



Winter of Hunger

By late 1944 the Islanders and the occupying forces were close to starvation.

The Channel Islands were by-passed following the Allied invasion of Normandy in June 1944 and their last supply lines to France were cut off. Officials reported that there was only enough food, fuel and medicine to last until the end of November.

In December the situation became desperate. The average daily calorie intake was down to one-third of that on the mainland. People had become very weak and many were sick. The Germans had nearly run out of food to feed their own troops.

After complicated international negotiations a Swedish ship chartered by the Red Cross, the SS Vega, was allowed to bring in emergency supplies to the Islands. She arrived on 27th December 1944. Thousands of food parcels donated by Canada and New Zealand were delivered to Guernsey. The Germans were asked to distribute them because it was felt that their discipline would make looting less likely, even though they were not permitted to receive any parcels themselves.

The Vega made six more visits before the Channel Islands were liberated. Even so, it was not until February 1945 that Vega brought vital flour, by which time Guernsey had been without bread for three weeks.



The Swedish ship SS Vega chartered by the International Red Cross, arrives in St Peter Port on her first delivery, 27th December 1944.



German soldiers loading a train with Red Cross parcels at the harbour in January 1945.



Collecting Red Cross parcels.

