

The 1940 Jersey census

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It is well known that the population of Jersey fell substantially during the War, largely as a result of people leaving the Island immediately before the German Occupation. Headline figures from a 1940 Census carried out by order of the German command showed a fall of around 10,000 – about 20% of the mid-1939 estimate of 51,080. Jersey Heritage has begun the process of digitising the Bailiff's Occupation and Liberation files which form part of Jersey's Occupation Collections. These include detailed results from the [1940 census](#) available for the first time.

Previous analyses

Until now the most authoritative analysis of the Wartime position was in the report on the 1951 census (Census, 1951, p. xi.)-

In the latter half of 1939 many men left the Islands to join the Forces. In Jersey, these were estimated, on the basis of the reduction in the numbers registered for Social Insurance, at about 2,000 by April 1940. Later that year came the German occupation following largescale evacuations to the United Kingdom, the size of this movement being apparent from the figures given by the count of the civilian population made after the German Military Authorities had installed themselves. This count indicated that the overall reductions between mid-1939 and the latter part of 1940 were about 10,000 persons for Jersey and double that number for Guernsey. In the occupation period itself, 1940 to 1944, there was a steady reduction in the population of the islands due to the excess of deaths over births and deportations to the continent by the Germans. After the liberation the increase in population was rapid. At mid-1945 the population of Jersey was estimated at 45,000 and that of Guernsey at 25,500 representing rises of 1,000 and 3,000 respectively since mid-1944. In the next 12 months the increases were 9,700 and 12,500 respectively. Both islands continued to gain rapidly in population until 1948, and in Jersey the population surpassed its pre-war numbers before mid-1947. (Census, 1951, p. xi.)

Platt (2009, P.114) estimates that “only some 6-7,000 left the Island immediately before the occupation”, and he contrasted the position between “Guernsey (half empty) and Jersey (two thirds full”. Cruickshank (1975, P. 42) said that 23,000 people registered to be evacuated by the number who left was under 10,000. Subsequently (P.59) he said that “Only 6,600 out of 50,000 left Jersey, but 17,000 out of 42,000 left Guernsey”. Both Cruickshank and Platt attributed the relatively small evacuation from Jersey to the firm leadership by the Bailiff, Alexander Coutanche, and other island leaders to publicly committed to staying.

The census covered only the civilian population. There were of course also German troops – a peak of 16,000 in 1944 - and slave labourers.

The 1940 Census

The Census was carried out by the Department of Labour following an order by the occupying forces and was conducted on 10 August 1940. Because of the Occupation, unlike other censuses there were no complications caused by visitors to the Island and Jersey residents being temporarily out of the Island.

The headline figure was that the population in August 1940 was 41,101, a reduction of 9,979 (19%) on the mid-1939 figure of 51,080. The number of males was 18,766, a reduction of 5,190 (21%) and the number of females was 22,335, a reduction of 4,789 (17%).

There is no parish breakdown of the 1939 figure. However there is a parish breakdown in the 1940 Census, which can be compared with the figures in the 1931 Census. Table 1 shows the position.

Table 1 Population of Jersey by parish, 1931 and 1940

PARISH	1931		1940		CHANGE 1940/1931
	Population	% of total	Population	% of Total	
GROUVILLE	2422	4.99	2178	5.30	-244
ST BRELADE	3823	7.88	2288	5.57	-1535
ST CLEMENT	2506	5.17	2968	7.22	462
ST HELIER	22986	47.40	16738	40.72	-6248
ST JOHN	1455	3.00	1340	3.26	-115
ST LAWRENCE	2057	4.24	2145	5.22	88
ST MARTIN	2281	4.70	1911	4.65	-370
ST MARY	800	1.65	856	2.08	56
ST OUEN	1898	3.91	1836	4.47	-62
ST PETER	2192	4.52	1886	4.59	-306
ST SAVIOUR	4292	8.85	4454	10.84	162
TRINITY	1777	3.66	1709	4.16	-68
OTHER			798	1.94	
TOTAL	48489	100.00	41101	100.00	-7382

Notes

1. The 798 figure for other in 1940 is the number given for people in institutions in the country parishes. The equivalent St Helier figure of 1,335 is included in the St Helier figure.
2. The 1931 figures exclude visitors so as to make them more compatible with the 1940 figures. The "headline" population figure in 1931, including visitors, was 50,262
3. The total figure for the 1940 population is six fewer than the addition of the parish figures. This is because the key table is missing from the full report and the parish figures are taken from the equivalent table in the preliminary report.

The most significant feature of the table is that the population reduction from 1931 was concentrated in just two parishes, St Helier and St Brelade. St Clement particularly and St Mary and St Lawrence recorded increases. However, it should be noted that the figures do not show the reduction as a result of the Occupation as there are no parish figures from the 1939 population estimate of 51,080. The figure suggests a 5% increase in the population

between 1931 and 1939, hence the reduction as a result of the Occupation being around 20% rather than 15% of the population.

The 1940 Census also recorded the age distribution of the population. This can be compared with the position in 1931. Table 2 shows the position.

Table 2 Age distribution of the population, 1931 and 1940

AGE	1931		1940		CHANGE
	Population	% of total	Population	% of total	% point
0-1	1481	2.9	1103	2.7	-0.3
2-9	6069	12.5	4694	11.4	-1.1
10-19	7617	14.7	5800	14.1	-1.6
20-29	7853	16.2	4689	11.4	-4.8
30-39	6982	14.4	5828	14.2	-0.2
40-59	12462	25.7	11006	26.8	1.1
60+	7968	16.4	7981	19.4	3.0
TOTAL	50432	100.0	41101	100.0	0.0

It would be reasonable to expect that the age distribution of the population would in normal circumstances change little in a nine year period. However, as the table shows there was a sharp fall in the share of the population in the 20-29 age group and an increase in the share of the population in the older age groups. There was also a fall in the male/female ratio, men accounting for 46.4% of the population in 1931 and 45.7% in 1940. This reflects not just pre-occupation evacuation but probably also young men joining the forces immediately after the outbreak of War.

Three other census were conducted during the Occupation – although only to give a total figure for the population. Table 3 shows the figures.

Table 3 Population change, 1940-44

August 1940	41,101	
December 1941	40,073	-1,028
January 1943	39,148	-925
October 1944	38,806	-342

The table shows a significant decline in the population, largely reflecting a sharp reduction in births, linked to the disproportionate decline in the population of the people in their 20s. The December 1941 Census recorded that since August 1940 there had been 1,684 deaths and just 656 births.

References

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