

# Lizzie

and the  
Guernsey  
Gang

Digitally  
Narrated

APRIL W GARDNER



LIZZIE  
and the  
Guernsey Gang  
a Christian WWII novel for children

AUDIOBOOK COMPANION DOCUMENT

APRIL W GARDNER

*Big Spring Press*  


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KINDLE

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## INTRODUCTION

Thank you for your purchase!

This document is a companion to the audio edition of *Lizzie and the Guernsey Gang*, a Christian WWII novel for children. It should not be shared with anyone who has not purchased their personal copy of the audio edition of the book. Thank you for respecting the author, her work, and her livelihood. Purchases options can be found at <https://www.aprilgardner.com/lizzieandtheguernseygang>.

This companion includes pictures and a map from the physical copy of the book as well as content from the education appendix that does not easily translate to audio. Homeschool moms may wish to use to the extra content to expand education on the region, language, and history of World War II and Great Britain's Guernsey Island.

Big Spring Press

## NOTE FROM THE AUTHOR

Hey there!

Thank you for reading Lizzie's adventure. I hope you enjoyed it, but mostly, I hope you learned something—about Guernsey Island, about World War II, and about God's constant presence. No matter the difficulty or fear, He is always with us. He promised this in His Word, and He never breaks a promise.

*Be strong and of a good courage, fear not, nor be afraid of them: for the LORD thy God, he it is that doth go with thee; he will not fail thee, nor forsake thee* (Deuteronomy 31:6).

Did you know that Lizzie really exists? She does! Not everything Lizzie experienced really happened, but the little girl who lived on Guernsey in 1940 when the Germans invaded is a real-live person. She's one of my dear friends, too.

Her name is Ruth Davies, and I'd love for you to meet her. That's what the rest of the book is dedicated to—getting to know the real Lizzie and her beloved Guernsey Island.

April Gardner

## MEET THE REAL LIZZIE

I was named Ruth Davies when I was born, am now Ruth Millar, deeply honoured to be the subject of this book. Hard for me to believe, but I was just nine years old in 1940, little knowing how life would change.

April, the author, has been a very dear friend of mine for a number of years. We first met at New Testament Baptist Church, Bury St. Edmunds, England.

Although April says this book is fact based on lots of her imagination, the character names are fictitious, but the characters are real. There were boys and girls we thought were German spies, mainly because their parents collaborated with the Germans. We were cautious when around children who always seemed to have “proper” food! It could only come from one source as far as we were concerned, and that was the enemy.

The German officer who attended our place of worship, Cobo Mission Hall, did exist. The tender-hearted preacher was my father, George Davies. The hotel near Cobo Bay, where German officers arrived within an hour or so of landing is now a private residence.

As you read about Lizzie, let your imagination run away with you, realising that Ruth Davies was actually there on the small island of Guernsey, completely cut off from the rest of the world from June 30, 1940, to May 9, 1945.

Thankfully not cut off from Almighty God, who preserved us and comforted us every step of the way.

~Ruth Davies

## Q&A WITH RUTH

April: Ruth, tell us about your younger brother, the one Andre is modeled after. What's his real name? Do you have any other brothers and sisters? And what sort of relationship did you have with them?

Ruth: I have two younger brothers; Les (Leslie) is the one nearer Andre's age. My baby brother, Clarence (Clar), is four and a half years younger than I. He is the one who had the mass of blonde curls. Les also had very blonde hair, but it was as straight as it possibly could be (unlike Andre), but that does not matter one bit. We were very close as brothers and sister. I always remember having my baby brother with me everywhere I went (wonder if I was the babysitter??).

I can remember lots about the things we did and games we played when they were old enough to play games with. I can also remember when the three of us got into one bed, and I told them bedtime stories. I feel quite ashamed because they were not bedtime Bible stories but Hans Christian Anderson. Every night they would ask for Hansel and Gretel and the wicked witch who was going to eat them, my voice matching that of a really wicked witch. They really liked the frights. At least, that is my story.

~ ~ ~

April: Did you have a cousin like James that you liked to play with?

Ruth: There were several cousins who lived within minutes of our house, the two boys Paul (James in the book) and Ken were very friendly with my two brothers. I was great friends with Pearl (Paul's sister), both of them now deceased. Ken is still alive, and Les still visits him about once a month. Ken's dad, my uncle, was killed during the war. Six children in the family who never really knew their Dad. There were/are other cousins, but these were the ones we were with every day, went to the same school too, always on the beach together after school.

~ ~ ~

April: Before the Germans came, what did the beach mean to you? How close was it to your house, and how often did you play there?

Ruth: Before the Germans came, the beach was our second home. We went swimming every day. In fact, we hardly came out of the water. We were fortunate to live just a few minutes' walk away. What we did then would not be allowed today, because we were all diving off the rocks, diving off the seawall when the tide was in, and our mothers were home and dads were at work, not one of us drowned.

There were always older people on the beaches, and that was considered a sufficient safety measure. More often than not our Mom would have to come to get us off the beach; we had no watches and were quite oblivious of the time. In the summer holidays, I can still see her now trying to attract our attention at nine p.m., sun still shining, being double summertime, and quite often curfew time. Sadly, this didn't last long.

I can't remember exactly when they mined all the beaches and coastline. In my estimation that was the most cruel thing the Germans did – no swimming for almost five years (and no soap). Don't think absence of soap bothered us too much at that age.

~ ~ ~

April: What did you think of the possibility of being sent away to England?

Ruth: When we heard about evacuating the Island in May 1940, most of us were very excited at the prospect of going to the UK. None of us realised that our parents may not be travelling with us. No men were leaving the Island, so definitely no fathers or elder brothers (over 16).

Quite a few mothers did travel but were separated from their children almost immediately. I had visions of staying with an aunt, uncle, and cousin in London, not realizing that London was a more dangerous place to be. I think arrangements had been made for us to stay with my grandparents near the Malvern Hills in Worcestershire, I had been there once before just nine or ten months previous, which was my first time out of the island.

At the time of the evacuation, nobody ever mentioned the likelihood of German occupation. I think the main reason was the difficulty which could arise in obtaining food and other essential supplies, seeing the islands were so close to France, and the enemy at that time was also very close to France. The thought of bombing raids was the furthest thing from most minds.

~ ~ ~

**April: Were you disappointed about missing the boat?**

Ruth: I was disappointed that we were not going on this “huge” boat. Now I think back they weren’t really very big. I certainly wouldn’t want to travel on them now. I was also disappointed I would not see London (as if I would have been taken there). Had I packed a very small backpack with one change of underclothes, one item of nightwear one clean dress and my small Bible with pictures in it all for nothing?

However, as I trusted my parents with God’s answer to everything they took to Him in prayer, and my father explained that he was not allowed to travel with us, and my mother was only permitted to travel because my younger brother Clar was just four years old. There was a possibility that we would be separated, having to travel with the other school children and billeted with them for the time being. The whole situation was far less attractive.

Later on that day, Dad explained how Mom and he had prayed the previous night, that if it was God’s will for us to leave, they would leave the early morning alarm to Him. We had been taught that God never sleeps, therefore that wasn’t the reason He allowed us to sleep in.

As I got older and understood spiritual things more, I was – and still am - grateful to the Lord that He took us along that path, and even more grateful that He brought us through the trial. We all learned such a lot, which we (well certainly I) have never forgotten. I am grateful even now for so many different things. Even to this day I would never waste bread by throwing it in the trash. I feed birds with it, but throw it away? Never! I hate to see food waste as it always brings to mind the absolute rotten, mouldy, even filthy stuff (called food) which we *had* to eat – or go without.

~ ~ ~

April: Were you really on the beach during the bombing?

Ruth: Yes! We certainly were! I was not searching for crabs, but maybe my brothers or cousins were. None of us were swimming, for I remember the tide was well out, we always waited for the tide to come in. Otherwise we had to walk so far out to be even waist high in water. No fun in that.

I can still remember the spot where we were, probably just soaking up the sun while waiting for high tide. The bombs did not drop on Cobo Bay. The planes aimed at an old Napoleonic look-out, thinking no doubt that this was a gun post or something similar. The bay was called Salines Bay, and the target was about a quarter mile away, close enough to deafen us. I think the planes coming out of nowhere just above our heads were even more frightening.

We then heard the thunder of machine guns and bombs over the main harbour in St. Peter Port – the capital of Guernsey. Within minutes, my mother appeared, looking absolutely terrified rushing us home,

No time to get dressed; no time to put shoes on our feet. Fortunately, the journey home for us only took five minutes, and for our cousins two minutes. Their home was just about on the sea-front.

Our biggest fear when we reached home—our father was not back from work. He should have been, but he turned up eventually, after sheltering behind a granite wall a few minutes from home. There were no bombs dropped in our area, but we were not to know that at the time.

He told us he had been praying out loud, accompanied by another man he knew, one of the biggest loud-mouthed heathens in Guernsey. This man asked Dad to pray for (to quote his words), “We have been a wicked lot, and God is angry with us.” I would like to imagine that my father’s reply was, “Speak for yourself,” but I know it was nothing of the sort.

All this happened on June 28, 1940. Two days later, June thirtieth, my father received the most unforgettable birthday present – the Germans had landed and begun the five longest years of our lives.

