Podcast 112 : The Ballad of Lucie Schwob

{INTRO:
KIRA: I also got to see exactly what would happen if I'd've been, you know, remained a lovely, innocent, straight-A student. I got to live my parallel life today guys, it was really strange}

{intro music – jaunty, bouncy}

{Intro standard announcement:
Hello. Thank you for tuning in. You're listening to Travel Tales From Beyond The Brochure, a podcast looking at unfamiliar places across the world, and aspects of travelling you may never have thought of. I'm your host, The Barefoot Backpacker, a middle-aged Enby with a passion for offbeat travel, history, culture, and the 'why's behind travel itself. So join me as we venture ... beyond the brochure.}

{Music fades. Podcast begins}

Hello :)

This podcast is being recorded a week in advance, which might sound like something someone dosed out on Elvanse would say, but really it's because I'm quite busy in the first two weeks in February, flittering about to both ends of the country, and spending a couple of days in the Manchester office to take advantage of dentist appointments.

By 'ends of the country'; I'm in London on the first Monday in February at the AGM of the British Guild of Travel Writers, a fact I really should make more of and I know I say that every time I mention the BGTW, but, well, maybe with Elvanse I might actually have a chance. I'm working from my org's London office on the Tuesday, then I'm in Glasgow on the Thursday, partly because I have an opticians appointment – you may wonder why I didn't transfer my optician when I transferred my dentist and the reason is I didn't transfer my dentist; the last one I'd been registered at was in Sheffield in 2021. Whereas I like this optician and they have several years of eye history. That said, I'm not just going up for that, because that would be ridiculous; I'm also there for my wider organisation's in-person members meeting of the association for people who are non-binary or trans. I wouldn't normally, but it's being held in Glasgow this quarter and it fell quite nicely. My dentist appointments are the following week, the Tuesday and Wednesday, plus in the middle there's the Manchester area enby social meetup, so I'm not going to be at home much.

Look at me, socialising and stuff. 2026 is going to be that sort of year.

At the time of writing this pod, I've had the best part of a week on Elvanse, And it's ... it's actually been quite chill. Which may be the point. I haven't noticed any major side effects,; I am slightly aware of an increased heart rate, which I can't monitor precisely because it turns out I can't feel a pulse in my arm/elbow to position the blood pressure strap on my upper arm in the right place, and I'm obviously missing because it thinks I have a resting heart rate of 58. And that's *after* being on the pills for a couple of days. The main effect though is ... I feel 'calm'. Like, really calm. Which is weird for a stimulant, but it matches the memes, for sure. The first day I took it was Friday last week, so two weeks ago as of pod release date. I didn't otherwise feel any different to normal, at any point, but at work I wrote several e-mails and sorted out two pieces of work, both of which I'd been putting off for several months, as well as creating and filling in a spreadsheet tracking my workload, then at home I built the frame around my desk I'd bought in December, and recorded my last podcast episode. And then on the Tuesday after, I sat at my computer and realised ... I didn't feel overwhelmed. I had a lot to do, but I didn't feel like the best way of dealing with it was to do nothing because it would be too hard. I just ... did some of it. Before I started the medication, I was slightly concerned that it wouldn't do anything because, well, how can the brain work like that, surely if you were set in your ways and routines then nothing would shift that. Turns out, the brain is a weird blob of fat that's easily influenced. It's not a perfect journey, don't get me wrong, I'm certainly still forgetting things I've started, and I'm absolutely still dyspraxic, it's just that I'm now forgetting I've started things because I'm doing other stuff that needed doing and I'd otherwise procrastinate on. It took me two hours to start the washing machine today because I was busy doing stuff at work that I'd've never considered even starting because it looked too vague and hard. And as it turns out, it wasn't too vague and hard anyway.

