (as I discuss later), here I interpret the desire to possess these objects as a nostalgic desire to re-experience an event that they missed: to recapture some of the excitement experienced by teenage boys both during and immediately after the Occupation.

Their nostalgia is for a very specific part of the Occupation. They do not long to recapture the oppression, the food shortages and the hardship, or to witness the ill-treatment of Jews or foreign workers, the deportations or the imprisonment of those who disobeyed the orders of the occupying power. Like the people of Budapest, they tune out all that was ‘painful and difficult about that era’. Their nostalgia is for quite specific ‘exciting’ experiences of boys or young men during the Occupation.

When asked whether they would like to have lived through the Occupation themselves, nearly all responded positively, but drew a selective image of what age they would have liked to be or what they would like to have experienced. Richard Heaume, born towards the end of the Occupation, said, ‘*I know quite a few boys who were youngsters during the Occupation, and they had an exciting time in a way ... the Germans almost were amused with them and quite friendly ... for some people it was no joke, because the older people felt the hardship ... it was drudgery for some ... but for some of the youngsters it was quite exciting ... it would have been an experience*’.⁸² Damien Horn, born almost 20 years after the end of the Occupation, puts it thus: ‘*life sounds more exciting [during the Occupation] ... you’ve got that other dimension, as in the unknown ... you’ve got that fear and anxiety of not knowing what’s going to happen next ... if you were 16, 17, 18, there was excitement to be had*’.⁸³

For some collectors, their desire to have experienced the Occupation is, unsurprisingly, object-oriented. Damien Horn imagined himself present on

⁸² Interview between author and Richard Heaume, 16 March 2009.

⁸³ Interview between author and Damien Horn, 11 May 2010.

Liberation Day, ‘... in the bunkers carrying out arms full of German rifles and helmets, that sort of thing’.⁸⁴ Mark Lamerton was similarly focused on the objects. ‘I’d be saying “you’ve got to save that, you can’t get rid of that, put that aside”’.⁸⁵

Boym (2001: xviii) distinguishes between two kinds of nostalgia. The first, restorative nostalgia, ‘attempts a reconstruction of the lost home’. It does not think of itself as nostalgia, rather ‘as truth and tradition’. It manifests itself in total reconstructions of monuments of the past and has ‘no use for the signs of historical time—patina, ruins, cracks, imperfections’ (ibid.: 45). Reflective nostalgia, on the other hand, ‘focuses on the longing itself’ and ‘lingers on ruins, the patina of time and history, in the dreams of another place and another time’ (ibid.: 41).

When observing the interests and priorities of our collectors in childhood and teenage-hood, we can see that their appreciation of objects began with a reflective nostalgia, where rust and the ‘signs of historical time’ were important. Graeme Delanoe, one of the younger collectors I interviewed, recalled his schooldays in the early 1970s. ‘*In those days we were collecting anything as long as it was rusty. It had to be rusty! Because we couldn’t afford non-rusty equipment ... So my first collection of equipment was empty ammo cans, drum magazines, bullet belts, but [in] the condition that you would throw away today ... you know, if we found an ammo can, in today’s standards we’d look at it and throw it away. Well, to us that was the biggest find we could ever imagine*’.⁸⁶ Mark Lamerton, born five years before Graeme, explained the importance of the rust: ‘*If something had a bit of rust on it, you could virtually guarantee that it was the genuine article*’.⁸⁷ Rust was thus appreciated and valued by younger collectors. However, as they grew into adulthood and began to have more spending power, they made a transition from reflective to restorative nostalgia in their appreciation and valuation of German equipment.

Many collectors belonged or belong to one of the several vintage military arms or vintage military vehicle associations in the Channel Islands and put much value on restoring or maintaining their collection in full working order. Collector Damien Horn, for example, has a Stoewer, the last Occupation-era German vehicle left in the Channel Islands today (Fig. 2.8). His website boasts that it was a ‘*rusting wreck*’ when he acquired it, but it has now been ‘*fully restored and put back on the Island’s roads. As a member of the Jersey Military Vehicle Club I take the car out on various events throughout the year*’.⁸⁸

Our collectors’ collections are not just for display; quite the contrary. For some, they are to be handled, admired and used. Some collectors are also often scathing of modern Occupation museums which have different interests and priorities; some took the opportunity of the interview to express their disapproval of museums where items were going rusty or damp or were not looked after or appreciated.

⁸⁴ Interview between author and Damien Horn, 11 May 2010.

⁸⁵ Interview between author and Mark Lamerton, 8 May 2009.

⁸⁶ Interview between author and Graeme Delanoe, 25 May 2010.

⁸⁷ Interview between author and Mark Lamerton, 8 May 2009.

⁸⁸ www.festungjerseymilitaria.com, accessed 9 July 2011.

Fig. 2.8 Collector Damien Horn driving his Stoewer on Liberation Day 2009 (© Gilly Carr)



Such lack of maintenance can lead to an item losing aesthetic and financial value, even when rust can also be associated with authenticity.

Nostalgia also plays a role in the value of objects in other ways, where those which are somehow closest to the past are more valuable than those deemed to be more recent. This is articulated most clearly by Martin Walton, talking about the items in his collection which he has had since childhood. *‘My most treasured provenances are the earliest, partly because of nostalgia for youth and when the “sun always shone”, but also because the people involved were closer to the event and seem so much more interesting in character’*.⁸⁹ The relationship between ‘closeness to the event’ and value is clear.

However, unless they are forged or are reproductions, all of the objects with which we are dealing here date to the time of the Occupation, but the ability of collectors to come within touching distance of the Occupation is all important. For this, they must, as far as possible, be the first (rather than, say, the fifth) owner of the object. *‘They all want to be the first one’*, says Ian Channing. *‘There’s like an aura ... it’s like one-upmanship’*.⁹⁰ For Graeme Delanoe, like other collectors, the importance of having the item ‘first hand’ means being the first owner of an object since its original wartime or post-war owner, whether that person acquired it as a souvenir or because it was useful on their farm. *‘That’s real provenance. And that is sometimes the only thing that I will actually believe in, because I know the source’*.⁹¹ This means that lists or stories of which collectors have previously owned the object in question—whose hands it has passed through—are positively undesirable. There is little prestige to be gained through owning an object that had previously been in another’s collection unless there is some guarantee that that

⁸⁹ Email to author from Martin Walton, 21 April 2010.

⁹⁰ Interview between author and Ian Channing, 2 May 2010

⁹¹ Interview between author and Graeme Delanoe, 25 May 2010.

person obtained it directly or indirectly from a German soldier. Belk (1994: 321) refers to this kind of object as 'sacred' by virtue of having been 'contaminated (in a positive sense) by contact with prominent persons'. Sacred items would rarely leave the collection or at least would greatly boost its value.

In addition to an item becoming sacred or acquiring added value for being closer to the Occupation in this way, it must similarly at least be a local piece, i.e. used by a German soldier in the Channel Islands (as opposed to elsewhere), and preferably from the island where the collector lives, in order to be worth collecting at all. This is of fundamental importance to most of the collectors I interviewed. '*If it's got nothing on it and it doesn't say "Channel Islands", then I can let it go and I can use the money or a direct exchange for something that has a connection*', says Damien Horn.⁹² Danny Wakley from Sark remarked to me that '*if it comes from Sark, it makes it more valuable*'.⁹³ Others are scathing about the importance of such notions of what constitutes 'local'. Ian Channing gives the example of a helmet worn by a German soldier who had served in France, then in Jersey and then on the Eastern Front, in Russia. '*Those helmets were in Jersey. Now they're in Russia. Before that they were in France. How does that make it local?*' ... *They go 'Oh, it's a beautiful local piece, this helmet comes from Jersey'. I say, 'That's funny, I thought it came from Germany'. Where do you start? Is it Jersey only when it comes to Jersey?*'⁹⁴

Some collectors and dealers have brought items into the islands from other formerly occupied European countries, such as France or Norway; after the fall of the Berlin Wall, items from Eastern Europe also entered the market.⁹⁵ This can cause problems for the unwary collector, although there are ways of telling the provenance of some items. Every gun that was imported, for example, had to be marked as such.⁹⁶ Because of the added value of a secure provenance and the associated importance of 'closeness to the event', many dealers or collectors often do not reveal the list of previous owners of an item in case it puts off a buyer, especially if the list is a long one. Graeme Delanoe elaborates on this. '*The worst thing about collectors is they're very secretive. Collectors will never give any information out [about where they acquired a piece] ... people are very guarded about their sources*'.⁹⁷

Thus, the role of nostalgia in collecting can be a powerful influence in determining the value of items of militaria. Just as the brand of nostalgia experienced by collectors is focused on a particular aspect of the past, on the particular memory of youth and the experience of the 'excitement' of the Occupation in the Channel Islands, so collectors value objects which are guaranteed to date from this time and this place or at least which are closer to the Occupation by dint of having been

⁹² Interview between author and Damien Horn, 11 May 2010.