~ ~ ~

April: Do you remember if you had any thoughts in particular about Hitler? What did you think he was up to? Did his very name scare you, or were you oblivious to such details?

Ruth: I must be quite honest, the only thing I can recall of the man Hitler at the start of the war was the awful Hitler Youth. We were terrified of them. The fact they were his “boys” made me think Hitler must be a very bad man, but I can’t remember thinking he was the cause of this war. I can also remember very vividly, each time an officer addressed a soldier the salute was given and “Heil Hitler” almost shouted, a half mast right arm was raised at the same time, also a loud click of the boots. The boots which gave this haunting sound of imprisonment.

My parents did not discuss the actual war very much, not to us children that is. All I can remember is the fact that Germans bombed England, and England bombed Germany, simply because they hated each other. Why? I did not know.

Naturally, this man Hitler was hated when the truth was revealed about the Holocaust and other concentration camps scattered in different parts of Europe, and I feel certain if we had known this during the five years of occupation, we would have all been terrified. After all, their “Got Mit Uns” may have been bigger than our God, for he certainly wasn’t the same God as far as we were concerned. Thankfully, our God supplied all our needs and never left us nor forsook us.

~ ~ ~

April: Tell us about the day you saw your first German soldier. Were you afraid? What detail pops out most about that moment?

Ruth: The Germans landed at the airport Sunday, June 30, 1940, and within a short time of landing, we saw the first soldiers. There were just three or four of them riding in an open-topped car. Naturally, only the top half of their uniform showing, but sufficient to see they were officers, jackets covered in silver braid and very large peaked caps to match. We were taking a short walk along the sea-front after our evening church service. I can remember them smiling and waving, which probably was a friendly gesture, but we did feel at the time it was almost ridiculing us, a “we are now in charge” kind of gesture.

I can recall being very bewildered for a few moments, as we had not been told much about the seriousness of all that was going on; the evacuation which didn’t take place for our family was a bitter disappointment for me until I learned Dad had to remain behind. The bombing which took place on the Friday previous had not been repeated, and I feel there was a sense of false security in my innocent thoughts.

Within a few minutes of seeing the enemy, I remember my father explaining that it certainly looked as if we had unwanted guests, and the picture was looking quite grim. That is the moment I remember most of all, a terrible moment of dread.

~ ~ ~

April: In the book, Andre asks, “Will we fight them off, Dad?” His dad replies, “No, no. Prime Minister Churchill ordered all our soldiers, sailors, and weapons removed from the island.” Ruth, in your own words, why did all the British soldiers leave the island?

Ruth: As there was no longer a military base in Guernsey and hadn’t been for a while, the only military personnel who were there were those on leave. They were instructed to leave for their appropriate bases immediately. Despite not having a military base, we still had (and still do) a governor who is HM the Queen’s representative. He too received his removal instructions. Any men or women who wanted to enlist in the military were also told to leave at once.

~ ~ ~

April: Was there a “Phillip” in your life during that time, or is his character make-believe?

Ruth: “Phillip,” as a character, is certainly not make-believe! Whilst a lot of the detail about Phillip has been written to add excitement and suspense to the story, there were very many “Philips” around, and as months went by there were “Philips” whom we didn’t trust at all. If it was known (or thought) that a certain child’s parents were probable collaborators, I was warned (by my parents) to be very careful what I said to them, and even discouraged from associating with some of them.

I had regular instruction how to keep my mouth shut! Words, which were almost alien to me previously, became very realistic and almost threatening. Words such as “you will be shot,” “French prisons,” “concentration camps.” All very true threats, not only threats, but on many occasions, action to any who disobeyed “Orders of the Feldkommandant.”

~ ~ ~

April: Did you ever break the rules? Were you ever afraid of being shot?

Ruth: I don’t think I ever broke any rules that would have been punished by way of shooting. I know we sometimes placed stones or suchlike on the railway lines, hoping we would have the pleasure of seeing a railway truck come off the rails, spilling their cargo of cement, sand, shingles, anything they carried that consisted of supplies for the coastal reinforcements—bunkers for soldiers to live in with large naval guns adjoining them.

Nothing was ever derailed, but we did try. Our big effort may have delayed production of these bunkers by at least a few hours...some joke. I was never afraid of being shot, but I often wondered if my father and some of his colleagues would be caught one day.

~ ~ ~

April: Lizzie, Andre, and James often played in James’ garage using his dad’s leaky boat, *Trina*, as a prop for their many imaginary adventures. Is any part of this true to real life?

Ruth: My Dad did not have a boat. My uncle did. My grandfather also had one, but he was no longer alive. They were kept at my grandmother’s house – right on the sea-front just a few minutes’ walk from our house, and even less from James (real name Paul). All the fishing gear was kept at Gran’s house too.

As all the beaches were soon heavily mined and barbed-wire all around them, there was little interest in boats, apart from genuine fishermen who had permits to fish in one or two mine-free areas. These areas

were used by the German authorities to bring in supplies from France by ship. The only other people who took an interest in boats were would-be escapees.

~ ~ ~

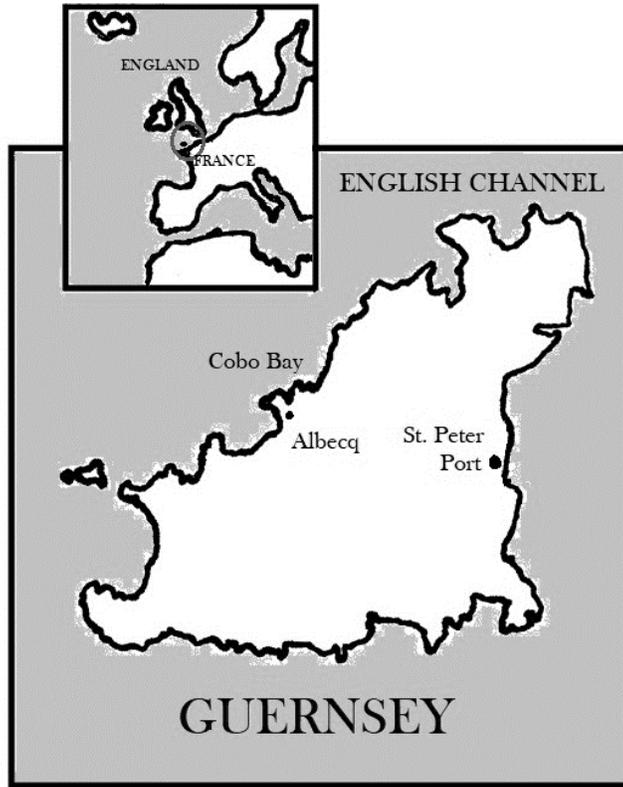
April: In the book, as the children are playing, a group of German soldiers march past the garage. From beneath *Trina*, all Lizzie can see is boots. She thinks, “All I could see were their bottes, so tall that from my position under the boat, they had no end. As the soldiers kicked up their feet, the sun glinted off the soles of their bottes revealing a gleaming mass of steel studs. Good for kicking little children.”

*Good for kicking little children*—this is a direct quote from you, Ruth, from the day I interviewed you in your house. You must have been just as afraid of the German boots as Lizzie was. Did you ever get kicked?

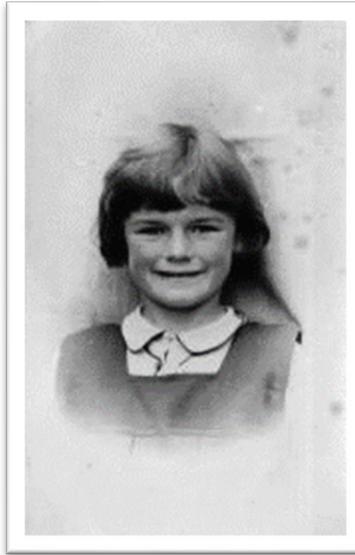
Ruth: Thankfully, I was never kicked by Germans or anybody else, but I do know that many forced labour workers were often kicked, prodded in the face with rifles, spat on, and face-slapped. It was not a sight that very young children should have witnessed, but it happened.

It was the sound of the boots that frightened me most, particularly when they were on marches. Even to this day, this haunts me; it spells war, cruelty, separation, starvation, and very sadly – hatred!