I've not done any running of late though, which is going to be a big test, but that's because it's been relatively cold and damp in the hills so everything's been a bit miserable and icy. I'm conscious I'm the heaviest I've been for a while, and while Elvanse is supposed to be an appetite suppressant, and also I sometimes eat just so I'm doing something with my hands and mouth (because online hookup sites are a bust), and medication would help with that, but honestly, I'm not giving it a chance to. Mmm nachos with homemade cheese sauce.

The comedy course is going well, three weeks in. I have already one routine fleshed out, about hookup sites and asexuality, and I'll start working on a second about dyspraxia shortly. The mindmaps have been really useful, and so much potential content came out of the dyspraxia one, much more than other words I've zoned in on, so that's quite interesting. I am in danger of stereotyping myself, of course, but honestly, if I walk on stage and people see me, it might be very jarring if I started talking about, I don't know, Parkrun. Although honestly sometimes that jarring can itself be the source of humour,

I've had a couple of long chats with my VA this past week, about what I am and what I should concentrate on. I feel I need to be slightly less 'broad' in my content, so a couple of my YouTube niches might get cut – the beer notes and the outfit-of-the-day Shorts most probably. They're cool but they're quite different from much of the rest of my regular chaotic content and honesty it's hard to fit them in so it feels natural. I like beer but I'm not a beer blogger, and I'm quite ... I have a distinctive style, but equally, I couldn't be a dedicated fashion blogger, so it's not my space. V asked me to think about things I could do but which I also felt comfortable doing, Because if you're doing something because you feel you have to, even if it's something you can do easily, it's going to be obviously that you're not enjoying it as much as you could be, and that'll turn people off. She asked me what I liked doing best, and I came down on Storytelling, and this fits in with the way she sees me (which is primarily someone who makes history come to life and be interesting).

So, with that thought, here's a tale from history that feels quite pertinent right now.

{section separation jingle}

While it's true V thinks of me as a history storyteller, and while my academic background was in History – Social & Economic History, even, so a much more comfortable fit to my podcast and storytelling style than regular history – I'm not an expert, I'm not an academic, so anything I can talk about that's more than just my experiences will obviously be quite limited in both scope and analysis. Especially with a topic as widely-attested and written about as the German Occupation of the Channel Islands in World War Two. That said, it's not a part of the war even I studied at school (and I did an entire year at 'A'-Level on Germany and its expansion 1919-1945), so if it's all relatively new to me, I'm guessing it'll be even more so to most of you.

But let's start with some basics.
The Channel Islands are a series of small islands that lie just off the coast of Northern France, in a bay in the south of the English Channel. They have a current total population of just over 170,000 (slightly more than Oxford) and a total area of just under 200 km^2, about the same as Darlington, but since that's slightly niche even for Brits, let's say instead it's twice the size of Coventry. There's seven inhabited islands in the main archipelago (which doesn't include the Chausey Islands to the south, notable for being French), and a whole series of uninhabited islands, islets, and notable rocks. However the vast majority of people live on two: Jersey and Guernsey. These also form the two administrative blocs; they are both separate Crown Dependencies (the 'crown' in question here being the British monarchy) and Bailiwicks (places run by a Bailiff, which in this context means 'chief judge' and 'Speaker of Parliament'). An entire podcast could be made to explain what this actually means in a wider geopolitical context; this is not that podcast. Suffice to say they're British enough to be a domestic flight from Manchester, but not British enough so that citizens of them need work permits to work in the UK, a fact that irks my ex-flatmate whenever it comes up in her job. The UK look after their external affairs, but domestically they're largely independent. But not independent enough for travel blogger country counting purposes. Possibly. Your mileage may vary.

I went to the island of Jersey, the largest and most famous of the islands. And yes, the US state of New Jersey is named after it, seemingly because that land was colonised by the future King James II & VII and he named it in honour of the island being faithful to his brother Charles II (who indeed was nominally crowned King there in 1649). Later this year I intend to visit Guernsey (and at least one of Sark or Herm) and then I'll do an overall podcast on the islands, but for the purposes of this episode I want to talk specifically about the islands

in World War II, and how and why my visit prompted this as an episode.