⁹³ Telephone interview between author and Danny Wakley, 26 July 2011.

⁹⁴ Interview between author and Ian Channing, 2 May 2010.

⁹⁵ Interview between author and Mark Lamerton, 8 May 2009.

⁹⁶ Interview between author and Peter Le Vesconte, 6 April 2010.

⁹⁷ Interview between author and Graeme Delanoe, 8 April 2010.

received first hand from a trusted source or from a German soldier directly—the ‘glamour of association’ is valued. I now wish to explore the concept of ‘closeness to the Occupation’ a little more deeply.

The Social Life of German Militaria

Drawing upon her fieldwork among the Kodi people of Sumba in Indonesia, anthropologist Janet Hoskins introduced the concept of the ‘biographical object’ as an object which is ‘endowed with the personal characteristics of their owners’; the ‘lines between persons and things can blur and shift’ (1998: 7). Such an object can be a ‘metaphor for the self’ and can ‘mediate for the person’ (ibid.: 3). I would suggest that the ‘aura’ that Ian Channing referred to above, associated with items which are in first-hand ownership since the Occupation, i.e. have an unmistakable provenance as they are owned by the person who acquired it from a German soldier in one way or another, is because these particular items of militaria are perceived to be ‘endowed with the personal characteristics of their [original] owners’. As Martin Walton explained it to me, ‘*If it is an item named to an individual, this adds enormously to its interest*’.⁹⁸ In other words, if an item can be linked directly to a German soldier, the aura is stronger and the item accrues more value for collectors. Its provenance is strong, and it is ‘closer to the Occupation’. However, if the provenance is unclear and an item has passed through the hands of many collectors, an item becomes vaguely contaminated and very quickly loses its value as a biographical object.

Following the work of sociologist Morin (1969: 137–138), Hoskins (1998: 8) contrasts biographical objects with ‘public commodities’, which are ‘not formative of its owner’s or user’s identity’. ‘At the spatial level, the biographical object limits the concrete space of its owner and sinks its roots deeply into the soil. It anchors the owner to a particular time and place. The public commodity, on the other hand, is everywhere and nowhere, marking not a personal experience but a purchasing opportunity’. Thus, for our collectors in the Channel Islands, I would suggest that once items of militaria begin to change hands, they pass rapidly from the status of biographical object to public commodity. For those that stay with the original or first-hand owners, i.e. the people listed in categories 4 and 5 in Table 2.1, they remain as biographical objects as long as they are kept with those owners.

To stay on the subject of the meaning of an object during its life trajectory, anthropologist Arjun Appadurai stated that ‘even if our own approach to things is conditioned necessarily by the view that things have no meanings apart from those that human actions, attributions and motivations endow them with, the anthropological problem is that this formal truth does not illuminate the concrete, historical circulation of things. For that we have to follow the things themselves, for

⁹⁸ Email to author from Martin Walton, 19 April 2010.

their meanings are inscribed in their forms, their uses, their trajectories. It is only through the analysis of these trajectories that we can interpret the human transactions and calculations that enliven things' (1986: 5). If we follow Appadurai, we must come to the conclusion that for our collectors of militaria, the objects themselves have no meanings apart from those with which they endow them and which can be interpreted by observing their trajectories and their use.

While we might have no problem with this position, Peter Pels, in his study of the fetish, encourages us to look closer. For him, the fetish is an 'object of abnormal traffic', which I take to mean a rare or strange object that, in trade, follows an unusual trajectory or is treated differently, because of its abnormal status. We might assign to items of German militaria this status, as they are 'abnormal' objects which are certainly treated fetishistically by collectors, according to their own rules. Pels suggests that such items possess a 'spirit of matter' and can 'act, emit messages and meanings on their own'; they can 'communicate their own message' (1998: 94). The ability of the 'materiality itself ... to speak and to act' is something that we can connect to the 'aura' referred to by Ian Channing earlier. Collector Martin Walton also suggested to me that many items can '*speak for themselves*'.⁹⁹

Quite how objects are able to speak or act is expressed by Pels; thus, a souvenir can suddenly 'change our everyday rhythm, to connect it with a memory or a history that is commonly absent'. This also happens when we are 'confronted with the difference from everyday life presented by strange museum objects or other curiosities' (1998: 100). Thus, the item of German militaria can act as a trigger for collectors (and others) and connect them with a memory of the Occupation or of their youth, a period when they roamed around their island, searching for items of militaria and having adventures among the debris of war left behind by the occupiers. Even as children, many collectors commented on the ability of these objects to fire their imagination about the war years. Just as people can shape the trade in objects, the trade in objects can also shape people.

I think it important to stress at this point that the perception by collectors of some items of German militaria during their life cycle as 'biographical objects', and the ability of some objects to 'speak' or 'act' or trigger memories, is something that is very Channel Island specific. This is not to say that those who live elsewhere in the world do not see German militaria as biographical objects (indeed, the family of former soldiers of occupation may well see the helmet of their family member in this way); nor is this to argue that people living in the United Kingdom or elsewhere, who buy a military badge or gun in the islands, cannot be sent off into a reverie by handling the object. Rather, my intention is to stress that the memory or sensory perceptions of Channel Islanders in handling these objects will be very specific to their own particular history, and the meanings and values with which they imbue first-hand items of militaria are culturally

⁹⁹ Email to author from Martin Walton, 30 April 2010.

specific. Thus, an item traded out of the Channel Islands will lose the meanings that island collectors hold dear.

I now wish to consider the range of biographies of items of German militaria in the Channel Islands. The purpose of a biographical approach (Kopytoff 1986) is that it allows us to understand the changing meaning of the social actions which involved these objects during their existence; they cannot be fully understood at just one point in time during their life history. It also illuminates the links between people and things and the ways ‘meaning and values are accumulated and transformed’ (Gosden and Marshall 1999: 170 and 172). In short, it clarifies the numerous possible trajectories that militaria can take and the resultant changing meanings and attitudes attached to it by different people. As Kopytoff argues, ‘the same thing may be treated as a commodity at one time and not at another ... the same thing may, at the same time, be seen as a commodity by one person and as something else as another’ (1986: 64).

We have already seen how, by Hoskins’ definition, an item may move rapidly from being a biographical object into being perceived as a public commodity. What other transformations are possible and regularly take place among objects of German militaria? Once an item of militaria becomes a candidate for commodity status, is there any turning back? Can it be decommo-ditised? What, in the perception of our collectors, constitutes an ideal ‘career’ for militaria and what would be considered an undesirable career?

First of all, how are we to define a commodity? For Kopytoff, it is a ‘thing that has a use value and that can be exchanged in a discrete transaction for a counterpart, the very fact of exchange indicating that the counterpart has, in the immediate context, an equivalent value’ (1986: 68), i.e. an object intended for exchange. A commodity can be contrasted with a gift, with its associated implications of reciprocity, links and obligations which bind people together.

In small societies such as the Channel Islands, and especially among small groups such as collectors of militaria, the trade and exchange of commodities occurs among people who are already bound together by links of kinship, friendship, membership of the same clubs, proximity and island identity. This muddies the water when contrasting the two types of exchange because, especially when bartering or swapping items as opposed to paying for them with money, collectors will remember who has had the better deal, to whom they owe favours and who behaved appropriately during a transaction.¹⁰⁰

The links of island identity can be important when considering with whom to trade. Ordinarily, people from one island will preferentially trade with each other rather than with someone from a rival island, although they will prefer to trade with another Channel Islander than with an outsider. To openly trade outside the islands rather than with a friend or neighbouring collector who wishes to acquire the same piece can be a matter of insult or can cause offence. Generally, selling a collection

¹⁰⁰ Some collectors expressed a disapproval of the way that some of their fellow collectors conduct themselves in their search for and negotiation of objects.

outside the Channel Islands has negative connotations. Not only does this constitute a loss of heritage and the sale of items to people for whom it does not have the same meaning or who would not appreciate it, but there is the danger that the collection could be split up, a notoriously difficult concept for a collector to handle.