MAP



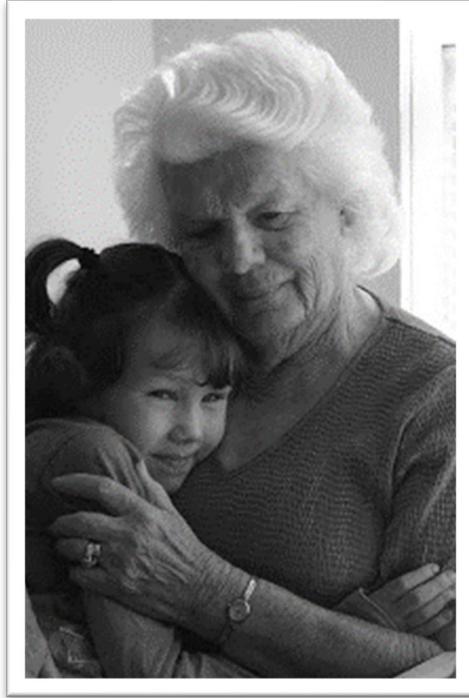
## PHOTOS



Ruth Davies Millar, age nine  
Photo taken shortly before invasion



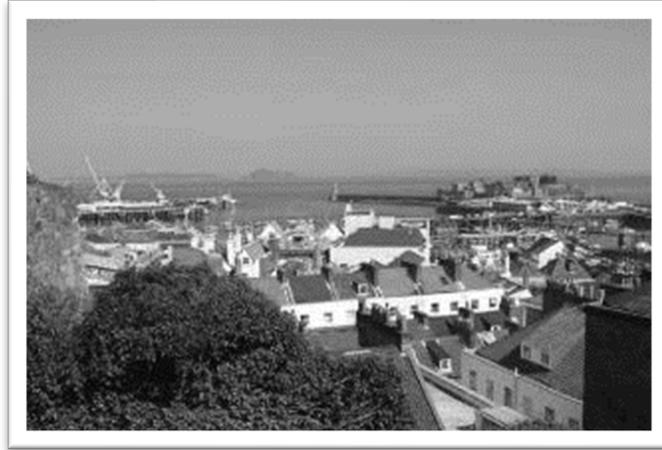
Ruth Davies Millar, 2018



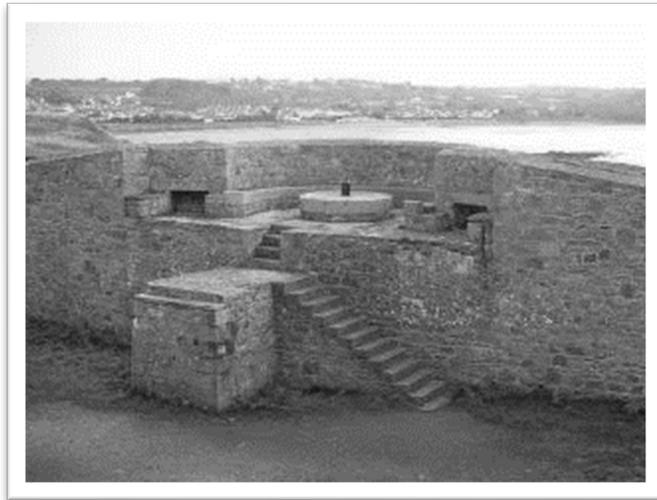
Ruth with April's daughter, 2010



April and Ruth gardening, 2010



Guernsey



Castle Cornet

## ABOUT GUERNSEY FRENCH

by Ruth Davies

Guernsey French, or Patois – pronounced pahtwaa—was the primary language of the island in my mother’s day, and even when I was young, my mother always spoke to us in French, but when we started school, English became our first language.

Like every other language, French has its dreadful distortions. I do believe in the olden days (very olden days, i.e. before my time), French as it should be spoken was the norm on Guernsey. Over time, French as spoken in Normandy was warped. I suppose an example I could use (with great fear), is what Americans have done with the English language (not any of you, of course), even your car parts are all foreign to me. Maybe you had the language first.

For example, “cow.” The proper French translation is “vache” pronounced “vosh.” The Guernsey French desecration is “vac.” Pronounced “vaac”! (Guernsey is famous for its Guernsey cows. These cows can be seen all over the world.)

New words have been imported for modern phenomena “le bike,” “le gas-cooker.” Lots of Guernsey French words are just like English, but usually pronounced with a French accent, quite funny really. These days, we would have “le computer” and “le cellphone.” Now have a laugh!! Below you’ll find a list of words that Lizzie would have used every day. When I see these words I can hear my mother speaking.

Island – Île

Beach - Baque

Donkey – Âne (pronounced Aan, as in Baa Baa black sheep) Residents from other nearby Channel Islands call people from Guernsey “donkeys.” All in good-natured fun.

Toys – Jouets (Jooay)

School – École

Guernsey – Guernesias (Jen-er-ziay)

Mother – Mère (Mare)

Father – Père (Pear)

Brother – Frère (Frair) as in fair

Sister – Soeur (Surr) as in purr

Aunt – Tante (Tornt)

## QUAND LES ALLEMANDS VINRENT

(When the Germans Arrived)

Here is a little story in Guernsey French [and Common French] with a literal translation after each paragraph. This is an almost word-for-word translation, therefore quite bad grammar.

-Ruth

Guernsey French (Patois):

Y'a pu d'chinquante àns qué les allemands vinrent, et tous l's'onnaïes quand lé meis d'juin arrive, nous n'peut pas faire sans n'y pensaî. Ya des mémouaires qui n'peuvent pas jomais ête r'aômbillaîes, car les circaônstânces saont acore raide vif.

Common French:

Cela fait plus de cinquantes ans que les allemands débarquèrent, et chaque année quand le mois de juin arrive, nous ne pouvons faire autrement qu'y repenser. Il y a certains souvenirs que nous ne pourrons jamais oubliés tant les plaies sont encore à vif.

English Translation:

There are more than fifty years since the Germans arrived, and every year when the month of June arrives, we cannot do other than think about it. There are some memories which we cannot ever forget, because the circumstances are still vivid.

Guernsey French (Patois):

Après lé tripot et l'carnage su la Blliânche Rocque lé venderdi 28 juin, 1940, l'île était dans érine état dé profaônd choqe. Tchi qui s'en aller s'arrivaî perchôin?

Common French:

Après la pagaille et le carnage du vendredi 28 juin, 1940, sur le Rocher Blanc, l'île était dans un profond état de choc. De quoi sera fait demain?

English Translation:

After the mess and carnage on the White Rock, Friday 28 June, 1940, the island was in a right state of profound shock. What is going to arrive tomorrow?

Guernsey French (Patois):

Lé desmanche suivânt, ch'tait aen magnifique jour d'étaî. A méjeu, nous ôui et vis éne grosse plane dé arborrt militaire, camouflagie, et dauve des larges swastikas es côtaîs. A d'vallit su l'airport. Lé tchoeur nous faôncit fràn dans nos sôleis.

Common French:

Le dimanche suivant, c'était un magnifique jour d'été. En début d'après-midi, nous avons entendu et vu un énorme avion de transport militaire, aux motifs camouflage et avec de larges swastikas (croix gammée) sur les côtés. Il a atterri à l'aéroport local. Notre sang n'a fait qu'un tour.

English Translation:

The following Sunday, it was a magnificent day of summer. Early afternoon, we heard and saw a huge military transport plane, camouflaged and with some large swastikas on the sides. It landed on the airport. Our hearts went straight down our shoes.

## GUERNSEY, THEN AND NOW

by Ruth Davies

In 933AD, the Channel Islands formed part of Normandy, France, creating a link between Britain and France. That link can still be seen on the islands today in surnames and D'gernesiais, the local language. England and Guernsey became connected in 1066 when William the Conqueror of Normandy defeated King Harold of England.

The Castle Cornet mentioned in the book was built around 1204 to repel a French invasion. It has guarded the town and harbor of St. Peter Port for almost eight hundred years.

Fishing, shipbuilding, and privateering have always been an important part of Guernsey's heritage. Another part, the traditional Guernsey jumper, or sweater. It's known for its water-repellent wool, and is used throughout the world.

Between 1856 and 1879, the French poet Victor Hugo was exiled on the island. It was on Guernsey that he wrote some of his most famous works, *Les Miserables* and *Toilers of the Sea*.

Guernsey's scenery is stunning, and it is the ideal holiday destination. Strolls along the cliff paths, explorations of the rural center, or idle days on the beaches—Guernsey has it all.

The island's capital, St Peter Port, is a busy harbor town. There, you'll find bistros, restaurants, and boutiques. In the harbor, ferries run between the sister islands of Sark, Herm, Jersey, and St. Malo in France.

World War II was a defining part of Guernsey's history. For over five years, the Nazis ruled the islands. Many evacuees returned after the May 1945 liberation, some with new husbands and children. Others remained in the United Kingdom. Every year on ninth May, Liberation Day, Guernsey celebrates its freedom.

The use of the local language, D'gernesiais, declined after liberation. While the evacuees were in the United Kingdom, they spoke mostly English and continued this when they returned. Recently, locals have campaigned for lessons in school with the hope of saving the language.



## TRANSCRIPT OF RUTH'S MEMORIES

Over the next pages, you'll read a transcript of an interview Ruth and I did in preparation for writing the book. I recorded it in her home in Littleport (Cambridge) England when she was seventy-nine. These are her memories of the occupation, spoken as they came to her that day in 2010. It isn't organized in any sort of timeline order. I include them for those who'd like a bit more about her, and for historical record.

~April

RUTH: I enjoyed/endured five birthdays under Nazi rule. We were liberated in May. My birthday was in January. I may have had a bar of chocolate from the Canadian Red Cross for that one but can't remember. We were having Red Cross parcels Christmas 1944—they must have known "Lizzie" was having a birthday soon. They came from Canada and Australia, about one each per month. What a God-send! After the parcels, my weight took a rapid upswing to 87 pounds at fourteen years old.

APRIL: Reader, a portion of the transcript is missing. Below, Ruth is in the middle of an account of her family's near deportation. I'll fill in what I remember of the story's beginning...