You probably know already that the Channel Islands were noted as being the only part of the British Islands to be occupied by an enemy power in that war (although certainly not the only part of the British Empire to be), but you may not know how or why, nor that they were amongst the last places to be liberated at the end of it. I didn't know either, and it was really interesting to find out.

In late Spring 1940, the Germans invaded Northern Europe, and quickly defeated, well, pretty much everyone. Including the British, hence the famous 'Dunkirk Evacuation' of late May where we got the feck out of there as quick as we could. Now, if you look on a map of northern Europe, especially one showing the state of play in June 1940, you'll see just how close the Channel Islands were to the German forces, and therefore just how important and useful it would be to have a base so close to their territory. You may raise an eyebrow then to know the British government did not agree. In fact the feeling was the Channel Islands were, and I quote, "of no strategic importance" and would be demilitarised immediately. On 19 June a telegram from Whitehall stated, in clear terms, the "Channel Islands will not, repeat, not be defended against external invasion by sea or air". For once this doesn't seem to have been an idea from Winston Churchill. Arrangements were made to evacuate military personnel and any civilians that wanted to flee before the inevitable German invasion.

This seems to have confused the Germans, who sent a pre-invasion force to Guernsey on 30 June to test out the strength of the defences ... and found nobody there. The islands all surrendered to the Germans over the next five days with nary a shot fired.

By all accounts the actual occupation was relatively dull. Obviously life was hard, and got harder as the war went on, especially when the Germans started to lose momentum elsewhere in the war, when food and clothing, already rationed, became scarcer, and restrictions became harsher. Of course even from the start, freedoms were curtailed and German laws applied; the islands were effectively run from, and considered a part of, France (specifically the Manche department which covers the nearby western coast of the mainland), the timezone was changed to that of CET rather than GMT, and traffic was switched to right-hand drive – not that that made much of a difference since most motor vehicles had been confiscated from the general public soon after the invasion and people generally got around by well-worn bicycles. Other restrictions included limitations on where you could freely go around the islands – beaches were particularly off-limits for obvious reasons, which had the added effect of limiting fishing opportunities – and curbs were set on socialising opportunities, including curfews and limiting the number of people who could meet up at once to three. Other things that were confiscated or controlled were radios, cameras, and boats; that people still had them hidden meant there was of course friction between collaborators and conspirators.

The Germans also built labour camps across the islands, including at least four on the island of Alderney (which had been all-but abandoned in the pre-invasion evacuation). Alderney is 8 km^2, or, for Londoners, two-thirds the size of the Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea. I don't even know where you'd fit four labour camps there. Although some of the labourers were volunteers, many were volunteered, and two of the camps on Alderney were later turned into full-blown concentration camps.

Aside from the fortification tunnels that I'll mention later, the German defence of the Channel Islands included: 28 navy vessels, 13 infantry defence installations, 3 naval gun batteries, 34 anti-aircraft batteries, 16 coastal artillery batteries, 67,000 mines, and 1.2km of anti-tank ditches. Which is quite a lot for a place that small. It's weird that none of it was ever in fact needed.

But everyday life was ... well, everyday. Unlike in other parts of occupied Europe, there wasn't much in the way of upheaval. About the only issue that caused more than a murmur was the 1942 deportations to Germany of anyone not born in the Channel Islands – this mostly affected British citizens who'd moved there pre-war. Around 2,300 people were eventually deported, after much procrastination on behalf of both the public and the occupying German administration, and this was still maybe only a quarter of what German High Command had wanted and expected. Their departure was met with the singing of patriotic songs and a small amount of rioting.

