



## Secretary's Annual Report

14<sup>th</sup> April 2021

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I hereby submit my first annual report for the year just ended.

### 2020 Events

Normally I would review a long list of events and activities from the past twelve months. The past twelve months have been anything but normal. I note the Société kindly allowed us to hold our 2020 AGM just before shutting down for public health reasons the following morning, and here we are this evening just as things are starting to get back to normal. Our AGM timing is impeccable but let's not try for a repeat!

There were no member events this past year due to the Coronavirus pandemic, however work continued behind the scenes. Social Secretary Noel Le Fondré continued the tradition of marking important events in the Island's Occupation history. Noel represented the Society at official functions on Liberation Day, Holocaust Remembrance Day, and at events commemorating Lieutenant Bernard Scheidhauer in St Ouen, and Captain Philip Ayton in Trinity. Noel also reached out to the organisers of a memorial service to French Army cadet François Marie Scornet, who was executed at St Ouens Manor after an unsuccessful escape attempt from France. Forming new ties to other local history groups is essential and I thank Noel for representing us so well during a difficult year.

Society member Alex Fearn organised a memorial ceremony for the crews of US Navy PT boats sunk off Noirmont Point. The memorial ceremony was followed by a tour of the M-132 Underground Command Bunker (and a welcome break from the rain). The official party included United States Ambassador to the United Kingdom Robert Wood Johnson, His Excellency, the Lieutenant Governor, Air Chief Marshal Sir Stephen Dalton, Bailiff Tim Le Cocq, Chief Minister John Le Fondré, Minister for External Relations Ian Gorst, Dean of Jersey Mike Keirle, and memorial founder John Ovenden.

### Priorities

I am standing down as Secretary this year, having joined the Board seven years ago and having served as Secretary for the previous five years. The Society is an important organisation and it has been a privilege to serve you and to document the Occupation.

Several years ago, Stan Keiller responded to my newsletter message calling for us to reassess our fixation with all things military and German. It's not exactly a mainstream topic and most people here during the Occupation were neither German nor military. What about their history?



Stan's essays are easily the most popular content we published over the past few years. I receive responses from newsletter readers each month who are delighted by an essay or share a personal connection.

Sadly I later discovered this was not the first time Stan contacted us. Another Board member he shared his essays with five years ago expressed no interest. More recently I suggested that we publish some in the 2019 Review but again, no interest.

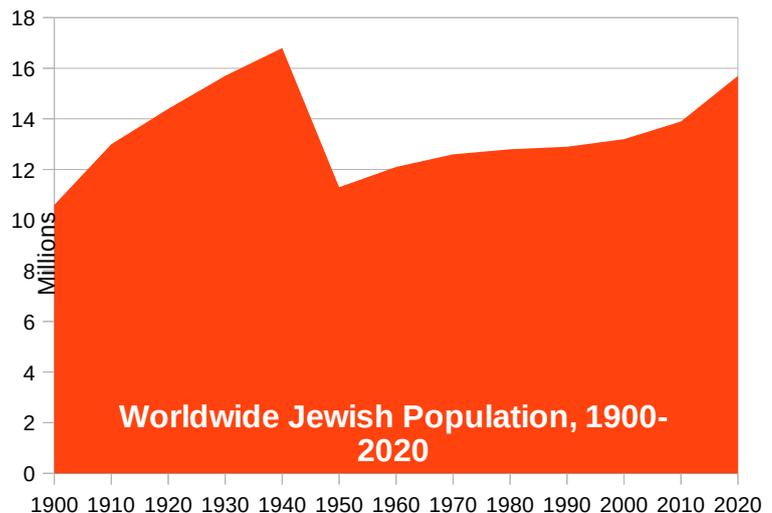
A majority of our members understand that we are meant to preserve and record *all* aspects of the German Occupation of Jersey. The reality is that some of our most active members do not share this view. We have several Nazi apologists on the Board and on our bunker teams, and they negatively impact our public image. We are better off without them.

To highlight one positive, Tony Pike deserves credit for showing initiative and creating our only Forced Worker display I'm aware of, at Battery Moltke. There used to be a second downstairs at Battery Lothringen, however it is long gone. The military portraits and swastika flag are still up.