The Germans had declared that all English men and their families would be sent to labor camps in Germany. Her father was English, so they made the list. A couple of weeks remained before the scheduled departure date, so they began praying incessantly for God to intervene. Shortly before they were to be loaded on the boat, a German officer who'd come to know and respect her father, got it in his head to intervene. It took some doing on his part, but their family was removed from the list of those being sent away. Ruth picks up the story right as they learned they've escaped the labor camp. Again, little Ruth mistakenly thought she was going on holiday...

RUTH: I do remember my father calling out to my mother saying, "Praise the Lord, we're not going!" I said, "We're not going on the Holiday?" My father said, "No," and I thought, *Wow, God's really let me down.* I was asking for a lovely time in Germany, and I should imagine I cried, "I want to go." And then, they explained [the situation] to me.

I don't think my mother said anything. My mother was very emotional. She cried very easy, especially where it concerned the children and food and hunger and stuff, but I can remember my father saying, "Look, it wasn't going to be a holiday. You know how afraid you are of the Germans?" (Which we were a lot of them—the Hitler Youth.) He then explained how we were going to be put in a camp, and we really didn't know how we were going to be treated.

The Guernsey people went to Biberach [Internment Camp], and the Jersey people went to Laufen [Internment Camp]. There were some Jewish people—well, somebody said they were Jewish. There were a few of them that went, and one came back. The others never came back. I supposed they ended up in Auschwitz, Birkenau, somewhere like that. Belsen, I don't know, but they didn't come back.

But I wasn't too happy with God that day. Until my father explained and told us what a wonderful answer to prayer it was. He said how my mother and he had been praying almost continually that we wouldn't go. He found it very difficult when I was saying, "Only three more days, and we get to go!" But he did say that actually it was a wonderful testimony for me because I was telling my school pals, "I'm going on holiday to Germany." Not one of them said, "You're not going on holiday." So obviously, they didn't know, but my father said, "I can remember afterwards when you told your school friends after, 'I'm not going to Germany at all,' and explaining that we were going into a camp.

But my mom and dad were praying that we wouldn't go, and two other men (one a German) praying all night, and God answered their prayers. I don't know if they understood what was going on, but God was

really good. I mean, once my father explained why we shouldn't go, well then, He was a *good* God, but before that, He'd let me down. You know, that wonderful holiday I was going on.

Only 1,200 went. There weren't many English people that lived in Guernsey before the war. Now, there aren't many Guernsey people living in Guernsey.

APRIL: So it was just the English men and their families who went to German camps?

RUTH: Yes, well or anybody, like these Jewish people. They had a definite pick-up, but that was Guernsey or anywhere. They were Jews.

But any military men. There were a few soldiers that were there, and if they had families, they stayed thinking, *If you want us, you send for us. Otherwise, I'm staying here*, you see. Once they knew the Germans were coming, even then some evacuated two or three days before the Germans arrived. They said, "The last boat will leave at such a time, and if you don't go, well, then you're stuck." So any military men then said, "We'd better go," and off they went.

An uncle of mine went. He was my dad's army friend. There were three of them. Three friends that married three sisters, and my uncle went off. Told my father he should volunteer as well. "No, my place is with my children," [my father said]. Anyway, my uncle went off and didn't come back. He was killed in Tobruk. Mussolini's army.

We had one or two Christian Germans that wrote to us after the war. You couldn't collaborate too much because you soon got a name for yourself. If they were Christian men, they visit us and pray after dark, so no one saw them coming. They [their neighbors] would have called us bad names, you know collaborating with the enemy, that sort of thing.

I remember the majority of the Germans that were there... Well, they were pleased to be there because apart from a shortage of food, there was no war, no bombings. They were there all through the war. They weren't at the front. So their families were quite pleased that they were in these beautiful islands, but a lot of them didn't realize they would starve—and starve to death a lot of them.

Nothing [food] came in, you see. I don't know how long. I've got several books on the war and there's lots of dates there where it says "June 1941, a ration of bread issued. One-pound loaf per person." It sounds as if you had that every day, but that might be for the month, you see or certainly not more than once a week. Usually it was stale, green sometimes, but a little loaf like that to last you a week and nothing else.

But in the end, it got that maybe there'd be a ration of bread, and it was the most disgusting color. It was gray, and they maintained that they swept up the flour that fell, and there were husks in it and often moldy. You'd have this loaf, and that would be your ration for the week. That was for six of us to last the week.

My mother usually kept some little thing for before we went to bed, so we could have a mouthful of something, and we'd give thanks for it. We always thanked God for caring for us and supplying our food. Maybe it was a slice of bread, and mother used to cut it into six portions, and often she'd cut it into five portions. I knew what she was doing. She was going without herself. After the war when we'd talk about being hungry, my father said to me one day, "We were hungry, but we never, ever went to bed with nothing to eat." I said, "What are you on about?!" He said, "No, always had something before you went to bed." I said, "A slice of bread between six?" He said, "You can never say that we went to bed one night, two nights with absolutely nothing. You always had at least a mouthful. God supplied."

APRIL: Did you have a garden?

RUTH: Yes, he put in potatoes, not cabbage so much or any greens. It would be carrots and parsnips, carbohydrates. But then, you couldn't eat it. It happened to us. My dad would get up in the morning and

he'd say, "That looks different," and they'd be all dug up. And they were that size [golf ball]. You know, the minute there seemed to be something underneath, they'd be gone. You'd need a barbed wire fence to keep anything.

We kept rabbits, not as pets but for food. And we weren't allowed to pick them up or pet them at all. So they weren't lovely little furry rabbits that we visited after school. That was forbidden.

They were in a little outhouse, and my father rigged up bells and gongs and goodness knows what on the door leading across into the bedroom. Trip wires, so if anybody broke in, they wouldn't see this little wire going across. They'd step on it, and all the bells and gongs would go off in the house. And then my father would go down there to catch the burglars.

We had eight big rabbits. My dad couldn't kill them. Somebody else would, you see, and they'd come home all ready for rabbit stew or something. And really, now I think of it, I don't think we realized it was our rabbits we were eating. They didn't look like rabbits.

The rabbits would be kept for if one of us wasn't well. There was no medication, no nothing. You'd soon succumb to infections and that sort of thing. So when one of us wasn't well, then we'd have the rabbit which provided food to fight the infection, or something, but we didn't even eat those. I don't know how many we'd eaten before. Not many. We had to wait for them to grow.

I remember one morning. Very early. One of our neighbors shouted out (we were still in bed) "George!" And [my father] jumped out of bed and, "They've gone. They've all gone!" and my father called, "Praise the Lord! Halleluiah!"

And [the neighbor] said, "What are you on about?" He wasn't a Christian man. I can hear him now. "Praise the Lord? Your rabbits, I mean. And mine!"

Somebody had stolen all the rabbits. My dad got up straightaway. I don't know how many this other man had. Maybe half a dozen, and my father had eight big rabbits. I mean, that was about twenty meals! And when he looked, all these trip wires had been disconnected. So somebody had been there and looked in the meantime.

But whoever stole—I don't think it was Germans. There were a lot of [foreign] forced laborers brought over. They were pathetically thin. And sometimes you'd get them rapping on the door, absolutely starving, begging for food from my mother. She'd say, "I've got nothing for myself." And they'd be crying. And it was the most awful thing to say, "I'm sorry. I've got nothing at all." And they'd walk away. They could hardly walk. Lots of them died.

[...]

Typhoid and typhus—we'd keep well away from that. As well as we could. I mean they'd be living maybe across the street. The reason we kept away. They were always fumigating the houses. They were full of lice. And then they had scabies and impetigo.

None of us had scabies, but we all had impetigo. I think every child on the island did. They kept the clean ones away from school because there were more infected. If you had impetigo, you went to school, and if you didn't get it, you stayed home.

APRIL: What did you do to treat it?

Ruth: We lived in a bungalow then and on another road. Pretty much all of the other houses were taken over by Germans. The first bungalow, that was the *kranken* [sick] house. It wasn't a hospital. It was where the doctor was. I didn't know who he was, but he had the white coat on. This doctor man he said, "Komt." I thought, *Oh, no. I'm not going into the house with you. You're not getting me in there.* He could inject me with anything—kill me. That was the thought, *He'll give me something and I'll die.*

But anyway, he meant well. He could speak a little English. "Come. I give you something." "I'll ask my mum," I said. So I went back home, and I said, "Mum, there's a man there with a white coat. He's a doctor, and he wants to treat us." So she said, "I'll come with you." So we went in and he put an ointment of some sort. He didn't put any dressings, but he put this ointment, and then he gave my mother some more. So, he did well.

APRIL: He was there for the Germans only?

RUTH: Yes, and this wasn't well into the war. They built an underground hospital. It's still there now. You can go in it. And that's where a lot of the Russian POWs helped to build this into the cliff. Into this rock, you know. All these tunnels into the rock. And a lot of them died. I mean they were too hungry to work, but the hospital is still there, and it can still be visited. There's a good one in Jersey too. There's even the bed in the different wards, and it's all lit up. I think in the winter they even have heating going.

I was thinking of this through the week. We had all radios confiscated. All cars were confiscated, but the radios were after six months, so completely isolated at that point. But I found out after the war that most people had radios, and I also found out that in our house, we didn't have one, we had dozens. Because my father used to make them.