Partly this was because there wasn't much in the way of active resistance. Obviously as a series of small islands, there was limited scope for much in the way of notable strikes against the regime. Norman Le Brocq, a young communist agitator and leader of one of the few resistance groups in the islands, said afterwards: "You couldn't

take to the mountains in Jersey with arms in hand. First we've got no mountains, and second, we had no arms.". His resistance was limited to mainly circulating anti-German propaganda and passing on news reports from the UK and the Soviet Union. People like Lucie Schwob and Suzanne Malherbe did similar, writing satirical poems on fliers and occasionally putting up posters and flying banners. Other forms of resistance common were along the lines of hiding escaped forced labourers, and painting 'V for Victory' type slogans over German signs. But in general, a combination of an occupying force who actively didn't push too hard, and an occupied people who tended towards a sense of passivism and letting things be as they were, meant that there was no armed resistance to the Germans, and no real desire to 'push the boat out' in that way.

The Allied invasion of France, D-Day, June 1944, didn't holistically change much on the islands, at least at first. There was a rising hope that the allies would pass by and pop in, given that the French coast is only like 22km from Jersey and 15km from Alderney, but they did not. They just marched through France and turned left towards Belgium, leaving the islands still German-occupied. This did lead to deteriorating conditions on the islands for both locals and the occupying forces; with supply routes to the mainland now unavailable, the islands were pretty much cut off from the rest of the world. Over the course of the rest of that year, the islands pretty much reached starvation level. A request by the Germans for aid, food, and civilian evacuation in August 1944 was rejected by Churchill who said "let 'em starve. No fighting. They can rot at their leisure". We assume he meant the German garrisons, in that his belief was any aid would be requisitioned by them before it reached the general public. But it's hard to tell. Churchill was that sort of person.

Eventually an arrangement was reached whereby the Red Cross, using the Swedish steamship SS Vega, would transfer aid packages through Lisbon to the islands, under the strict condition that the Germans were not to touch them and everything would be distributed to the general public. The first aid shipment arrived in late December 1944 with nearly 120,00 aid packages, and was the first of six – the latter arriving on Liberation Day in May 1945. There were reports of some German soldiers trying to break in to homes to pinch the food and resources that had been brought to the islands, but the authorities generally brought these soldiers to trial rather than turning a blind eye.

That said, the Germans kept a tight hold of the islands until the very end. Even as late as 3 March 1945, four days before the liberation of Cologne, so at a point when the Allies were very definitely on German territory, the Commanding Officer of the Channel Islands, Vice-Admiral Friedrich Hüffmeier, said "I have only one aim, to hold out until final victory". Surely, surely, he knew, surely that was just bluff and bluster. He did organise a successful raid on the French port of Granville a few days later to obtain supplies and rescue Prisoners Of War, but that's like scoring a last minute goal to cut the deficit to only 5-1.

Just as occupation was achieved without a shot, so was liberation. In fact the islands were liberated not by any kind of force, but by definition – they were included in the German instrument of surrender and announced to the world on 8 May by Churchill who said "our dear Channel Islands are also to be freed today", as if it wasn't his government who'd given them away in the first place. Actual liberation took a little while longer – the final island, Alderney, formally surrendered on 16 May. The islands were then run by the military to clean up, re-implement the previous bureaucracy, including reverting to GMT and left-hand-side driving, and sort out the financial affairs (because when your occupying power for five years suddenly ceases to exist, there's an awful lot of cash lying around that suddenly becomes worthless), until a full handover to civilian rule could be implemented on 25 August.