### The Nazis are a package deal

The Occupation was a terrible, dark time. It is not something for us to reinterpret today. This should be obvious, however some Society members are aggressively promoting a whitewashed image of the Occupying forces who terrorised and oppressed Islanders and Forced Workers 75 years ago.

In the years following the Nuremberg trials, there was a concerted effort to whitewash the record of the armed forces of the Third Reich. German war criminals promoted the idea then, as do right-wing extremist groups today. It is a dangerous path some want to lead us down.



On our Facebook page right now is a bunker display featuring a German soldier grinning whilst juggling clubs, as if the Nazi forces were merely entertainers from a travelling circus. I remind you these people murdered more than six million Jews and oppressed your families. The Jews still haven't recovered 80 years and three generations later. I think such a light-hearted display is totally inappropriate. The female mannequins in full make-up and wearing military uniforms at Battery Moltke are very odd. What are visitors to make of this? What does it say about the Society?



In the Evening Post last month was an article about the former OT bakery site at Beaumont which is being redeveloped. Property developers we were advising “hoped to install ‘O.T. Bäckerei’ lettering on the building”, which came as a surprise to myself and other Board members I spoke to. What is worse, members of the public had to intervene and file objections to the Planning application. It should be pretty obvious that putting Nazi signs up in a new housing development is a terrible idea.

Home buyers want a sea view, maybe a meadow. Not a sign promoting a senior Nazi who used concentration camps to supply forced labour. I say this not to criticise, but to illustrate just how out of touch we are. Please take this as an opportunity to improve.

### **Accountability matters**

Accountability for Board members and bunker teams continues to be a problem. Bypassing accountability in the name of “moving on” will not succeed—should not succeed. You cannot go forward until you have justice.

I will keep my report professional but I must give members an idea of the scale of the problem because as elected Board members, we answer to you. Here is one recent example. A number of artefacts have gone missing over the past two years and are presumed stolen. All are connected to the same person at Strongpoint Corbiere. The Board discussed this matter privately and agreed a solution. Then we received a hoax email from a fraudster who claimed one of our Vice-Presidents recently ‘sold’ him the missing items.

The fraudster was clueless about digital forensics and I spotted their error immediately, however that leaves us with an uncomfortable truth. Is the fraudster a fellow Board member, or are Board members leaking confidential information to fraudsters? The mind boggles, but this is the level of hostility we see from the bunker team at Corbiere. They tell me there is “deep hatred” towards the Committee.

Financial accountability is another area where we can improve, because charities are held to a higher standard. As you know, we are without a Treasurer. The Board resolved to hire a bookkeeper to manage our accounts ages ago. I interviewed several, got the resolution passed, and delivered our financial records to him. This resolution was ignored by another Board member who tried to manage the accounts himself before resigning. I don’t believe the 2020 accounts we are presenting this evening are complete or accurate.

Spending limits were ignored, and I have seen evidence of withdrawals totalling more than eight times what is authorised since December. We cannot open RN La Mare Mill this season due to a lack of funds, however the Strongpoint Corbiere team somehow managed to have a clear out and rebuild with new displays (and an expensive new partition to replace a perfectly good one which was foolishly torn down last year). This is the same team responsible for a £4500 net loss in 2018,



after they excavated a personnel bunker that no one bothered to check for asbestos beforehand. That bunker is now closed indefinitely, unsafe, and unusable.

## **Optimism**

I remain optimistic about the future of the Society but members really must put themselves forward and help us build back better. We need better quality people on the Board. We must work more closely with other local charities and history groups. We desperately need a volunteer to liaise with schools and arrange tours for pupils, because we aren't getting any younger and we need to share our passion for history with the next generation. We need women on the Board to make sure their views are equally represented.

We need people to help open bunkers and generate more income. The government's "Back to Work" team are ready to supply volunteers looking for work experience. Acorn Enterprises can also supply volunteers from the Disabled community. I arranged this years ago but the bunker teams scoffed at the idea. One highlight before I finish, Tony Chalker at RN Millbrook agreed to try it and it worked out perfectly well. Somewhere out there is a young lady who helped us open a bunker one afternoon and no doubt mentioned it to her friends.

We need more of that if the Society is to continue, and fewer Nazi apologists.

Tom Brossman  
Secretary  
14<sup>th</sup> April 2021