You've heard of cat's whiskers radios. They call them cat's whiskers. In the old type houses on the ceilings there's a little rose, you know, where the wire comes through for your light. Well these little roses, they were called, well you can unscrew them, can't you? To get to these wires inside? My father used to make little radios in those with crystals, and I was always with my dad.

He couldn't go anywhere without I was hanging on somewhere, and I used to cry when he went to work. So whatever he did, I was always in on the act. I was sworn to secrecy (and it sounds awful of my dad) with lots of things concerning the war, and there's no way I would have told a soul. He would say, "Look now. Come, I'll show you how I made this, but you must never ever tell anybody."

He used to get lead, and he used to pile this lead into very fine yellow sulfur stuff and mix it with the lead. I don't know if there was any other ingredient. I do remember those two, and he used to then put it in one of these plumbing things like a little connector of some sort. Galvanized thing with a stopper at each end like you would use for your plumbing. And he put this mixture in there. Then he used to put it in an open fire. Not in the house. Outside. And then, really keep the heat going.

Then, after a while, I don't know how long. No idea. Ten, fifteen minutes? When it got really hot, it would explode. I don't mean blow the house up, but it was a good bang. And then he'd let it cool, take the little nuts or end bits off. And inside was all this gray matter stuff in one solid lump, and he'd hit it gently with a hammer. Sometimes he's say, "That's a waste of time. Throw it all away." But another time he'd say, "This is a good lot." And you see all these little shiny crystals in it and just a minute little piece, that would be for the radio.

He used to be into amateur radioing. That was his hobby. There'd be lots of little wires and things. What they called the cat's whisker was just a little piece of wire, and you'd place it onto the crystal where it was shiny with headphones, and you'd hear, "This is the BBC Home Service. Here's the news."

And he made hundreds of those during the war, and he made a very elaborate one for himself about that long, and he'd have different little wires say six or seven little wires, along on a little crocodile tip, a steel clip of course with wires on it, and he could click on that one [wire], and he'd get the BBC Home Service as it was called. Click on another one, and it was say, "BBC Radio One," and another one, "BBC Light Program." But that wasn't to listen to music. That was to listen to the Big Ben Nine o'Clock News.

Near my school, there was a man, and he did have a radio shop before the war. He sold radios and I'd go off to school early with a little satchel on. That was my secret as well. "You go straight to Mr. Medicroft's

house,” [dad would say.] It was early, reasonably early. There were no other children on the way to school then. I was to traipse up—it was about half a mile away from the house. I’d go with this little backpack, as you call it, with eight, nine, or twelve of these little radios in. And I remember knocking at the door and a lady poking her head through, and she shouted out. “Ted, it’s George Davis’s daughter!” And this man popped up from behind the sofa. “I’ll be with you,” he said.

Well, I thought it odd a man hiding behind a sofa, but he was listening, mostly probably, to the Eight o’Clock News. But my father said after the war, “Really, that was a terrible thing for me to do. To load a little nine-, ten-year-old with a satchel full of radios.” The Germans were wise to the radios with the little wires showing.

My father had loads of tools because he did a bit of plumbing, anything, he used to repair the wooden soles to our shoes with old bicycle tires. You know, lovely rubber pieces underneath. He did all sorts of things. He used to repair old pots and pans because during the war they’d wear out and leak. They were aluminum saucepans, and he’d sawder them, put new handles on them, anything. But not to make a living.

But I can remember one day a German—we were home from school, my two brothers and I—and I don’t think they realized about radios. But my father had in his shed this elaborate thing [radio] but covered with an old sack. This German soldier came to the door. He wanted a hammer or something. And you didn’t refuse them anything. If they wanted a hammer, they took it. But he said he’d bring it back. I said, “I’ll go and fetch it.” Well most likely I told him in German because we could speak German then. “Nein, I go. I go.” “No, I’ll go,” [he said.] And it was then that I let out to my brothers, “Dad’s got a radio on the bench.” And they came out, and as little as they were, they were talking to the German (We still had our rabbits then—maybe he took them!) saying, “Come and see my rabbits,” sort of thing.

I just panicked, and there was this radio all wired up, and I just ripped it out. My father didn’t mind. Well, he wasn’t too happy but he said, “No you did the right thing.” I ripped it out, and I had this thing behind my back. Well it was only about that big [six-seven inches]. And I had it behind my back, and he didn’t suspect anything. [The German] came in and looked around [the shed] and said, “Oh I find it, I find it. Thank you, and I’ll bring it back,” and off he went.

And I thought, *I wonder how long until he brings it back.* So between us, we dug a hole, and we put this radio [in it]. And my brothers couldn’t understand. They thought Sister had gone mad. But I said, “Dad doesn’t want them to know about it.” So I buried it in this hole, and when my father came home, I told him what had happened. He said, “You just ripped it out?” I said, “Well, I just pulled on it. I don’t know what happened.”

I told him where it was, and he dug up the hole, and he sort of dusted it off a bit and plugged it in, and it still worked. That was a near one, I mean, he definitely could have been arrested. Well, his friend was sent to France for having a radio. But he had a proper radio. He was sent to a prison camp for having a radio. He used to listen every day at one o’clock for the news. Several used to go to his house, maybe up to six people—friends and family. They’d all be hidden in a closet, under the stairs I supposed, but they’d all go there to listen to the news. Then one day at one o’clock, there was a rap on the door, and it was a couple of Germans *politzei* [police]. And off he went.

His wife didn’t see him again until after the war. He was the one that was saved [became a believer] about the same time as my dad. He wasn’t badly treated. Funny enough, I think he was better off than we were food-wise. But he found out after the war that it was one of the men that used to come listen to the news, a friend, a neighbor that reported him to the Germans and told them, “If you go to that house, today, tomorrow, whenever at one, you’ll find them all listening to the radio.” He made a point of not being there that day, and that’s how some of them were during the war. I don’t know if it was for food, or...it must have been. Because money was useless.

That bench of my dad's where that radio was, you could have gone there and there was money everywhere. People would pay him for repairing a pot or pan. Five Deutch Marks [DM] or the equivalent of fifty pence. Yeah, ten DM would be a dollar, if you like. And they would throw the ten DM or five, and wherever it landed was where it stayed. I mean, you could buy nothing with it.

When he was preaching, I would go with him and sing, and all these people in the churches would come up and say, "Oh we liked your singing little girl," you know, and they'd give me five D-marks or something to go in the pocket. I mean, that's a useless piece of paper. There wasn't a thing we could buy. So at the end of the war we were very wealthy people but it was worthless. It was money they'd [Nazi's] printed, so it wasn't worth anything.

Going back to the singing, I went with my father to—there were no cars, so wherever he was preaching we went on the bike.

I think the reason why parents did not discuss the war with their children was because we might have asked where they got all their information. I knew my father had a radio, I believe he just listened to music and some occasional boring chatter. We were not told that it was BBC news, which was the only interest. Although, I do remember a man who was called "Lord Haw Haw," a German who broadcasted all the propoganda, which blocked out British channels. I did hear him once. How? I do not know. He always started with the words, "Germany calling. Germany calling." I also remember the way he said it. "Jaaarmany calling. Jaaarmany calling." I think I must have had a sneaky moment at one time, for I am sure my father did not ever put earphones to my ears for me to hear.

APRIL: Your father preached?

RUTH: Yes, he was a local preacher. He would preach at different churches. Most Sundays, he was preaching somewhere, and both my brothers did as well. My younger brother still preaches now.

It was a little Baptist church, very small. He was preaching this Sunday evening, and this particular evening—Do you know the one "The raven, He feedeth and why should I fear? In tender compassion and wonderful love, the Father looks back"? Well, I sang that while starving-hungry, most probably, but the raven He feedeth, so why should I fear? I should think I was, let's see, ten.

And it was after the war that this lady, I don't know her, she said to my father, "Do you know when you were preaching about...?" He spoke on Elijah, you see, and the raven, and I think that's why I sang that because that was the topic during the war. "Not a sparrow falleth" and things like that. She said, "You remember the night you came, and you spoke about Elijah and the raven?"

"Oh yes, I remember that," he said.

And she said, "Well I was saved that night."

"Oh, that's wonderful! What actually did I say that really convicted you?"

"Nothing."

"You were under conviction before you came?"

"No, it's when I heard your little girl singing 'the raven He feedeth'."

It'll make me cry.

"Then why should I fear?" the lady said, "knowing we had nothing to eat, but this little girl had sufficient trust. He feeds the ravens, He'll feed us. When I got home, I knew I was lost. I thought, *Well if a little girl like that can have sufficient trust to sing that, well I want some of it.*" So that was it.

As I said, I don't remember who the lady was or anything. This was quite a while after. Mostly he didn't preach for a while, and there weren't many telephones then, so she couldn't have phoned or said anything, no. I do know this about her, she used to play the organ in the church, yet she'd never been saved.

That's one soul. Anybody who says that singing never—it doesn't save them obviously—but that singing never convicts, well it does. I can prove it. Some will say, "Oh singing will never get anybody to heaven. It doesn't get them to heaven, but the words can make people think, *Oh dear, I haven't got that assurance*. Do you know what I mean?"