After the war there were recriminations and attempts at what would be termed in post_apartheid South Africa, amongst other places, 'Truth and Reconciliation Committees'. These included the mistrust between those who'd left and those who'd stayed – the former being deemed 'cowards' and the latter 'collaborators', both seeing the other as traitors. They also wanted to look at events surrounding the labour and concentration camps, and try to bring some kind of justice. However, it seems that people were just generally reluctant to talk about those years, 'for some reason', and almost nobody was prosecuted for any kind of war-related crime. This even extends to the people who ran the labour camps; since many of the forced workers there were taken from the Russian front, the Soviets took a keen interest in administering justice and the British deferred to them. The camps themselves became overgrown and forgotten; it's unclear where most of them were. The fortifications and tunnels were also often left to rot – some of them were used for things like growing mushrooms but for the most part they were sealed off and forgotten, many with armaments still inside. In effect, the whole of the war was kind of 'swept under the carpet' a bit; people like Norman le Brocq were openly criticised and blacklisted by employers for decades after the war ended because they didn't like to be

reminded how indifferent they all were to the Germans. It wasn't until the 1990s that people started feeling comfortable talking more openly about it in public discourse and it took until 2010 for people to start being acknowledged for their heroism and resistance efforts. It does mean things will never truly be known, like, how many people died in the camps, and indeed how many camps there even were, or how many children were born as a result of illicit liaisons between local women and German soldiers, or, of course, what proportion of the population collaborated.

All of this, and more, is detailed in a couple of museums I went to during my trip to Jersey. After the break I'll talk about the museums and why this entire podcast was a complete accident.

{section separation jingle}

Me: Hello :) It's time for a mid-episode break. Half time. Seventh Innings Stretch. That sort of thing. Put the kettle on. Grab a snack. Get comfortable. I'm just here to remind you ways in which you can get in touch and help this podcast out. You probably know this already, but in case you don't:

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Now, on with the show}

{section separation jingle}

My plan had been to visit Jersey just for a weekend – arrive on the Friday and leave on the Monday, and spend most of that time doing cheery things with Debbie, that included a Country Life museum and a mediaeval castle. I did toy with the idea of visiting the Jersey War Museum on the Friday but it's slightly awkward to get to from the Airport so I walked along the coast instead. Jersey very much has the feel of a seaside resort type place, but let me tell you, that water's bloody cold for paddling in December.

However, on Monday morning I had a text message telling me my flight back to Manchester had been cancelled, due to air traffic control restrictions at Manchester Airport that were limiting the number of flights inbound. Turns out this was both weather-related (excessive rain) and infrastructure-related (there was a hole in one of the runways). So I had an extra day in Jersey, and on my own as Debbie had headed back to Guernsey that morning too, so visiting the War Museum made perfect sense.

The museum, known as the Jersey War Tunnels, is set in one of several tunnels deep under the hills in the centre of Jersey. Although a small island and not terribly high, it is quite undulating and the slopes can be quite sharp, kind of if you ruffled a bedsheet with your up with your hands. These tunnels (Hohlgangsanlage – German for "cave system") were all built by the occupying Germans, as a means to defend it in the event of an Allied Invasion – it formed part of the famous "Atlantic Wall" that blocked most of Western and Northern Europe's shoreline. In Jersey, while over 35 tunnels were planned out, not many saw construction start, and only one had been finished by the time the war ended, though for the previous year the lack of raw materials and more urgent needs elsewhere had seen the project die a slow death anyway. The tunnels were built by a variety of workers including both locals and the German Army itself, though 40% of them were imported forced labourers, many from France, north Africa, and land occupied on the Russian front. They were designed primarily for storage of munitions and equipment out of reach of enemy bombs. The museum is located in one designed as Hohlgangsanlage 8, originally a munitions storage facility but converted towards the end of 1943 into a makeshift hospital complex that could catered for up to 500 casualties in the event of an attack. It's not the ideal location to have surgery, but needs must I guess, and it was certainly better than doing it on the surface. It was never completed and at points when you walk around it you can see where tunnels

were still being built when the war ended. One of these unfinished portals is now a commemoration to those who died in the war, with a series of candles lighting the dark.

