

Name: John Max Finkelstein

Born: 12 March 1882, Galați, Romania

John's story:

John Max Finkelstein was a Romanian Jew, born on 12 March 1882. After working in Egypt as a government official on the state railways, he retired and first came to Jersey in 1931. After the Germans occupied the Channel Islands, he was among those who registered as a Jew.



In February 1943, the Germans deported Jews with British nationality to civilian internment camps alongside others from the Channel Islands, including former members of the British armed forces, people who had served time in prison, and some people from the island of Sark. John Finkelstein was among those deported from Jersey at this time even though he was not British.

At first, Finkelstein was sent to the civilian internment camp of Laufen on the German-Austrian border with the other deported men, joining those Islanders who had been deported in September 1942 for being English-born. After only a few days he was moved to a camp at Tittmoning and, a few months later, was transferred via other camps to Buchenwald concentration camp. Here, all of his possessions were taken away and he was interned in '*conditions of indescribable horror*', as he described it later. He was beaten regularly by the SS guards and most of his teeth were knocked out. After two and a half years, towards the end of the war, he was put on a cattle truck to Theresienstadt concentration camp, where he was liberated weighing just over 8 stone or 112 pounds – a loss of four and a half stone.

After hospital treatment, he returned to Jersey in January 1946. He successfully applied for naturalisation as a British citizen in 1948, and remained in Jersey. In the mid-1960s, aged 81, John Finkelstein successfully applied for compensation as a victim of Nazi persecution. His testimony is available to read here:

<https://www.frankfallaarchive.org/people/john-max-finkelstein/>

Things to discuss

- Finkelstein moved to Jersey in 1931 after his retirement. Why might he have decided to move here rather than back to his native Romania?
- Why did Finkelstein apply for British citizenship in 1948?
- Although Finkelstein's testimony is upsetting, why is it important that we study such documentary evidence?
- Finkelstein had a red 'J' on his registration card. He was deported for being Jewish. Why did the local government not protect Finkelstein from being deported?