APRIL: Did you live in the country?

RUTH: It was out of the town, but it's such a small island. There was no traffic during the war. No cars. Only the essential, doctors and such.

APRIL: So you just walked or rode bicycles?

RUTH: [By the end] we didn't have bicycles. We walked everywhere, and I can't think, I've tried to think, when the war ended, on the news, Winston Churchill said—Of course, everybody had their radios, nobody was supposed to have them, but the day the war ended, they all came out—real ones. I remember this. He said that the war is over and then he said, "And our dear Channel Islands will be freed today." Well, we weren't freed on the eighth, but on the ninth. All these boats came in with the troops and mainly Royal Engineers. There were some Americans. I don't know what they called them, maybe MTV's or something, but they were boats that came in, but they had wheels on them.

Well quite a few of those came in. Not the main harbor but the little "old harbors" as we called them. And the tide would be in, but then there would be this boat floating, and the troops were there throwing bars of chocolates and sweets and most of them landed in the water, and that was pitiful. I can remember them throwing cigarettes and gum. Some of them did land, but as the tide went out, suddenly they had wheels on them. They just wheeled off and came up.

I don't know what they were there for. They weren't there to bring food. They weren't big enough for that. So I don't know what part they played. This was May ninth, our Liberation Day. The Royal Engineers came in to clear the beaches because they were all heavily mined. All the coast was mined. I can't think how we got into town. Four miles maybe, but we must have walked and thought nothing of it. This is some other instance.

The war ended May the eighth, that was a Tuesday. I remember all these things. I'll tell you why. We were liberated on Wednesday, May the ninth 1945, but we had at six on Tuesday what we called a children's service. The lady who took us, to me, she was not ancient, but getting on. Now I think back, she wasn't getting on at all. She may have been fifty. To me she was old. I'd love to meet her. I wish she could come back because wouldn't I thank her for what she taught us. If any woman is going to have stars in her crown, it's that lady. She was so good.

But come May eighth, Tuesday, everyone was up into the town.

They found the Union Jacks flying everywhere. I don't know where they came from, even though the Germans said, "No flags until you've been liberated." Everybody did.

We wanted to go off into town, and my father said, "There's service at six. Go into the service, and we'll take you in after."

"Dad! It's liberation!"

"I think you owe it to God to give thanks. Don't forget Him now. You just go, I'm sure she won't keep you long. You go and give thanks for what God has done for us."

So we went to the service. I don't know what we spoke about, but we were the only three there. But it just shows how people soon forgot—what *we* would have done, if my mother and father hadn't said "No,

come on, you can celebrate after, but you go and give thanks.” And the teacher was there waiting. That’s something else I’d tell her. I’ve never forgotten that. She was there. That was when the war ended.

My brother was blown up with a mine. If he hadn’t been blown up, they’d have all been drowned for sure, so my father reckons that was Divine intervention that they were blown up. There was only one seriously injured. They all had shrapnel. They were coming home from school and walking on the headland, not straight home. They were where they shouldn’t have been, coming the long way home, along the coast and then farther down on the sea. It wasn’t cliff, but rocks and the beach down there, and they spotted a dinghy, a little rubber dinghy. So they decided— One of them was only eight. My brother was ten. They decided that if this dinghy had oars, that they’d all get in it, six of them, and they’d row home. Come home by sea.

APRIL: Go around the coast?

RUTH: Yeah, it wasn’t very far. Half a mile, at most. Very rocky with all these little inlets. My father said they wouldn’t have made it. There wasn’t a gale, but a high wind blowing. Big waves, so they would have drowned for sure. I don’t know if they could swim.

Anyway, they went to this dinghy, and there were oars there, so that was it. They decided, or so my brother told it, that they’d have a little rest first before starting on their trip. They all got into this dinghy to sit down, and it blew up. It had been booby trapped. It was mined, and somebody living nearby heard this loud explosion.

It was about teatime, I know, so it could have been anytime between five and six, and school finished at four. But my mother wasn’t worried. I don’t think mothers worried then. They knew you may go play on the beach before coming home, and you’re safe. Well, you didn’t play on the beach then, that’s for sure. She heard this explosion, and I can hear her saying, “Go and see if that’s them.”

And it seemed that in no time at all somebody ran to the door. I don’t know who it was and said there were six of them, and my brother was one of them that had been blown up with the mine. We thought they were all dead. Anyway, my brother had shrapnel in two parts of his arm and had two operations, and he always said that as if that wasn’t punishment enough that his bottom would be warmed because he had no business going down into the beach instead of going home from school.

But you do that don’t you? Your child runs across the road and you say, “Don’t you dare do that again!” Well I think my mother was the same. I mean she didn’t do it immediately because he was in hospital. I think it was when he came home, she warmed his bottom a little bit.

One of our cousins, he was the youngest. He ran home, and they still don’t know to this day how he got home so fast. As I say it was half a mile from the house, and they heard the explosion, and it seems as if he’d been blown there. You hear a big bang, and then here he comes. “We’ve been blown up!” He was okay, but they said they didn’t know how he got home so fast.

APRIL: Could you see the mines?

RUTH: On the beaches, there were lots of them. They were like criss-cross things. Made of steel and the mines were attached to that and you could see them all over the beach, but that was so the Brits wouldn’t come in with boats. That was why. Of course, we weren’t allowed on the beach, and we couldn’t swim or anything. When there was rough weather, and it brings up all the stones and sand, gradually there were these things that should have been taller were buried. They didn’t do anything about it so after the war, there were lots of. . . Well, the Royal Engineers had to look for a lot of them. They cleared away hundreds of thousands of ammunition and mines all over the place.

There were a few that came in, Air Force mainly. During the war, they were parachuted down, and then they climbed the cliffs. The ones that did come were locals. Their parents were there. They used to make their way to their parents' house. Wouldn't stay too, too long of course. There were two that were caught. They were deported, but they used to come, and they would get told of what was going on food-wise, but really, they were there to find out things like, "Don't land there because there's a big naval gun there."

But the whole island was fortified. I don't know how they managed to get out. They had a certain time limit. They [military] did allow them time to visit home. I think the ones they sent lived quite near where they landed. But the cliffs are a few hundred feet. And they climbed these cliffs, and they still don't know why they weren't blown up because the cliff paths were all mined.

I remember another time when a man and his wife came to visit us, and my mother introduced him as "cousin" something. Cousin Bert it was. I didn't know of him. He was chatting for quite a while, and he brought lots of toys. Boys' toys, so I played with cars for year. It was nice of him. His two boys had evacuated, so he didn't need them. It was only after the war that my mother knew why. The whole family, the eight of them, had escaped on a boat the next day. Left the island in the dark, and we did get news some while later that they'd landed, but the Brits kept them in custody a little while to make sure they were genuine.

I think there were eight of them. That was another thing that we were told after. They were shot at, at one point, sort of ten to fifteen miles off the coast. They came under some kind of small fire, and I suppose the Germans thought, *We're not wasting any more ammunition. You won't reach there.* But they did. All around the coast it [the water] was heavily mined, but they got through. You see, he was a fisherman. They were allowed to fish, but they had to take a German soldier with them [when they fished]. That was to make sure he came back. I never found out what happened to the German soldier that was with them. I've got a feeling he went overboard. I don't know. Maybe he wanted to go to England with them. Might have been.

APRIL: Was it normal for a whole family to go out fishing? Wouldn't the German have been suspicious?

RUTH: No, I think they were picked up off the north coast somewhere. Unless the German trusted them, said, "I'm not coming out fishing at one in the morning." He may have said that, and he may have been with them lots of times every day. It had to be early [on in the war] because they didn't allow the people to do these things long.

They used to go out at night some men. My father went once, and then he said, "No, it's [the strain and fear] not fair on the family." I know he went once. There was a curfew, and as soon as sabotage had happened, instead of the curfew being at ten, they'd make it at nine. And if it was summertime, they'd make it at eight. We were on double summertime, so it was light until eleven, nearly midnight. So when they put a curfew at eight, that's bad! You went to bed, and you were shut in the house with the sun shining.

But I know on one occasion my dad was in on this and a few others. They went and cut the German phone cables, and that was their connection to France, you see. After curfew and in the night, they went and cut these cables. [Then the newspaper] headlines said, "all communications have been severed by somebody," and that they'd find out who did it, and once they had the culprit, they'd be shot and their family. That was always their threat. No matter what happened, you'd see in the paper next day. "Anybody found doing this will be shot."

APRIL: Did it ever happened?

RUTH: I don't think so. I think it was more a threat than anything else, but of course, if you were caught you were on the next boat, like my dad's friend, to a prison in France or else some concentration camp. But

this sabotage stuff, I don't think they caught many people. There were all these fields, not big ones like we have here, but every field had big black railway sleepers. They'd stick them straight up in the ground. And all the fields were full of these sleepers and that was to stop any planes landing or helicopters. I mean they were terrified of anything. I think they thought the Brits were pretty clever. They'd think of everything.