There are, of course, exceptions to this rule. Sometimes a better price can be gained from an outsider. If the item in question does not have a Channel Island provenance, then it is perfectly acceptable to trade with whomsoever one wishes. Additionally, as time moves on, there are fewer and fewer collectors operating in the Channel Islands. Sometimes collectors are forced to seek new trading partners elsewhere if they are to avoid the endless circulation of the same objects within their social circle. Because of the small circle of collectors, it can even become necessary to sell some items outside the islands. In order to acquire a piece, a collector may have to say that it will go in their personal collection, where it will be kept safe. They would then not be able to sell it locally in case the person who gave it to them saw it.

In this chapter, items of militaria have been considered at different points in their life history, at times during which they were seen as commodities and in periods when they were given as gifts, used as toys and kept as souvenirs or when they left commodity status and entered a museum. Clearly, commoditisation (if that is to be our focus) is best 'looked upon as a process of becoming rather than as an all-or-none state of being', as Kopytoff (1986: 73) puts it.

Appadurai (1986: 13) proposed that 'the commodity situation in the social life of any "thing" be defined as the situation in which its exchangeability (past, present or future) for some other thing is its socially relevant feature'. As one of the key questions in this chapter is to examine, document and understand the trade in militaria in the Channel Islands, we will accept Appadurai's proposal, while not forgetting that commodity trade is just one part of the biography of these items. As Appadurai himself notes, 'things can move in and out of the commodity state, such that movements can be slow or fast, reversible or terminal, normative or deviant' (1986: 13).

As shown in Tables 2.4 and 2.5, in a series of steps, I consider what might be perceived in the Channel Islands as both an ideal and a non-ideal biography of a German helmet, which is most iconic of items of German militaria. The diversion of objects from their 'proper path' was considered by Appadurai (1986: 26) as something which could happen due to crises such as warfare, theft or economic hardship. For our collectors, of course, warfare was the very thing that produced the objects in the first place. Still, there was certainly something to be gained in the post-war period in selling an item, whether to a liberating British soldier or to a tourist, as collector Alan Allix recalled from his youth.

To view militaria in the way I show it in Tables 2.4 and 2.5 highlights not only how it moved in and out of the commodity state through time, but also how it changed in meaning and use, throughout its life history, depending on the owner. The original intention of the first owner may not have been to trade the item in question; the predestined path of the item may have been diverted because of the death of the owner, a desire not to have items on the property which reminded the

Table 2.4 Ideal biography of a German helmet (after Walters 1997: 72)

Begins life as functional head protection issued to soldier
Becomes a souvenir after the war
Becomes a gift for a schoolboy
Becomes a commodity to be traded in the playground
Becomes a toy to be used in playground games
Becomes a collectable item and kept out of marketplace
Re-enters commodity state to be traded in the Channel Islands
Leaves commodity status for non-traded permanent collection
Becomes a museum item
Becomes a symbol of Occupation and oppression for tourists

Table 2.5 Non-ideal biography of a German helmet

Begins life as functional head protection issued to soldier
Becomes souvenir after the war
Becomes a commodity and sold to visitor to islands due to economic hardship
Leaves the Channel Islands
Remains a commodity outside the islands and loses context
Becomes stolen from collector/souvenir hunter owner
Breaks/becomes damaged/becomes junk/loses value
Remains a commodity but leaves collectors' market and sold in junk shop/flea market

owner of a difficult time, or because of economic hardship (Appadurai 1986: 25–26), and this would have resulted in a change in meaning of the item. It may also have lead to the item being eventually put in a museum, where it may have been permanently decommo­dised, becoming a kept object and remaining out of circulation (Weiner 1985)—at least for the lifetime of that museum or museum owner.

Tables 2.4 and 2.5 deal only with authentic, original objects. As I have already noted, such items are, not surprisingly, valued more highly than fakes. An increasing problem with German militaria is not just the entry into the market of items from Eastern Europe, but more seriously, the growth in forgeries. It can be notoriously difficult to tell the difference between a ‘right’ and ‘wrong’ (to use local parlance) German helmet, for example. Helmets are especially vulnerable to forgery because of the high prices they can command. As collector Martin Walton explained, ‘*helmets used to be about thirty bob or two pounds in the 1960s ... and now a paratrooper helmet is two or three thousand; an ordinary helmet is ... six, seven hundred pounds or something like that if someone thinks that it’s particularly good*’. It is also almost impossible to tell a reproduction German helmet after it has been weathered.¹⁰¹

Collectors consider the ability to discern a real German helmet from a fake as a matter of skill and pride. Peter Le Vesconte told me that ‘*the most important thing is handling the stuff and having a feel for it. I’m really one of the last few people ...*

¹⁰¹ Interview between author and Martin Walton, 31 August 2009.

bring me a good German helmet and a wrong [i.e. forged] one, I'll tell you straight away. And there's hardly anyone who can do that now. Now you see on Ebay, there's stuff for sale all the time. And they're all fake'.¹⁰² But such skills are not without their problems. As Ian Channing put it, *'you do get a feel for the stuff, but you try convincing somebody else! But you've got the same problem when you've got something genuine ... I've got an old saying: "There's none as blind as don't want to see"'*.¹⁰³

Collectors are unwilling to admit to having forgeries in their collection, as it reflects badly on their own ability of discernment. As Martin Walton put it, *'be wary of asking collectors about how you can tell a reproduction, because they are going to immediately say, "well, nothing I've got is reproduction!"'*¹⁰⁴. As for collectors who also have a reputation for skill in the arts of restoration and reproduction, additional problems exist; other collectors become wary of trading with them. As one such collector-dealer put it to me, *'you could walk up to them with Hitler's pyjamas that you'd got off his mother and they'd go "You made them!" You can't win'*.¹⁰⁵

Thus, while authenticity is cherished and of considerable importance, it is difficult to distinguish real items from fakes—or even between objects which came from other formerly occupied countries and those which came to the Channel Islands with the German army. The skill of discernment is one that a collector will claim to raise his status and level of respect within the circle of collectors, and there are perceived to be increasingly few collectors who have this skill. Because only the older collectors can claim to have been alive at a time when only genuine items were circulating, they can legitimately be the only ones who can claim to be able to distinguish between real and fake, local (i.e. with a Channel Island provenance) and non-local.

For collectors outside the Channel Islands who buy items online from Channel Island dealers, concepts of local versus non-local are likely to be less important. For these people, what is of value is that the item of militaria dates from the Second World War. For the casual visitor or tourist, however, people without the necessary skills to discern reproduction from real, what matters is that they are buying war memorabilia, perhaps perceived as 'a little piece of the Occupation' because, after all, it was purchased in the Channel Islands. The items that visitors tend to ask about or wish to purchase are the iconic German helmets or iron crosses.¹⁰⁶ Like the trade in Vietnam Zippos explored by Walters (1997: 66), 'the boundary between genuine and fake vanishes entirely in the merchandising'. For veterans or their family members who travel to Vietnam in search of *'that place, the place of war, the place of their youth, or their dad's youth, or whatever, these*

¹⁰² Interview between author and Peter Le Vesconte, 6 April 2010.

¹⁰³ Interview between author and Ian Channing, 2 May 2010.

¹⁰⁴ Interview between author and Martin Walton, 31 August 2009.

¹⁰⁵ Name of collector withheld.

¹⁰⁶ Phone call between author and Damien Horn, 23 July 2011.

Table 2.6 Occupation museums in the Channel Islands

Name of museum	Year of opening	Island
German Underground Hospital	1946 (now Jersey War Tunnels)	Jersey
La Hougue Bie	1947 (now a memorial to forced labourers)	Jersey
German Underground Hospital	1954	Guernsey
St Peter's Bunker War Museum	1965-2000 (now closed)	Jersey
German Occupation Museum	1966	Guernsey
Island fortress Occupation Museum	1982-2006 (now closed)	Jersey
La Valette Military Museum	1988	Guernsey
Channel Islands Military Museum	1989	Jersey
Sark Occupation and Heritage Museum	1994	Sark
Jersey War Tunnels	2001	Jersey

things are the mementoes. They are from Vietnam ... They must be real. They *are* real. No questions asked. No issue of fake arises'.

It is only among our small group of collectors that locally specific concepts of fakery, authenticity and value prevail. These are firmly wrapped up in historically specific nostalgic memories. And it is all of these concepts and memories which have been put on display in Occupation museums.

