

**Name: Harold Le Druillenec**

**Born: 5 August 1911**

### **Harold's Story**

Harold Le Druillenec was born in Jersey and is best known for being the only British survivor of Bergen-Belsen concentration camp at its liberation.

Harold was a school master in Jersey during the German Occupation. His sister, Louisa Gould, whose son had been killed in the war, sheltered an escaped Russian slave worker for 18 months. She was informed upon by neighbours and arrested. Because Harold was complicit in sheltering Bill, and was also found to have a wireless set after radios had been confiscated in

June 1942, he was also arrested on 4 June 1944 and put in Jersey Prison. On 22 June he was given a 5 month sentence and deported at the end of that month with his sister.

Harold was sent first to France and then to Germany. Two months after leaving Jersey he entered Neuengamme concentration camp. He soon moved to a sub-camp called Alter Banter Weg, and here faced severe beatings as well as forced labour. Eventually he arrived at Bergen-Belsen concentration camp on 5 April 1945. His job here was to bury dead bodies. He worked for 11 days with no food, hardly any water and very little sleep. The camp was liberated by the British on 16 April 1945. Meanwhile, Louisa Gould had been killed in Ravensbrück concentration camp in February 1945.

Harold spent five months in hospital, followed by six months recuperating. He had septicemia, dysentery, skin diseases, fluid on the lungs, malnutrition, memory loss, and his mind was unbalanced. Despite this, in October 1945 he was travelled to Germany to testify in war crimes trials, and did so again in 1946 and 1947. In 1946, Harold narrated a drama documentary about Neuengamme and Belsen based on his own experiences. It was broadcast on the first anniversary of the liberation of Belsen.

Harold found his experiences in the camp so traumatic that he couldn't stop talking about it to his fellow teachers. In the mid-1950s he had a breakdown, but returned to teaching.

During his life, he was awarded the French Médaille de la Résistance. He was given a gold watch by the Russian government in 1966 for helping to shelter the Russian slave labourer. Harold died in 1985. In 2010 he and Louisa were honoured as British Heroes of the Holocaust.

### **Things to discuss**

- Harold suffered from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. Why do you think this was, and why did he have a breakdown ten years after the war rather than sooner?
- Harold testified at several war crimes trials. What was his motivation? What do you think the impact of this was on his mental health?
- Why was Harold given honours by the French and the Russians but not by the British until 25 years after his death? What does this say about how his acts were perceived locally?