When food was really scarce, and we were still allowed on the beaches, we used to go down, even as children, and we used to gather a sort of seaweed. It was called carrageen moss. It was greeny brown seaweed. And we'd take a pail or something down and fill it up, and then it was laid out on a table or cloth in the sun. We used to get a lot of sun there. And it would be left there to dry for a few days, but it wasn't to dry so much but to bleach it. And after a few days in the sun it would be pure white, and then it was washed, then it was boiled up with water. Then it would be boiled and all the moss was taken out through a strainer. And all this liquid when it cooled would be like jelly. And every mother used to put milk with it and make a sort of jelly. I don't know if it was sugar, but it was a sweetener that we used to get in bottles. I think it was almost pure saccharine. Some kind of sweetener. We'd put a teaspoon of that with it, and that was like a dessert. At first it tasted very seaweedy, but apparently, it was something that kept the children very healthy. It was full of iodine. Seaweed, you know, is full of iodine, so by being boiled and milk added to it, it was very diluted then, but it was just sufficient iodine to keep us healthy. It also provided iron, healthy blood. And that went on until, I don't know, three years before the war ended. When they mined all the beaches, and we couldn't go.

APRIL: Why did it take them so long to mine the beaches?

RUTH: Well, I think they thought, there's nobody here. The natives are quite friendly, and then I think when the when they [the Allied Forces] started advancing into France that was getting a bit too close for comfort, and it was then they really went to town on all these navel guns. They built these bunkers, these concrete and steel bunkers all around the coast. They're still there today. They couldn't blow them up. Explosives just made no impression. So that put us away from the carrageen moss. If they'd left even one beach open and put guards on it, if you like, that would have helped the children's health. I didn't like it at all, but when you're hungry, you eat anything, don't you?

My father was essential to the island because he was at all these greenhouses [that held] the main product, because they ran out of all the seeds, you see. If you ate all the product, you had no seed, did you?

They had beans, you know baked beans, little white beans. They'd plant them in the greenhouses, and most of them had beans towards the end of the war. They would let them dry. We weren't allowed to eat them fresh and green. They had to dry, and once they had dried, and the Germans kept their eye on them, then they'd go around to pick them. And the beans would go through a machine (thresher), the pods would go to one side, the beans to another into sacks. And different growers would tell my father, "We're threshing on Monday, if you'd like to come round. I'll make sure I put a drop of water in the fuel, so the engine will go pop-pop and stop." So my father will begin seeing to these fictitious engine problems.

There were always two Germans on guard because half of the beans went to the Germans and half to the public. But not to the grower. He couldn't have any. They all went into a pool and were distributed. So, of course, Germans would stand there and after a while, either one would pop out to have a cigarette, and the minute they were gone, my father used to— Because he came on a bicycle, you know, he had bicycle clips (cinched around the calves). He'd keep them on because the minute the Germans were out of sight, one of the men who was threshing would get a little sack full and drop it down his leg and down the other leg and before they came back, "The engine's ok now," and off he'd go on his cycle with both legs full of beans!

Behind the sofa in one of our rooms was quite a big sack that was full of beans. And this happened regularly, and my mother would boil them. No fat, no nothing. She'd put them to soak first and boil them.

And that was our meal. Our main meal. Just a plate of these beans, boiled, and the next day we never asked, “What’s for lunch, or what’s for dinner?” because we knew it was a plate of beans. And Wednesday, beans. And Thursday beans, and we ate like that for maybe more than a year. Nothing but beans.

I don’t think we suffered too much. My mother couldn’t eat them in the end. And baked beans after the war. I mean we loved baked beans. They were lovely on toast, but my mother wouldn’t. Just watching us eat them, she’d have to go out.

We had a curfew, so our Sunday service, obviously, couldn’t be held at 6:30, and in the winter they couldn’t because the electricity, gas, and all that used to get shut off sometimes at seven in the evening. So we had a service at four in the afternoon, and we could invite the French people and the Algerians because they spoke French. There was no shortage of Bibles or books. So we did have some of the French labor force, but we didn’t see any souls saved, but I think the reason most of them came was they were in shelter.

We used to meet at different houses. Every week it would be somewhere different. It was always where somebody had an organ or a piano because we used to sing. We used to pray and relate different instances of what had happened, or what people had eaten that week or hadn’t eaten. We used to call them “squash night,” and we called them that because the rooms were small, and we may be fifteen of us. The children on the floor, but I used to be playing the piano or the organ anyway, as young as I was, I played.

There were some we never failed to sing. We started with this one and ended with that one. And one of them was a chorus. \*sings\* “Trust in the Lord and don’t despair, He is a friend so true. No matter what your troubles are, Jesus will see you through. Sing when the day is bright, sing through the darkest night. Every day all the day, let us sing, sing, sing.”

We used to sing that one every week. My mother’s favorite hymns from the war years: “He Leadeth Me” and... \*sings\* “I know the Lord will make a way for me. If I trust and never doubt, He will surely bring us out. I know the Lord will make a way for me.”

We used to sing, \*sings\* “Be not dismayed, God will take care of you. Beneath His wings of love abide, All you may need will He provide. Nothing you ask for will He deny.”

“Savior Like a Shepherd Lead Us. In the pleasant pasture feed us.”

“All the way my Savior leads me.”

And “Guide Me O Thou Great Jehovah.” We sang that one every week.

“In Shady Green Pastures, God Leads Us Along” and then another one “Nearer still nearer, close to Thy heart. Draw me my savior how precious thou art.”

They were ones we sang regularly, and apart from “God Leads Us” most of them were asking for food! Feed us! Provide! He did, I suppose.

I thought of another thing about a lady who lived near us. They used to run a soup kitchen three times a week more or less at the start of the war. Then, there was nothing to cook! So we had this vegetable soup. Nothing in it except vegetables. And the lady who was in charge, she came around one Sunday and asked would my two brothers and I, would we go and clean up some potatoes. They were growing little shoots. She wanted us to take all these little shoots off to ready them to be peeled for the soup on Monday. And she promised that we’d have a cracker biscuit, one each if we did it well. That was incentive enough!

My father said he cried when we came home because he was more interested in us having some food than what the job entailed. It was very, very cold, and we were in a barn, and there was this huge load of potatoes, and some of them were rotten. We sort of go to pick them up, and “Oh!” We’d have to throw them out. And in the end our little fingers, I may have been eleven, which would have put my brother at nine, and there we were in this big barn, freezing cold, and after a while, our little fingers, good heavens!

But all we thought about were these biscuits. Well, we did what we could, then we went to get these cracker biscuits, fairly thin. Our mother took it off us, and oh, we’d be longing to eat it! She soaked it in water and of course it doubled in size and I thought, this is what Jesus must have done when he fed the five

thousand. He put all the bread in water! But that's what I thought at the time. And this biscuit would swell up, and my mother would put it on a toasting fork and toast it. It was another way God provided.

I thought of the soap we had. I can't think for one minute how my mother managed to keep our clothes so clean because we didn't have anything to wash laundry in, and even the soap we used for washing ourselves, it came from France, and I think it might have originated in the dead sea because it was gray mud, and when you put it on your hands, it was rough, like gritty. It had a lovely perfume, I remember that, but it was like washing with some dirty mud, I suppose. It didn't lather at all, and if you washed your hands in it, there was all this sediment in the bottom, so it didn't dissolve or anything. We didn't use it on our face because it would make our face quite sore.

There used to be larger tablets of the soap, same stuff, and that was for washing clothes, but I don't think my mother ever used it. People used to remark how clean and tidy we always looked, and I can't think how she could keep whites looking white. I know she took a lot of time. She'd still be there when we came home from school, you know, from the morning.

There's one little prayer I used to pray. "Keep us safe, and give us our food, and free us." My father told me about this one. I don't remember. He said it was a regular prayer of mine. We'd be telling God we were very hungry and to please send us something to eat.

There was an old man. I think he was around ninety at the time. He looked one-hundred and ninety to me. He used to shave his head. He used to sit in the second row at the service, and we would always be in the third one. I'd say to myself, "Look at this man. I wish he had some hair." And it worried me.

My father says that one night I prayed, "Please God, give Mr. Stephens some hair." And then soon, I saw he had hair growing! He had all these little scratchy things, and I thanked God for answering my prayer. I'm sure he had a full head [and was shaving it]. And then I changed my prayer from "give him hair" to "give him some curls." I said every night, "Please, give Mr. Stephens some curly hair." He never did. The old man died, eventually, but at least he had hair. All over too. White. I should imagine my dad told him about my prayer. Because I found a photograph of him, oh, a little while back when David came here. I could see hair.

A lot of the schools were evacuated, and all the schools were taken over by the Germans, so we had classrooms, like it might be this house \*indicates her own house,\* and I'd be the only one [living] here, and they'd say, "Oh, she doesn't need all those rooms." So they'd make a classroom in a couple of spare bedrooms, and they took over many big houses. Our school was split up between four different buildings, and then, eventually, the grammar school, which was a fee-paying school, they closed completely. Then they thought it would be nice for children of ability to have a chance to go to a grammar school, or high school, and they had exams, and I won a scholarship. I prayed a lot about that.

In 1942, when the food crisis was really beginning to hit, we had one teacher called Ms. XXX. And the children really made fun of her. She was painfully skinny through starvation. She was straight up and down, and she wore the same jacket and skirt right through the war. It gradually hung looser and looser. You could see all her bones. I used to feel so sorry for her, but they nicknamed her The Weed. They thought it was very funny, but I couldn't laugh at things like that. Like people's infirmities. I'd cry!

