

Name: Therese Steiner

Born: 24th February 1916, Vienna, Austria
Died: Date Unknown, Auschwitz-Birkenau



Therese's Story

Therese was born in Vienna, Austria where she lived with her parents and two brothers. Therese trained and qualified as a dental nurse in Vienna. To escape rising antisemitism in Austria and to gain more experience as a dental nurse, Therese moved to England to work for Dr Edgar Potts, a dentist from Kent.

Therese became a nanny for the Potts children and moved to the Island of Sark with them in 1939. Mr Potts returned to his dental practice in Kent in 1940, leaving Mrs Potts and their children and Therese in Sark, although they subsequently moved to Guernsey. As the German Army moved towards the Channel Islands, Mrs Potts and her children moved back to Britain. Unfortunately, Therese was not allowed to return to the UK with the family. As Therese had an Austrian passport, she was interned in Guernsey as an 'Enemy Alien' from 4 to 25 June 1940.

After Therese was released from internment, she began to work as a nurse at the Castel Hospital in Guernsey. The German Army occupied Guernsey on 30 June 1940. On 23 October 1940, under the First Order of the Regulations against the Jews of the Channel Islands, Therese registered with the authorities as a Jew. The following year, her identity card was marked with a red letter 'J'.

Therese was told that she was being deported by the Guernsey police in early April 1942. The Reverend Ord, a clergyman from Guernsey, spoke with Therese the night before her deportation and later noted in his diary "*When I last spoke to her she had orders to go to France. She was in great distress and seemed to feel that her feet were now set upon her Via Dolorosa. I did what I could to comfort her, but what can you say or do?*"

On 21 April 1942, Therese was deported to Laval in north western France, where she worked for a short period as a nurse. On 15 July 1942, Therese was arrested and imprisoned in the Grand Seminary of Angers until her deportation on 20 July to Auschwitz-Birkenau. She arrived in Auschwitz-Birkenau on 23 July 1942 and was murdered there.

Things to discuss

- What reasons did the British government have for interning people like Therese in June 1940?
- Via Dolorosa is Latin for "*way of grief*" or "*way of suffering*", and refers to the path that Jesus took carrying the cross on the way to his crucifixion. What did the Reverend Ord mean when he described Therese as feeling "*that her feet were now set upon her via Dolorosa*"? Do you think that Therese knew the fate that awaited her?
- While the Guernsey police did not physically deport Therese, they were involved in facilitating her deportation. Did they have a choice? What might have happened if the local authorities refused to let the local police be involved?