Occupation Museums, Nostalgia and Memory

Since the end of the Occupation, there have been at least ten key Occupation museums in the Channel Islands. This list is not exhaustive; there have been other venues which contain items from this era but which also function as a museum for the whole island, such as Alderney Museum. Jersey and Guernsey museums are excluded from this list as they are not Occupation museums even though they own and sometimes display objects in their archives which are similar or identical to those in the collections of the collectors interviewed here. There have, at various times, been objects of German militaria placed on display in places which do not quite conform to museum status (e.g. the St Saviour's tunnels in Guernsey as described in Ginns (1993: 58–59). Additionally, several of the museums discussed here have metamorphosed from museum to memorial; have closed and later opened again under new ownership; or have undergone massive renovation and rebranding, changing from one extreme of Occupation Museum type (as described in Table 2.6) to another. While some of these museums are singled out in this section for further comment, they are mostly described as a single phenomenon.

Display, Design, Poetry and Authenticity

The design of a display in any museum is important; however, among the collectors of militaria, there is a recognised poetry to their own collections and in those of others. This poetry is recognised by collector Martin Walton, who is worth quoting at length. *'The mass of the individual collections are a kind of formulation, almost an artistic display. I mean, when I collected a lot of the items I quite often have in my mind a presentation ... I can see the presentation in front of me. The way you put together these things is very much an individual thing ... you have enthusiasts here [in Jersey] who have put their life and soul into it and they present it in a way that they have done individually and personally researched ... [the bigger museums are] soulless, absolutely soulless. They are done in what is perceived to be the best way to present things as to what the public will relate to most easily. And the little museums have individuality and personality that you are totally losing now. I do think that the small private museums have a very important place because they are being interpreted by people who have invested quite a lot of their life into it. It's not just a job.'*¹⁰⁷

The different kind of poetry, individuality or personality referred to by Walton reflects the collecting interests of the individual collector who has built up a reputation for a certain style or method of collecting. For Peter Le Vesconte, for example, large numbers of the same kinds of items were important. As he recounted to me, *'by the time I started work, which was about 1970, I had about 60 bayonets, much to my father's disgust because I drilled holes in the walls and put them in rows down the walls'*. Around the same time, he recalled, *'I had the biggest collection of German helmets on the island. I had 116'*.¹⁰⁸ Graeme Delanoe's collecting rationale was different. *'One thing I used to do was, if I found something, I would try to complete it ... I would find every accessory to go with it'*.¹⁰⁹ For Damien Horn, on the other hand, the structuring logic of the collection in his museum is less obvious. *'The museum doesn't start ... pre-war, it doesn't go to the immediate Occupation and it doesn't end up with the liberation. It's just evolved: what fits into a room, what I can get into that cabinet ... what I've got to put on display fits into that space. It would be nice to put everything into chronological order and have the various bits in their own separate cabinets, but the museum doesn't give itself to that; I haven't got the space'*.¹¹⁰

In examining collections of militaria in the Channel Islands, preferences for certain kinds of militaria were obvious. While most aimed at artistic display, the constraints of space inevitably ended up interfering with initial intentions. Despite this, it was clear that while some preferred machine guns, others favoured German paperwork, medals or military badges, and these are often displayed in an artistic

¹⁰⁷ Interview between author and Martin Walton, 31 August 2009.

¹⁰⁸ Interview between author and Peter Le Vesconte, 6 April 2010.

¹⁰⁹ Interview between author and Graeme Delanoe, 25 May 2010.

¹¹⁰ Interview between author and Damien Horn, 11 May 2010.

manner rather than entirely haphazardly. The style in which these items were mounted on the wall differs between museums. Some favoured grouping all items of a certain type (such as pistols or medical equipment) in one display case or wall, and others clearly delight in creating scenes with mannequins. Graeme Delanoe remembers the island Fortress Occupation Museum in St Helier in its heyday. *'This was the time when the MG34 machine guns and flak guns from Portugal had just started to be put onto the open market ... so [the owner] had this 2 cm flak gun with all the associated equipment and kit you could imagine ... and he'd made it into a working diorama ... you could walk around and touch as you went into the room'*.¹¹¹

To be able to touch a collection on display was an early prerequisite for Occupation museums that was much valued by collectors; this sensory engagement with the objects was and is highly important. This was contrasted by Graeme Delanoe with museums with more modern modes of display. *'Unfortunately ... with certain museums where it's just a computer screen and you press a button and it tells you the information, they're not interested in the original equipment. They've put that in a little cupboard somewhere ... but to me history is hands-on and being able to see something for yourself'*.¹¹²

La Hougue Bie Occupation Museum in Jersey is one that is often recalled with fondness. *'It was a hands-on museum ... I remember going in there and you could actually cock the rifles ... they just had a barrier ... you could touch them, and a lot of people used to pinch them'*.¹¹³ The danger of theft inevitably led to the increased use of glass display cases, but collectors without museums, who display their collection in their own houses, also emphasise the importance of sensory engagement. *'I want to see a big room full of all the equipment and I want people to come in and actually see it there, and smell it ... pick up a helmet and actually see inside it'*.¹¹⁴ Once again, we can see notions of 'closeness to the Occupation' coming to the fore in systems of value. To be able to touch, feel, use and smell an object handled by a German soldier during the Occupation is clearly closer to actual event than an interpretative display, a computer screen or even glass case that prohibits touching.

It is pertinent here to consider the concept of authenticity in museum display. For our collectors, this is achieved by the use of large numbers of artefacts which originated from the Occupation, preferably acquired first hand and chosen from the best of a collection (as opposed to reproductions). Objects originating from another formerly occupied country in Western Europe or (even worse) from Eastern Europe after the fall of the Berlin Wall are not valued as highly. Chronological and geographical distances both conspire to lessen the perceived value of an object or display.

¹¹¹ Interview between author and Graeme Delanoe, 25 May 2010.

¹¹² Interview between author and Graeme Delanoe, 8 April 2010.

¹¹³ Interview with author, Graeme Delanoe and Damien Horn, 8 April 2010.

¹¹⁴ Interview between author and Graeme Delanoe, 25 May 2010.

Authenticity is achieved and perceived in different ways by museums not owned by collectors. At Jersey War Tunnels, for example, while the use of militaria or items dating from the Occupation are useful, and authenticity is certainly the goal, whether the objects on display are reproduction or not is perhaps not as important, as most visitors to the facility are unlikely to be specialist collectors. Kjeldbæk (2009b: 30) argues that the problem of authenticity is seldom about whether an object is a fake or not, but rather in what condition it should be exhibited, because ‘objects have a history in terms of use and physical decay apart from when they were freshly made and apart from the historical moment you want them to bear witness to’. At the point at which it was used—the period that the item is illustrating in the museum—what was its condition then? Was it mud-spattered, dirty and rusty or was it highly polished daily? If an item is kept on display in the open air, to what extent should it be preserved or allowed to weather?

Holtorf (2008: 126) argues that it can empirically be shown that visitors to museums experience authenticity and aura to the same extent whether they are looking at originals or copies, as long as they do not believe them to be copies. As Sharon Macdonald found in her study of a heritage centre on the Isle of Skye, the provenance does not particularly matter when it comes to authenticity; ‘what matters is that they convey the right kind of picture ... authenticity lies not in the aura of the artefacts, but in the “story” which gets told’ (1997: 170). While this would apply to Jersey War Tunnels, almost the opposite would be true for the collector-owner for the Channel Islands Military Museum in Jersey.

Because German tunnels, such as the one in which Jersey War Tunnels is situated, are prone to dampness, it can be detrimental to leave genuine objects, especially paperwork, textiles and photos, on display. Such items are also at risk of fading under electric light. This means that while a good number of selected and well-spaced, original objects are on display, inherited or purchased from other collectors, authenticity is sought and achieved in other ways. This is done through videos of interviews with witnesses of the Occupation; the use of original film; interactive and thought-provoking displays which present ethical dilemmas to the visitor; appropriate background sounds or commentary; hands-on exhibits; and art installations which intend to convey or invoke appropriate emotions and atmosphere (see Addy (2009) for further information). While such displays are very effective, intelligent, well thought out and are inclusive of (and indeed focus on) victims of Nazism, they are often not to the taste of collectors, who have different systems of value and are more likely to perceive such displays as inauthentic or staged for tourist consumption.

We might contrast the two approaches to authenticity as a ‘grass-roots’ approach from the collectors, an approach that operates from the ‘ground up’, versus one that operates from the ‘top down’ and is controlled by larger groups. Neither is more ‘authentic’ than the other; they simply have different values. In her study of maritime heritage in Bermuda, Andrews (2009: 143) emphasised that grass-roots heritage is not more ‘authentic’ than that produced by ‘top-down’ heritage professionals, and nor is the latter’s approach more ‘tainted’ or ‘ideologically driven’; both are integrated. As she states, ‘any claim to certify heritage

“100 percent organic” is patently untrue and denies the constructed nature of all heritage, no matter its orientation or scale’.