And told my dad about this teacher, and I said, "She's ever so kind, and they make fun of her. To her face. She's so thin. I don't think she's got anything to eat." My father filled up a bag of beans and said, "Take this to your teacher, and she may say *no*, but if you need to, tell her, 'Because we're Christians, and we like to share whatever God gives us. Jesus was hungry, and nobody gave him anything to eat.'" And he put a couple of [gospel] tracts in it.

She never passed any comment about the tracts or anything, but she wrote a little note and thanked my father for the thinking about her. She felt certain we needed it, and so it was appreciated more. We never heard that she showed any interest in spiritual things, but we don't know.

Right near us there was a hotel called the XXX Hotel. The Germans took that over. There was quite a large ball room on one side. And they called that the *soldatenheim* [soldier's home]. Where social functions were to take place. They went there for their rations. Say, at six every evening they were there, and it was always soup, and we used to go around there and wait for them to come out once they were finished. And they used to go back for seconds, and they gave them to us. Usually soup in their little cans. We could take it home, but we had to make sure we took their tins back nicely washed.

There was always one German that I'd take a fancy to, and he'd take a fancy to me. And another German would like my little brother. You know how you can have your favorites. Soon's as I'd see "my German" as I called him, he'd come out with my soup. But there was one if we saw him— He was a big guy. He didn't look war-thin at all. A big German with these sort of breeches. And he'd come out and say "[unidentified German]" And we'd run away. But one evening, we were there, and he said, "Come! Kommen sie hier." So he said, "Soup? Ja? Soup? For *Vater* (father)?" We took it home to my dad, you see. We didn't eat it.

So the German came out with this tin full of this soup. It had a lot of barley and noodles in it, and as far as I was concerned, it was quite nice. Had chicken in it. Good soup. He handed it to me, and when I went to take it, he said, "Nein!" and I thought, *You're going to tantalize us.* Anyway, my little brother, he had a mass of curls. White curly hair and the German handed it to him, and as he went to take it away, the German spat in it. Really spat in it. And then "[unidentified German]"

I think it was his way of saying, "You won't come round here again." All the others were fine. Anyway, we ran home with this, and I can remember thinking, *I'm not going to give you your meal can back. You come and get it!* So I ran home with it, and my dad was there. He was always waiting for this soup. It's all he had I think, often.

"Don't eat it dad!" I said. "The German spat in it!" He didn't care. He was still going to eat it, and we said, "Oh, please, dad. He really spat in it!" And he said, "I'll ask the Lord to bless it to my body," and he ate it. I couldn't have done it.

But that was one of the Germans. Sometimes, it wasn't soup, and they'd come out with thick slices of rye bread, and I think sometimes, it wasn't too fresh. It was dry and, sometimes, it was very sour. I like rye bread, but this was really sour. And they'd put this thick honey on it, and I'd eat part of the bread, but take most of it home to my dad, but as strange as it may seem, I didn't like honey. It was too sweet to me. I mean, we didn't know what sugar was, I suppose. I tried some, but I couldn't eat it. So my dad had the honey, and I had the bread, and then they'd give us another can sometimes.

Tea. I knew my mother was always on about, "Oh, I'm longing for a cup of tea!" and when this German said, "Tea," oh, my little legs took me up the road. It was only two minutes away. I said, "I've got some tea for you, Mom." Oh, she was so looking forward to it, but it was mint tea. It wasn't the ordinary British tea. I got to like that, and I suppose it was good for our stomachs as well.

We used to pray most days in the morning but mainly at night before we went to bed. They always prayed with us. And we always prayed that the German would have lots of food for us the next day, and it was very rare we didn't have any. Most days, we had the soup or the bread and honey or the mint tea.

They were these OT's the *organisation todt* They were dressed in a kaki or a light brown sort of— And they had German swastika arm bands and across here it said, "Organisation Todt" and "Gott mit Uns" on the belt, and they had top boots that came up to here \*below knees,\* very shiny boots. But we found out they were very intelligent men, all of them. They weren't fit to serve. They all had illnesses of some sort. A lot of them were architects and engineers. They were used to design the reinforcements around the island. That's why they were well fed and had nice accommodations.

And one of them gave me an orange. It was one of them. And generally, they were gentleman, apart from this one that spat, but they were real nice people, and they came right at the start of the war, maybe

within three, four months. The first ones that came, the army, the Green Germans as we called them, some were okay, but generally, we didn't have anything to do with them. They also shipped over a boatload of Hitler Youths. They were the most awful! Now I think back, they were only children. Some of them were only fifteen, sixteen, and they were awful! As we passed them as little children, there'd be two or three of them coming up the road, and they'd put their hands out like this to stop us passing.

One would grab the hair or something, and then they'd pull on our ears call us "English pigs" and "swine." And if they caught hold of us— And usually they caught hold of my brother. He was very little. The one that was blown up in the mine. I know I weighed six stone [84 pounds]... When I think back, they were only boys ranged from fourteen to seventeen, but they'd catch hold of my little brother and wouldn't let him go, and I'd scream and cry, of course. And when I did, they'd pull on my hair or something, but it was because they'd had my little brother. He was only four or five years old, and I don't remember him crying, but I certainly would.

And they'd grab hold and wouldn't let go until he did what they told him. They'd make him stand up straight, click his heels—of course, we didn't have any shoes on—and we'd have to do the "heil Hitler," and that was good enough. Real Nazis, they were. And I've often thought, *That's not in a child's mind to do that. They'd been trained.* Those Hitler Youth were trained straight out of school, I suppose. And they were big, and in Hitler's Army. We were terrified of them! They weren't there long, a couple of months maybe. I don't know if the German authorities said, "Well, there's no offensive here." They were living quite near where we lived. We were surrounded by Germans where we were. They seemed to take over all the empty property. The ones we were surrounded by were these OTs, and they were ok. We weren't afraid of them after a while.

I remember one of them calling us. It was always my little brother. He had a sweet little angelic face and little curls, and it wasn't cut like a boy really. And some of them would just ruffle his hair. He didn't like that.

There was one that used to call us in, and he always had the British news on, and he used to say, "You listen and tell Papa." If there was something about some bombing, he'd say, "You tell Papa." I didn't know there was a war raging. The war was with us. I found out something on the internet that I didn't know.

When all the English people were sent to the camp in France, it was retaliation for all the German troops that were imprisoned in Iran. When that happened, they asked if the British or Americans did it because they'd mentioned quite a few times, "Americans." They asked them to release the prisoners of war, and they didn't, so they said, "Right, we'll take one of the Channel Islands people for every six that you've got." They weren't interested if you were French or Spanish, just English because it was the English that did it.

APRIL: What would they do if they caught you out after curfew?

RUTH: Well, they always said you'd be shot, but nobody was shot. But you'd be sent to prison for maybe six weeks, but some would be go and not come back until after the war, or two years. You just never knew. When they were sent to Laufen, one of the internment camps—right next door behind the wire were all Americans, and later, somebody wrote in one of those papers, how kind the Americans were to those from the Channel Islands. They had been there a while, so they were getting their Red Cross rations whereas the Channel Islands had just arrived, so they had to wait a couple of months before they had anything, but the Americans shared theirs with those next door. It was touching.

There were German soldiers that came over year after year after the war for holiday. They said they were so happy here. Although those from the islands didn't fraternize with them they were still mutually

respected. Those ones who came looked up islanders to visit with them, and the islanders would be pleased to say, "We're friends now."

APRIL: You said you went to church. They didn't mind that? You had freedom that way?

RUTH: Yes, they printed that almost within a day or two of arriving. That they wouldn't interfere with any religious services except the Salvation Army who weren't allowed to meet. Because of the word "army."

My father was in the army, and when my sister was born, he was in the army. When I was born, he was out of the army. I was with him from day one, and I never left him. I was the apple of Dad's eye. I could do no wrong in his eyes, and it worked the other way around. I still think that to this day! My dad told me I had a very strong conscience. He always instilled in us even to the day he died "God sees you."

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Before reading *Lizzie and the Guernsey Gang* had you ever heard of Guernsey Island or its Nazi occupation? If not, why do you think that is?
2. How would you have felt if you'd been told you might be put on a boat and sent away from your parents? Would you have thought it an adventure, like Lizzie did, or would you have been worried?
3. Do you think it was reasonable for Lizzie to consider Phillip a collaborator or traitor? Why or why not?
4. Was Lizzie wrong to treat Phillip the way she did? How would you have behaved?
5. Imagine for a moment known criminals walked into your church. How do you feel inside? What are people around you doing and saying? Will the criminals be welcomed?
6. Sometimes those who don't know God behave better than those who do. Why is that?
7. Do you think God was with the Nazis? Why do you think they wore "Gott mitt uns" on their belts?
8. Which character in the story was your favorite? Which was your least favorite? Why?
9. Did the story end the way you'd hoped? Why or why not?
10. If you could ask Ms. Ruth a question, what would it be?

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



April W Gardner lives in Texas with her computer nerd husband and her two German Shepherds. The Gardners enjoy watching nature shows, visiting national parks, and eating popcorn and chocolate during family movies. April is also the author of inspirational historical romance series for moms.

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