

## Name: Hedwig 'Hedy Bercu' Goldenberg

Born: 23 June 1919, Vienna, Austria

### Hedwig's Story

Hedwig Goldenberg was born in Vienna, Austria. Having fled Nazi persecution in her home country, she arrived in Jersey to work as a cook in November 1938, with a passport issued two months earlier in Vienna in the name of Hedwig Bercu-Goldenberg. Hedwig had another registration card, also issued in Vienna in May 1937, which stated she was a Romanian national, but this was in the name of Hedwig Goldenberg. This led to confusion over her nationality during the German occupation of the Channel Islands, which Hedwig exploited to say that she was not really Jewish.



Jersey was occupied by the German Army on 1 July 1940. Hedwig registered as a Jew under the First Order of the Regulations against the Jews and her registration card was marked with a red letter J. A note written by Clifford Orange, Chief Aliens Officer, on the bottom of her registration form stated that *"Miss Hedy Bercu has stated that she is an illegitimate child, and that she has never known who her father was – that her mother subsequently married a Romanian Jew – that her mother was originally Protestant, but adopted her husband's faith."*

During the German occupation, Hedwig found work as an interpreter for the German transport staff, despite her Jewish identity. In November 1943, Hedwig had faked her own suicide and gone into hiding in Jersey after being implicated in the smuggling of petrol coupons out from the German Transport department. The *Jersey Evening Post* published a notice on behalf of the German authorities asking for information about Hedwig's disappearance. It warned the people of Jersey that *"Anyone concealing Miss Bercu or aiding her in any other manner makes himself liable to punishment."* Despite these threats, Hedwig remained hidden. While she was in hiding, she was brought food by Kurt Rümmele, her German soldier boyfriend who she had been in a relationship with since 1942. She married him after the war.

On 14 May 1945, after the liberation of the Channel Islands, Hedwig reported to the Aliens Office in Jersey. She had been living in hiding for the past eighteen months with Jersey woman Dorothea Weber (née Le Brocq) in St Helier. Dorothea had married Austrian baker, Anton Weber, in 1941. He was drafted into the German army in 1942 and left Jersey in May 1943, although returned to the Island on leave while Hedwig was hiding in his house.

In 2016, Dorothea was honoured as Righteous Among the Nations by Yad Vashem. In 2018, she became a British Hero of the Holocaust.

### Things to discuss

- What is significant about the date November 1938? How might this be related to Hedy's decision to add Bercu to her true name of Goldenberg and her decision to leave Austria?
- Dorothea Weber took a great risk hiding Hedwig. What reasons might she have had to hide Hedwig? What problems might they both face in hiding her? Why does someone take such risks to help another? Why does Yad Vashem honour gentiles who hid Jews?
- How unusual do you think it was for Kurt Rümmele (and perhaps Anton Weber) to help Hedwig? What might have been the repercussions for them if they were found out?