Ideas relating to authenticity are beginning to be questioned and supplemented by concepts such as the ‘vividness’ of the experience (e.g. Holtorf 2008: 112). As Mary-Catherine Garden has argued with reference to heritage sites, ‘the way in which the site (and the “past”) is being conveyed and the resonance of the experience of the heritage site that ultimately will determine the strength of the sense of the place’; she argues that it is more useful to consider how a site creates a distinct ‘place of the past’ rather than how ‘real’ that version of the past is (2009: 273 and 288).

Typology

We can see that, broadly speaking, there are two main types of Occupation Museum in the Channel Islands and they have different aims to each other. One of the aims of the modern, professional museum such as Jersey War Tunnels is to educate the public and to give a fuller picture of the whole of the Occupation. The smaller, old-fashioned Occupation Museum seeks to display and show off a personal collection which is often built around esteem for particular types of equipment and their features, such as engineering, workmanship or style. German equipment plays a different role in the two museum types and is treated differently according to how it is valued for the role that it plays. The professional museum uses military equipment in an illustrative role, for the creation of context for daily life or particular events of the Occupation; it is not the focus of attention and need not be kept in full working order. While not ideal, it is not a matter of great concern whether the pair of binoculars or the gun or the military radio on display is broken or not. The aim is not to use them as functioning objects, nor to return them to the marketplace; their financial value is, to a certain extent, immaterial. Such a system of value and display is entirely dissonant to the active collector or owner of the small Occupation Museum, for whom condition and working order are paramount to their systems of value; these aspects of their equipment also reflect well or badly upon the owner/collector, who derives prestige and status from his collection and how it is perceived by others. Items on display in these museums are not necessarily permanently removed from the marketplace. Most objects are deemed to have a price and can be purchased or swapped for the right price or item. It can thus be seen that there are two different trajectories for German equipment, depending on to whom they belong.

The two types of Occupation Museum in the Channel Islands are difficult to label or even to classify as falling into only two types, although two extremes are possible to discern within the wider range (see Table 2.7). While size could be used to distinguish between them, this is not enough; there is also the issue of function. Of the two roles of museums I have listed above, the ‘display of the collection’ and the ‘educational’ roles clearly overlap. Some museums which started their life as small displays of a personal collection have grown to become

Table 2.7 The two extremes of Occupation Museum types in the Channel Islands

Size	Small	Large
Budget	Low	High
Primary use of museum	Display of private collection	Education/entertainment
Function of militaria	Prime focus, 'auratic'	Illustration/creation of context
Density of objects	High	Low
Importance of perfection of condition of objects	High	Low
Type of presentation	'Old-fashioned'	'Modern'
Aim of mode of display	Original, authentic, 'atmospheric', not artificial	Recreation of atmosphere through modern interpretation
Status of owners/curators	Amateur	Professional
Owners	Collectors	Landowners/private companies
Status of objects	Potentially for sale	Not (officially) for sale

large, educational displays. Among these, we might list the German Occupation Museum in Guernsey. Both also have the function of entertainment, of satisfying the curiosity of a particular type visitor and of, perhaps, showing off the darker side of the islands' heritage. Occupation museums are thus a destination of 'dark tourism'—sites or attractions that are 'linked in one way or another, with death, suffering, violence or disaster' (Sharpley and Stone 2009: 4), something that is compounded in Occupation museums located inside German fortifications built by forced and slave labour. This added dimension means that some of the museums also function as or contain memorials to these groups or others that suffered during the Occupation. Among these, we might include the German Underground Hospital in Guernsey and Jersey War Tunnels.

It is also possible to classify Occupation Museum types according to budget. Jersey War Tunnels has a larger budget than the others and has thus been able to afford in the past many staff, cutting-edge technology and modes of display, and impressive new exhibitions. Other museums are funded by the collector alone, who often has to run all aspects of the museum personally. Some of these museums are heavily constrained by space and budget, and simply heating, lighting and ventilating museums can stretch the finances to breaking point especially now that the tourist industry in the Channel Islands is perceived to be in decline.

Probably allied to budget is also an acknowledgement of the contrast between 'old-fashioned' and 'modern' Occupation museums and the greater value placed upon the former by collectors. In recalling St Peter's Bunker War Museum, for example, Graeme Delanoe described it as '*the best there was*'.¹¹⁵ In describing his own museum, Damien Horn told me that '*maybe my way of doing the display [in my museum] is old-fashioned, but there is no other way of showing kit*'.¹¹⁶ This belief that there is 'no other way' of doing things is actually an expression of value. It was a

¹¹⁵ Interview between author and Graeme Delanoe, 25 May 2010.

¹¹⁶ Interview between author and Damien Horn, 8 April 2010.

Fig. 2.9 Occupation kitchen scene, German Occupation Museum, Guernsey (© Gilly Carr)



matter of pride among collectors that their museums, and those of others, did not have computers (their expression of the ultimate in undesirability in a museum) and used old-fashioned modes of display. Several collectors expressed appreciation for museums which retained the atmosphere of the Occupation and had not sanitised or destroyed it with modern displays. Once again we are reminded that artefacts, bunkers, displays and museums which are somehow ‘closer to the Occupation’ have a higher value among collectors. This has led to great cultural conservatism in Occupation museums in the islands, where the key difference between them is in the poetry of the display or the predominance of particular types of military equipment, depending on the preferences of the collector.

The desire to be ‘closer to the Occupation’ has also led to a tendency to favour displays which recreate scenes from the Occupation using mannequins. The German Occupation Museum in Guernsey, for example, has a scene showing a kitchen, complete with ersatz food, make-do-and-mend kitchen equipment, and a man illicitly listening to the radio, while his wife looks anxiously out of the window (Fig. 2.9). In another part of the museum, an old ‘Occupation street’ is reconstructed, complete with old shopfronts and queues of islanders. More common in other museums are scenes of soldiers at work. In the Valette Military Museum in Guernsey, for example, soldiers operate a military radio. In the Channel Islands Military Museum in Jersey, displays feature soldiers operating an Enigma machine, manning a gun emplacement or maintaining the air-conditioning system in the bunker. When he displayed some of his collections in the island Fortress Museum in St Helier, Martin Walton explained that he liked to ‘*collect with a diorama in mind—a sort of recreation of a scene from history being reinterpreted by myself*’.¹¹⁷

Several museums, including the German Occupation Museum, the German Underground Hospital and the Valette Military Museum, all in Guernsey, have

¹¹⁷ Email to author from Martin Walton, 25 July 2011.

Fig. 2.10 Slave worker in unfinished tunnel, La Valette Military Museum, Guernsey, © Gilly Carr



mannequins dressed as slave workers, digging into the granite to make tunnels. In the latter two examples, the mannequins are placed in unfinished tunnels for added realism, adding to the sense that the Germans are still around and have merely left the scene for a few seconds (Fig. 2.10).

While a desire to recreate the atmosphere of the Occupation using authentic means is valued among collectors, professional museums aim to achieve this using different methods of interpretation and display. This leads us to another potential way to differentiate between museum types, but this is rejected by some collectors. We could describe Jersey War Tunnels as the only ‘professional’ Occupation Museum in the Channel Islands, with displays designed in the past by trained heritage professionals, categorising all other Occupation museums as ‘amateur’. Such labels can be offensive to the owners of the latter type of museums. For men who have devoted a lifetime to collecting militaria and building up extensive, even unrivalled, knowledge about the artefacts of the German Occupation, it is insulting to be given an apparently lower status or classification than someone with a university degree who *‘does not know one end of a German helmet from another’*, as one collector puts it to me. *‘Unfortunately I don’t qualify for letters after my name, but I have served my time ... my two aims when I was at school were to own a wartime German vehicle and have a museum ... I have the car which cost me five years of*

Table 2.8 Second World War museums organised according to the generation that produced them (Kjeldbæk 2009a: 384–385)

	First generation	Second generation	Third generation
Displays	Symmetric/chaotic	Planned route	Scenographic
Texts	Who/what/when/why (short)	Why (long)	Videos, sound
Role of objects	Proof/documentation	Information	Fascination
Funding	Money for things	Money for staff	Money for events
Perspective	Rights of group	Rights of society	Rights of the individual
Function	A monument	Official opinion	Current trends

work in restoration ... and I got the museum when I was 25. I think either of those is more worthy than letters after my name.¹¹⁸ If we do not wish to insult, we must be wary of differentiating between museums based on the methods of training of the owners or curators. These people have very different knowledge bases, interests and priorities. Although there are bonds of acquaintance and regard between the ‘amateur’ and ‘professional’ groups, built through working together on projects, they move in different circles and have different values, as we have seen.