There's a regular direct bus from the bus station in St Helier to just outside the museum complex, from where you walk slightly up a hill. The tunnel is off to the right, while the ticket desk, gift shop, and café is in a newer building straight ahead. Along the path into the building are a series of large red rusty-metallic boards with quotes from some of the main players of the period, the likes of UK Prime Minister Winston Churchill, the Bailiff of Jersey Alexander Coutanche, and Fortress Commander Friedrich Hüffmeier. The tunnels themselves cover a little over 1km of walking distance, at points they're almost 50m under the surface of the hill, and the temperature inside is kept to a standard 10ºC-15ºC. Which is a good temperature in both the height of summer and the greyness of December.

It took me just over an hour and a half to go round the museum, which makes it pretty expansive. You start by walking into the tunnel through a white stone portal with the hospital red cross above the arched entrance, and you immediately come across a jeep and a German jeep knock-off. The museum itself is pretty linear; there's generally only one way you can go at any point, although there are small rooms off the tunnels that hold most of the information. It's ordered chronologically, and starts off talking about the background to the invasion, and poses the whole philosophical question of 'should I escape while I can, to be safe, or do I have to stay and cope with whatever happens'. I'll talk a bit more about that towards the end of the pod.

There's then a section on 'first contact', on how the incoming Germans were received by the locals and how they interacted with each other. There's recorded messages from Germans (the exhibit is set up with a model of a German with a screen replacing their head, on which a real head talks. When V saw my video from it she said 'oh that's a bit dalek-y'), and they're talking about how they share hobbies and interests, and have children at home, and are people just like you and me; the locals generally weren't that interested at what was perceived as 'fake platitude' – the enemy is the enemy even when they're wielding ice creams, and there's tales of parents snatching sweets out of children's hands that had been given to them by passing soldiers.

After a little section going into the general implementation of German laws, and how each law pushed the jackboot down a little further, there's a whole section on daily life under the occupation – how the locals coped with an ever-reducing food ration (these days there'd be clickbait articles like 'You'd Never Believe What This St Brelade Woman Did With A Parsnip'; sadly, the answer was 'make fake coffee') and how they had to constantly repair and re-size clothing as they were unable to obtain new material.

This of course leads naturally on to exhibits about resistance, cooperation, and the lack of trust that developed between people. There's examples of people writing anonymous letters to the authorities complaining about how some people are obviously getting more food than they ought on the black market, or that the person in that house is clearly hiding someone of interest; one letter even says "Our neighbours are horrible, rude, and unhelpful. Perhaps a good telling-off by the authorities will remind them who the real enemy is". Another says along the lines of "My children are sick. You say you'll reward us if we inform you about people with a radio. Our neighbours have one. I don't want to diss on them but if you give us food they'll get better". So quite how much of this was genuine collaboration, how much was people taking advantage of the situation, and how much simply people going 'yeh he shagged my girlfriend in '35, this is my revenge' is unprovable. And relevant when discussions were had in the post-war reconciliation period. It also doesn't help when relations between locals and German soldiers become, shall we say, more than cordial, the exact extent of which is, as I intimated earlier, still hotly debated.

Examples of resistance are also talked about, including the aforementioned Lucie Schwob and Suzanne Malherbe, whose anti-German news-sheets and propaganda are on display. This resistance wasn't just limited to ordinary locals either – exhibits point out mail workers who handled the anonymous letters often steamed open any addressed to the commandant and passed on its contents to the affect people, before resealing the letters and holding onto them for an extra day to give time for people to clear out offending items or ensure anyone they were hiding could be moved to another safe house. And sometimes resistance was passive-aggressive; the museum gives the example of the Evening Post newspaper that, when faced with German propaganda, made a point of not correcting the Germans' English so it was obvious that the Germans had written it and was not the view of the newspaper.

On display is the small boat (about 2.6m long) that was used by one Denis Vilbert in what is believed to be the

only single-handed escape from Jersey during the occupation. It's also notable because he didn't have the easiest time doing it – his boat filled with water from the wash of a passing German boat, that ruined his food supply. His engine got flooded, literally. He dropped his spare engine in the water when trying to replace it. And after rowing or two days with virtually no food or water, he was picked up by the British, taken to England, and charged 10 shillings for import duties on his boat – about £21 in today's money according to the Bank of England's Inflation Calculator but probably more on-the-ground during wartime!

