

Name: Frank Walter Falla

Born: 30 March 1911

Frank's Story

Frank Falla was born in Guernsey and is best known for his 1967 memoir *The Silent War*. Frank was a journalist and during the German Occupation of the Island he worked for *The Star* and the *Guernsey Evening Press* newspapers.



In June 1942, the Germans made listening to the BBC and owning a radio was an offence. They tried to confiscate all radios in the Channel Islands to stop people listening to the war news from London. Many people secretly kept a second radio or made a wireless crystal set.

Frank was one of five men involved in GUNS, the Guernsey Underground News Service. His friend, Charles Machon, was the ringleader. Frank would listen to the BBC on his hidden radio and type up the news. Other people involved included Joseph and Henrietta Gillingham, Ernest Legg and Cecil Duquemin, as well as Hubert Lanyon, who distributed the newsletter in the Island of Sark. Even the Bailiff of Guernsey, the Island's leader, received a daily copy.

In February 1944 the men were denounced, arrested and interrogated. Henrietta Gillingham was protected by her husband and so was not caught. The men were given heavy sentences and deported straight to Germany. Frank was deported in June 1944. Hubert Lanyon was fortunate to serve his shorter sentence in Guernsey Prison.

Frank was sent to Frankfurt and Naumburg prisons. Lice, starvation and violence from the prison guards was common at both, as was forced labour. Of the 15 Channel Islanders who experienced these two prisons, nine did not survive. Frank recorded their deaths; he was determined to survive to let the men's families know what happened to them. Frank was liberated, close to death, in April 1945.

Frank organized annual reunions for his friends in Guernsey who survived Nazi prisons. In the mid-1960s, he successfully fought for Channel Islanders deported to continental prisons for acts of resistance to receive compensation for Nazi persecution from the West German government. Frank kept records of this campaign and, when these were studied 35 years after his death, the clues left behind allowed the graves of his two GUNS friends who had died in Germany to be located. The Frank Falla Archive website about Channel Islander victims of Nazi persecution is named in his honour.

Things to discuss

- During his lifetime, Frank and those deported for acts of resistance were seen as 'troublemakers' and 'naughty boys who stepped out of line'. Why do you think this was?
- Why do you think that somebody denounced the men involved in GUNS? Do you think they realized the consequences of their actions?
- Should Frank Falla be considered a hero today? Why? What are the pros and cons of elevating the memory of a person in this way?