Esben Kjeldbæk, head of the museum of Danish Resistance, suggests a different way to overcome the minefield of ways to differentiate between museum types, categorising them instead in terms of the generation that produced them (2009a) (Table 2.8).

To what extent do the Occupation museums of the Channel Islands lend themselves to such analysis? Do those owned by the war-youth, first and second generations of islanders follow Kjeldbæk’s trend? For him, the first-generation museums are made up of collections which have become museums because ‘there is a collective will, a driving force, that claims them to be socially and morally important enough to merit public display’ (ibid.: 364). Such museums were grass-roots initiatives which aimed to ‘celebrate a victory won, a success achieved or wealth acquired by a person or by a class’ (ibid.: 365). Using this rationale, one might imagine that Occupation museums might be celebrations of victory, liberation or resistance, but this Kjeldbæk’s theory holds only if one perceives collections of German militaria as battle trophies. We must not forget that museums are not static and a long-running museum can evolve from one type to another. Today, for example, the German Occupation Museum in Guernsey has evolved to typify many elements of Kjeldbæk’s second-generation museum and espouses an official or mainstream opinion that held for generations but is now beginning to change—and new extensions to the museum reflect this change.

Members of the Channel Islands Occupation Society (CIOS), of which many collectors were founder members, were perceived to be the guardians of Occupation knowledge and memory, and their opinion became official opinion and shaped cultural memory. Thus, as time progressed, museums no longer needed to be monuments to victory with their associated display of trophies; they were free

¹¹⁸ Email to author from Damien Horn, 8 April 2010.

to express their official narrative of the Occupation. The longevity of this narrative has meant that only one museum in the Channel Islands can now legitimately claim to be a third-generation museum, and that is Jersey War Tunnels. The cultural conservatism already noted among collectors and their museums has meant that a number of Occupation museums opened by later generations have still followed the first-generation model, indicating that the age of the owner or the collector whose material is displayed does not necessarily dictate which form the museum will take.

In summary then, the Occupation museums of the Channel Islands reflect a range of approaches from different generations, while acknowledging the very strong influence of the model of those from the first generation. This museum type, and the collectors who remember it, valued what are now seen as traditional and old-fashioned displays. This has led to few collector-owner museums radically changing or evolving with time, or embracing new ideas in display. Because almost all Occupation museums (with the lone exception of Jersey War Tunnels) are in the hands of collector-owners, the greatest difference in style can still be detected between the collector-owner museum and those belonging to non-collectors rather than solely the generation into which they were born.

Morality, Ethics and the Collection and Display of German Militaria

Now that the systems of value, authenticity and typology among collectors and museums have been established, we must now consider the difficult issue of the morality of collecting objects of German or Nazi militaria. All collectors in the Channel Islands are aware of how their collections might be perceived in a negative way by those who do not understand what they do, but they firmly reject such perceptions.

To be explicit about how such collections are seen, we must turn to Susan Pearce's seminal study which investigates the history of European collecting. In this volume, Pearce (1995: 194–195) has labelled such collections of Nazi militaria as 'deviant and sinister'. She writes that 'A Nazi memorabilia collector is unlikely to concern himself with moral issues at all, in any other than a lip-serving way. For him, the issue appears as one not of ethics but of personal identity; his relationship to his material is that of worshipper to relic ... We have to conclude that most of those who collect Nazi material now would have actually been Nazis then. Ethics and identity come together because the collector (blind to the significantly appalling bad taste of Nazi material culture) sees glamour in evil and wishes to identify with it through its relics'.

While Pearce's analysis might be correct for some collectors of Nazi memorabilia, it fails to take into account the context of collecting. I have clearly demonstrated in this chapter that the historical context of the Occupation and growing

up in the decades immediately afterwards has had a very direct impact on the imagination and hobbies of boys and men of that era. They have not collected German equipment because of any neo-Nazi sympathies or 'deviant' tastes. Rather, it has been my intention here—and in the volume as a whole—to demonstrate that the population of the Channel Islands as a whole has, to a greater or lesser extent as the years have passed, grown up surrounded by the debris of war. It was almost inevitable that this would affect what some of them chose to collect.

We must also bear in mind that the Channel Islands have a strong shooting tradition because of the presence of the garrisons of the Royal Guernsey and Jersey Militias in the islands for hundreds of years.¹¹⁹ The college cadet forces (CCFs) at Elizabeth College in St Peter Port and Victoria College in St Helier, the two top private schools for boys in the islands, have also had an influence on the desire of young boys to collect militaria.¹²⁰ These two features of male life in the islands sparked an interest in military history in some of the collectors interviewed. Pearce (1995: 197) notes that collecting is shot through with emotions about sexuality and gender, and we can see how concepts of shooting, militaria and masculinity will have been reinforced in generations of schoolboys through their participation in CCFs or that of their fathers or grandfathers in the militia.

It is important to examine motivation in the words of the collectors. Each person I interviewed was asked precisely why they chose to collect such objects, given that these actions could be misconstrued by others. Damien Horn, for example, said '*I always collected German kit, stuff, memorabilia. It's never Nazi. It's never been Nazi. It's just German. It's German military, it's not a political thing. It's just German kit. They were Germans and they were here and that's what they had*'.¹²¹ Graeme Delanoe added to this. '*I had no interest in the political side and I certainly don't have now. This is the awkward thing about it ... that anyone who collects German equipment is deemed to be a Nazi, and it's something that is very frustrating because it couldn't be more opposite ... it's history, because it was Jersey [that was occupied] and this is what was here. Nothing political, and I've got to keep stressing this. Nothing can be further from the truth*'.¹²² Ian Channing, on the other hand, accepted that such an all-encompassing hobby was liable to be misconstrued. '*There are always the nutters who, for one reason or another, don't see it for what it is ... they glorify it ... but if you're interested in German stuff you tend to be branded a bit of a nutter anyway*'.¹²³

Many collectors emphasised a strong link between the history of their island and what they chose to collect. As Damien Horn explained, '*I do it because it is part of me, part of my island's history ...*'¹²⁴ This quote is particularly insightful,

¹¹⁹ I thank Martin Walton for reminding me of the importance of this tradition.

¹²⁰ I thank Richard Heaume for making this link.

¹²¹ Interview between author and Damien Horn, 8 April 2010.

¹²² Interview between author and Graeme Delanoe, 25 May 2010.

¹²³ Interview between author and Ian Channing, 22 May 2010.

¹²⁴ Email from Damien Horn to author, 8 April 2010.

because it emphasises the very strong link between people, objects, their identity and their history. Belk (1988: 149) has explored this link, arguing that the acquisition and retention of memorabilia, antiques and objects from past are part of the desire to know one's past, a nostalgic 'desire to identify with an era, place, or person ... a desire to bask in the glory of the past in the hope that some of it will magically rub off ...' He also argues that possessions have a function in creating, enhancing and preserving a sense of identity (ibid.: 150). While most collectors would reject that their collection enables them to 'bask in the glory' of the Third Reich (as some might perceive it), most would accept that it enables them to come closer to the Occupation and that some of that period might 'magically rub off' on them through possession of these objects.

At its most superficial level, however, it seems that boys and young men chose to collect militaria simply because it was plentiful around the islands. One collector emphasised this link, saying that *'you can't go anywhere, particularly here in Guernsey, without seeing something that the Germans left behind. It's a presence all the time, it's always there ... I reckon that there must be a memento of the Occupation in every house in the island'*.¹²⁵

Belk (2006: 540) emphasises the importance of the 'seed gift' from a friend or family which starts off the interest in collecting, and it seems that a souvenired German helmet, bayonet or military badge was deemed to be an appropriate gift for boys for several decades after the Occupation. Peter Le Vesconte, who was given a bayonet by his father, confirmed the importance of the seed gift. *'My collection seemed to just stem from liking old things. If someone had brought me something that was very, very old, it could have set me off on another course. For me, bayonets were at a price I could afford, so from that point of view I could get a number'*. The first object for one Guernsey collector was a German helmet, a gift from his grandfather. He particularly valued it because he associated it with his grandfather's stories of the Occupation. The importance of the link between objects and Occupation-related stories has already been made earlier in this chapter. It is also clear that the adventure involved in acquiring German militaria, most especially in breaking into German tunnels, and the fun involved in playing soldiers with real equipment, was also a huge draw to the collectors in their youth. These objects were also free or very cheap in the decades after the war, and this would have appealed to the young. Price is certainly a factor which prevents young people in the islands from becoming involved today.