The last sections of the museum look at the final days of the occupation, how life was once the Allies had invaded France and the effects of that invasion had taken hold, and then how the end of the war and liberation was greeted by the people – complete with recordings of the victory parades. One of the really neat things the museum does here is, obviously because it's all in underground tunnels it's lit by artificial lighting, mainly in the ceiling. But in the exhibits that cover the occupation, the lighting is kept relatively dim. You don't notice that though, because it's an underground tunnel so you expect that. Except that when you reach the liberation section, everything's much brighter, the lights are stronger, and it very definitely presents a contrast.

I went to a couple of other museums that covered a bit about the Occupation times, albeit more in passing. The Jersey Museum, in the centre of St Helier, is in a quite grandiose Victorian House which was built, as the museum openly admits, off the profits of the trans-atlantic slave trade. A loophole in British legislation designed to prevent non-British companies using non-British vessels from profiting from this trade with the Americas, meant Jersey companies were able to make a great deal of money on the route between Jersey, Brazil, and Newfoundland. The house was later occupied by the French homeopathic doctor and critic of Napoleon III, Dr Charles Ginestet, who then fled back to France before the bank foreclosed on him due to mounting debts – much of the museum is a display of the house more-or-less how he and his family left it, just before it was all due to be auctioned off.

But the museum itself also covers a general history of Jersey, including exhibits on prehistoric landscape, the relationship the Channel Islands have with the British Crown (and, by inference, the United Kingdom), and a little bit on Lillie Langtry, actress and producer and 'it girl' of the late Victorian and early 20th Century periods, who was born and brought up in Jersey. The museum does not at any point though mention Bergerac, the TV detective series in the 1980s that's really my generation's only reference point for the island. Of course it also has a whole section about the occupation, including going into a bit more detail about how the island remembers it, and how that's changed over time. This is where you learn about Liberation Day celebrations tended to be more being about a holiday day rather than actual commemorations, that schoolchildren in the 1970s and 1980s weren't taught anything about it despite it happening within living memory, and how the 50th Anniversary was supposed to be the last but instead kickstarted a more introspective feel for it, leading to more people studying it in more depth, and more recognition of who suffered and who resisted, rather than just "oh this thing happened, anyway, let's play a football match'. It also goes into some detail about some of the people behind the limited resistance movement, the who and what and why.

The nearby Maritime Museum, aside from a child-friendly overview of Jersey's maritime history and culture, hosts the Occupation Tapestry. This is a series of originally 12 panels, each 2m x 1m, and each stitched by one of the twelve parishes of Jersey. The panels tell the story of the occupation, from the initial invasion, through aspects of life under the Germans, all the way to liberation. It was originally sewn in time for the 50th anniversary celebrations in 1995 – for the 70th anniversary in 2015 a thirteenth panel was added that specifically commemorates the victims of the occupation and the heroism of the resisters. Yes, even in 1995, Jersey wasn't ready to have that conversation. At each of the panels is an interactive display where you can learn more about some of the scenes, people, and motifs included, and a few stories from people who lived through it.

Finally, at the prehistoric site of La Hougue Bie, which primarily talks about the stone barrow that's a passage grave and ceremonial site from 3500 BC (making it contemporary with the relatively nearby Carnac standing stones in Brittany), is a small exhibit about its use in WW2. Being one of the highest points in that part of the island, it was used as a small fortification and lookout post – there's an underground exhibit mostly talking about the forced labourers who were brought in across Europe to build the defences, and how badly they were treated. It's all quite depressing. As you can imagine; a quote on site attributed to a harbour guard on Alderney is "Just kick them in the arse when they come. They are not human beings but animals". Of course the authorities wouldn't say things like that about people these days, would they?