Some collectors valued or expressed a subjective appreciation for the mechanics, the engineering, the development or the style of the items of German militaria. Peter Le Vesconte, for example, was impressed by the German uniforms. *'Well, be honest—look at a German uniform and look at a British uniform. Which is the smartest? It'd be by a mile the Germans'*.¹²⁶ Not all collectors have the same appreciation; Damien Horn, for example, who has been involved in re-enactment

¹²⁵ Interview with author, name withheld, 14 July 2011.

¹²⁶ Interview between author and Peter Le Vesconte, 6 April 2010.

in the past, thought that the German uniform was *'not very flattering if you're the wrong size and shape, and it itches and it's hot and it's nasty'*.¹²⁷

It also cannot be denied that there was also a status and respect which went along with the knowledge acquired about military equipment among men of a certain generation; this was also hugely valued in a place where such equipment and military souvenirs were ubiquitous. As Ian Channing put it, *'It fires the imagination. You're always trying to find out more and more'*.¹²⁸ It is also likely that items of military equipment, especially the iconic German helmet, played the role of a battle trophy, especially when put on display. The Germans were a notoriously strong enemy, and there was much kudos in defeating them and inviting tourists to the islands to see the spoils of war.

This brings us to the subject of the ethical issues involved in displaying swastikas, pictures of Hitler and German paraphernalia in the old-fashioned, collector-owner Occupation museums. As I have already discussed, such a display is valued among collectors because it is deemed to be more authentic and 'closer to the Occupation'. Also, because these museums have a primary focus on German militaria because this is what was collected (and it will not have escaped the reader that half of the Occupation museums listed in Table 2.6 have a military or war-related focus in their title), one should not be surprised that these museums focus on 'the perpetrators of Nazism' rather than the victims (e.g. Vitaliev 1998: 4).

Lowenthal (1998: 102) tells us that 'history is the past that actually happened, heritage a partisan perversion, the past manipulated for some present aim'. How appropriate is this when applied to collector-owner Occupation museums? Do they 'manipulate the past' any more or less than the modern museum? Is it ethical to present a partial rather than a holistic vision of the past? We have already noted that the primary aim of collector-owner museums is not to present a holistic vision of the past; rather, it is to display a prize collection of militaria, thus testifying to the reality of the German Occupation.

That collector-owner Occupation museums should be criticised for unethical display is rejected among collectors. As Damien Horn says of his museum, *'The museum reflects my interest and my collection'*.¹²⁹ Thus, to accuse these museums of not displaying the material culture of victims of Nazism would be to misunderstand the aims and functions which many of these museums have had historically. In speaking about his father's museum, the St Peter's Bunker War Museum, the son of this collector explained that it was important for low-budget museums to take a commercial point of view. *'People who go into these museums are interested in things like daggers and flags and Lugers and flak guns. They're not interested in a set of wooden clogs [belonging to slave workers] ... I think it's more a reflection on the business side of things ... Any museum's going to have an eye on attracting people in through the obvious ... and that's going to be lots of*

¹²⁷ Interview between author and Damien Horn, 8 April 2010.

¹²⁸ Interview between author and Ian Channing, 2 May 2010.

¹²⁹ Interview between author and Damien Horn, 11 May 2010.

German flags and swastikas and things like that; that's what really gets people, attracts their attention'.¹³⁰ The first Occupation museums to open in the Channel Islands, the Jersey Underground Hospital and La Hougue Bie, were geared towards tourists as a way of garnering revenue to help the islanders recover after the Occupation. These venues set the trend for what was to follow and, more importantly, what was later valued by collectors who remembered their childhoods with nostalgia. I have already noted the cultural conservatism of collectors and collector-owners of museums. The museums of this type still open today all owe something to their earliest progenitors, which also had a narrow focus on militaria.

Because there are Occupation museums and memorials in the Channel Islands which tell the story of victims of Nazi persecution, one of the collectors I spoke to felt no compunction to do the same in his museum. *'I can only collect what's out there. I can't show things I haven't got. If I haven't got anything Jewish or if I haven't got anything from a political prisoner that's because there were so few of them, and what they had, they've either got or got rid of ... My interest is reflected in the museum. If it isn't the full story, well, things change ... if I happen to pick up a sack full of stuff relating to the Jews on the island or the political prisoners then it may go into the museum. But I feel that that's covered; you've got other places that will show that'*. For those who might be offended by the contents of his museum for reasons of political incorrectness, the same collector asked, *'If people find it politically incorrect then what are they doing going into a German bunker? ... They've got a free choice to either pay and go in or walk away'*.¹³¹

Perhaps the real question is not just concerned with partial or holistic views of history, but rather the display of what Kjeldbæk (2009b) calls 'dangerous objects'. For the Channel Islands, such objects are swastikas and portraits of Hitler. Kjeldbæk suggests that the dilemma for the curator is not between showing or not showing such objects, but 'how to show it and ... how much controversy he wishes to generate' (2009b: 50). Objects are powerful, subversive things. Do you lessen the impact of a swastika flag by folding it and showing only part of it? Is there a 'safe' or even uncontroversial way to display a portrait of Hitler, such as the nine-foot-high painting that was on display at the Hougue Bie Occupation Museum until 1963? Perhaps the consideration of 'appropriateness' in artefacts is more pertinent than concepts of those which are 'dangerous' or 'safe', as this changes through time, and those who own or curate museums—even the self-taught—should be sensitive to such changes. The problem with all museums of the Second World War is where to draw the line, and that is something which can only be decided locally unless the museum has an eye on a wider audience.

¹³⁰ Interview with author, name withheld, 26 August 2009.

¹³¹ Interview between author and Damien Horn, 11 May 2010.

Museums as Sites and Creations of Nostalgic Memory

The overwhelming impression gained from the study of collector-owner/first post-war generation Occupation museums is that they are sites where very particular nostalgic memories (a nostalgia that is sometimes inherited) of the Occupation are played out. Pierre Nora argues that there are *lieux de mémoire* in places where there are no longer *milieux de mémoire*, real environments of memory (1989). Thus, for our collectors, because the Occupation (a *milieu de mémoire*) is over and there are no more Germans occupying the Channel Islands, the memory of them is bound up in the equipment and fortifications that they left behind.

Objects (military equipment) and places (fortifications) associated with Germans are bound up so intimately in the Channel Islands that the two are frequently combined together. German bunkers and tunnels have been chosen as the natural home for seven of the ten current and former Occupation museums in the islands. Here, we encounter a potential contradiction in the expression of nostalgia among collectors. I have argued above that Svetlana Boym's concept of restorative nostalgia is dominant among adult collectors and that they prefer their artefacts (and, indeed, their German fortifications) to be restored, rather than revelling in the decay, the cracks and the rust of age. We must couple this with the collectors' system of value, which attaches importance to the concept of 'closeness to the event'. Thus, a bunker or museum which gives the impression that its former inhabitants have only just left is preferable to one which has been over-restored, modernised and 'sanitised'. Graeme Delanoe describes the German Underground Hospital Occupation Museum in Jersey in the early 1970s, contrasting it with its more modern incarnation as Jersey War Tunnels: *'That was probably the best it's ever been ... basically it was walking through a very damp, eerie tunnel ... it was almost as it was when the Germans had left. ... Today it's a little bit modern, It's gone the way everything has, it's got to be done for today's tourist. But we weren't tourists in those days; we were looking at it as our heritage and what was left behind'*.

The contradiction is not real. What is valued is an artefact (or bunker) which appears in the same state that it was during the Occupation, when the Germans were using it or 'as it was when the Germans had left'. To be restored or maintained is one thing; this maintains the value and aesthetic appeal. To over-restore or to modernise a bunker is seen as too much and diminishes its value. This is why the restoration of military items is also something which requires great skill and care so that the item does not end up looking fake or obviously inauthentic.

While the particular phenomenon of the Occupation Museum in the Channel Islands has a long pedigree and can be readily understood by reference to the specific historical context in which it came about, it cannot be disputed that some present—or have in the past presented—a very particular and narrow picture or individual memory of the Occupation, i.e. a memory where the experience and possessions of German soldiers predominate. It is a memory that most collectors share, and although their number has never been vast (even though it seems that the collection of militaria was a passing craze at school for many more male

islanders than are discussed here), the resulting collected memories of our collectors have had a disproportionate influence on the Occupation heritage of the Channel Islands through the medium of the Occupation museum.

Olick (1999: 338) defines 'collected memory' as 'the aggregated individual memories of members of a group', where 'the memories of some command more attention than those of others'. For our collectors, the nostalgic memories of the older members of the group carry more weight and are valued more highly as they were closer to the Occupation. As the older modes of display in Occupation museums focused heavily on the German experience, by putting this on display the collected memories of this small group have, over time, unduly contributed to or shaped the popular collective memory of many of the rest of the population of the Channel Islands. As Boym (2001: 54) has observed, nostalgia can act as an intermediary between individual and collective memory.

In his discussion of remnants of the past, historian James Young warns us that such remnants or relics in museums 'have long come to stand for the whole of events' and are too often 'mistaken for the events from which they have been torn ... authentic historical artifacts are used not only to gesture toward the past, to move us toward its examination, but also to naturalise particular versions of the past' (1993: 127). Applied to the Channel Islands, this means that visions of the past presented in Occupation museums, where Jews, political prisoners, forced and slave labourers and other victims of Nazism are largely absent, give the impression that these people were not present or not persecuted during the Occupation. It is too easy to confuse proof that something existed (i.e. the German Occupation) with proof that it existed in a particular way.

I noted earlier that as the collectors were the first to shape Occupation heritage, they were perceived as the authorities and the guardians of Occupation-related knowledge for many decades. The partial version of the past on display in their museums attained the status of 'official memory', that is, the memory of cultural leaders or authorities, which can be contrasted with the 'popular memory' of ordinary people (Bodnar 1992).

This memory was not necessarily dissonant to the popular memory of 'ordinary people', the non-collectors in the population; after all, the Channel Islands were densely occupied with a ratio of one soldier for every three civilians at the height of the garrison, a number that compares to a ratio of one to 100 in France, after the occupation of the Occupied Zone (Sanders 2004: 128). The very real experience of Occupation in the islands was a German-dominated one.

People in the Channel Islands have now become normalised to prominent images of German soldiers in a way that can be shocking to those from other countries.¹³² These images were at the forefront of people's consciousness during the years of Occupation and have been kept in that position in the post-war decades through Occupation heritage, especially through the very museums that I discuss here, and particularly through the use of uniformed mannequins.

¹³² My thanks to Jon Carter, Director of Jersey Museum, for this observation.

That German soldiers are prominent in the psyche of islanders can be seen in a number of commemorative tapestries throughout the islands. In Jersey, the twelve-panel Occupation tapestry, unveiled by Prince Charles in 1995 at the fiftieth anniversary of liberation, features outsize German soldiers in eleven of the panels. In a tapestry made by children on display in the German Occupation Museum in Guernsey, the head and shoulders of a helmeted German soldier takes a central position in the canvas. The twentieth-century panel of the Guernsey Millennium Tapestry also features a helmeted soldier, as does a tapestry embroidered in the late 1970s on display in Sark's Church. Here, the panel representing the war years shows a soldier slightly larger than the map of the island next to which he stands.

In their study of memory in post-war Europe, historians Fogu and Kansteiner suggest that low-intensity collective memories (which, for our collectors and many islanders, might feature a soldier-heavy vision of the past) focus on 'representations of the past that are produced and consumed routinely without causing much disagreement. Most groups settle on such collective memories and reproduce them for years and decades until they are questioned and overturned, often in the wake of generational turnover' (2006: 292). As we will see in nearly every chapter of this volume, generational turnover has been responsible for changes in the way that the Occupation is perceived in the Channel Islands. Slowly, most Occupation museums in the Channel Islands have become more inclusive of the previously marginalised or absent voices of the victims of Nazism.

In 2001, for example, the German Occupation Museum in Guernsey was extended to include a 'memorial room'. In this room, the plight of the three Jewish women deported from Guernsey to Auschwitz is highlighted. The accounts of many political prisoners have also been added, with a particular focus on those who died in continental prisons and camps. The death roll of forced and slave workers has also been listed, and museum cases in that room include the uniform of the Organisation Todt overseers and a pair of striped pyjamas from the concentration camp of Sylt in Alderney.

In the same year, Jersey War Tunnels unveiled its new permanent exhibition, 'Captive Island', which aimed 'to tell the whole story of the German Occupation of Jersey in the words and phrases of the people who were there ... it serves as both a memorial to those who suffered and a vibrant expression of life during those five years'.¹³³ That both of the main Occupation museums in Guernsey and Jersey incorporated these narratives at the turn of the twenty-first century speaks to the wider changes that were in evidence elsewhere in the Occupation heritage of the islands, echoed in the changing narratives of Liberation Day and in the inclusion of minority groups in memorialisation of the Occupation years.

Just as Kevin Walsh observed that the large number of museums in France dedicated to the topics of resistance and deportation 'reflects a need to mediate this difficult period in French history' (2001: 87), so we might observe that the number of Occupation museums and exhibitions in the Channel Islands, opened in the

¹³³ Jersey War Tunnels guidebook, p. 8.

1940s, 1960s, 1980s and 2000s, reflects an equal and ongoing need or desire to discuss and represent this subject over several generations up until the present day. We have noted, however, how the image of the past and, thus, the memory transmitted, has changed during this period.

It is also worth noting that, just as in the French examples, the earliest museums were owned or curated by those who had lived through the Occupation and had a vested interest in presenting their version of the past. A good example of this is Joe Mière, a former curator of the Jersey Underground Hospital, who nurtured and expanded his display of political prisoners, in whose ranks he stood, during his period of guardianship.

National memory and the vision of Occupation for the French revolve around the twin themes of resistance and deportation. Although the Channel Islanders experienced both phenomena, this neither frames their memory nor (unlike the French) influences the title of their museums. We have already noted that the years 1940–1945 are perceived in the islands through the lens of military occupation and that this influences the location of most museums of this type (i.e. inside fortifications) and historically has left little room for other perspectives.

Through examining WWII museums, Walsh has observed how the category of hero varies from country to country and how the popularity of these figures has changed through time (2001: 97). While the prime subject of Occupation museums in the islands is the German soldier, this character type can more accurately be described as an anti-hero. Although he is not described locally in these terms, this is the way that he is treated. The soldier's possessions and instruments of war are fetishised, his clothes (uniform) are carefully curated, and scenes or dioramas are constructed in which he, as a mannequin, can 'live'. Although not exactly glorified, this anti-hero is housed, dressed and armed and kept in good working order; at the same time, he is safely contained in static displays inside his steel-reinforced bunker. Although his dominance is now challenged by mannequins and other representations of forced and slave labourers, deportees, Jews and those who committed acts of resistance, he has not yet been moth-balled.

The collector-owned Occupation Museum in the Channel Islands represents a very specific local or regional identity: one that has maintained its partial vision of the past until relatively recent years—a vision that is still maintained in some museums. While they have been subject to criticism in the past, both locally (*sotto voce*) and in the UK press for their neglect of the full story of Occupation, they should be seen for what they are: the product of a very particular historical experience.

Conclusion

Several key themes have run through this chapter. Chief among them has been the role of nostalgic memory for the Occupation or immediate post-Occupation period for our collectors, and the impact that this has had on concepts of value and authenticity for items of German militaria. This in turn has shaped the contents and

design of Occupation museums, which traditionally have also been vehicles for nostalgic memory. In their turn, museums and the vision of the past that they displayed affected the collective memory of most Channel Islanders until the mid-1990s or early twenty-first century.

My aim in this chapter has been to reveal the dominating historical influences that have motivated and inspired generations of children and, later, men to create such particular visions of the past. It is my hope that this will go some way to shedding light on a practice which is often misunderstood by outsiders and, indeed, some other islanders.

Nostalgic memory with regard to the Occupation has played a large role in cultural conservatism in heritage in the Channel Islands. People have been reluctant to let go of the experiences of youth or of the cherished experiences of their parents and grandparents. These are the memories which are still recited today, and the story is rare that does not contain a German soldier lurking in the background. Such experiences of Occupation are hard to shift; they formed the memories of the majority. Only the few were victims of Nazism, and so their stories were marginalised. Because the forced and slave workers, Jews and political prisoners had little in the way of representative material culture, the sheer volume of the materiality of the occupier dominated. As this is what the post-war tourists came to the Channel Islands to see and to souvenir, this helped to stimulate and encourage collectors during the 1960s and 1970s, during the heyday of tourism. Today, however, with the tourism industry reputed to be in decline and the mass of material in the hands of only a few, the end of the phenomenon of militaria collecting in the islands is in sight. It is my hope that this chapter has faithfully documented and interpreted this particular legacy of the Occupation using the words of those who were involved in its creation from the beginning.

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