In 2012, at the Tuol Sleng Prison and museum in Cambodia, part of the Killing Fields of the Khmer Rouge, I

saw some writing on a wall designed for the the purpose for feedback. It said "Don't let shit like this ever happen again. Please!". The 'ever' was underlined. I think about that quite often.

It all also got me thinking about the question the very start of the occupation brought up – that of people fleeing versus staying. Such questions are asked every time there's an increase in authoritarian thought, and "what's the right thing to do" often depends on who you are and how much in danger you yourself feel. Which is often different to how much in danger you actually are, and that could go either way, depending on how compliant you feel you can be and how much you have to hide your true self. There's also the question of 'do you think your staying or leaving will be beneficial to your community' – if you have something to offer, and you're prepared to use your privileges and/or skills to resist, then stay. If all you're going to do is whinge or cooperate, you might as well leave.

Let me now tell you about an example of the former, of two people who, despite the danger they were in because of who they were, stayed to fight because it was the right thing to do, and who used their skills to good effect.

{section separation jingle}

Now. I need you to picture me. I mean, most of you know what I look like, and I know my blind listeners have either had me described to them, or have picked it up from the alt-text of my selfies. But I need to you to have in your mind a particular image of my presentation and my attire on the day I walked into the reception area of the Jersey War Tunnels, and why it kicked off a whole series of events and learnings that lead directly to this podcast.

I walk in wearing a bright maroon baggy hoodie, with the word 'neither' written on the front, in a series of bright colours. If you're clued-up with Queer culture, you'll notice those colours are the non-binary flag. I'm also wearing baggy dungaree shorts, kind of blue but with a very floral pattern. I have maroon leggings that fit nicely to my legs, and I'm wearing sandals, because it's bloody cold; with hindsight I'd've been better barefoot as one of my sandals broke later that day but that's beside the point. I also have long, quite vibrant, purple hair, and a stone-blue hat with a they/them badge pinned to the front. Over my shoulder is my small bag, that holds my phones and my card wallet, decorated in a pattern of stripes that match those on the caption on my hoodie.

Now, to the average person, I'm just dressed slightly eccentrically – colourfully and distinctively, and possibly with slightly 'gay man'. vibes To those in the Queer community, I'm presenting about as non-binary as it's possible to get, literally flying the flag in at least three ways.

I mention this because the Jersey War Museum is one of those museums where you get given an item related to someone you can follow the progress of as you go round. In this case it's copies of genuine identity documents issued by the occupying government to keep track of its citizens. Most of the time you're just given what you get, and you spend the next two hours tracking how someone called Nathaniel made a new life for himself in the New World having emigrated from Ireland, or what happened to Bouri when she was kidnapped from her African village and sold into slavery in Brazil. That sort of thing. Potentially completely at odds with who you are – it's just a way to keep you engaged. I walked into the museum on a quiet day and I was the only person there, so in principle the lady behind the desk could have spent time thinking more about giving me the details of someone she thought I'd connect with. Listener, she did not. Instead she immediately went to her box, pulled out a card without any apparent thought, and went 'Have you ever heard of Lucie Schwob?'. I said I had not. I mean, it's quite weird to think that someone trackable in a museum like this would be notable outwith the scope of the museum. It'd be like going to a museum about ww2 evacuees in the UK and ending up following the progress of Michael Caine. Anyway, she replied 'I think you'll find her interesting; she has a backstory, she's not who she says she was, and she uses a false name'. Not gonna lie, I was intrigued.

The identity card said her name was Lucie Renee Schwob, she was single, she lived in St Brelade (the town on the coast of Jersey that's now immediately south of the Airport, I'd walked through it briefly on my first day on the island), she was born in Nantes in France, and she was born on 25 October 1894, which at the time of the invasion would have made her 45 years old. I think she looked a little older, but that's just the way of mid-20th Century cameras.

I finally came across Lucie Schwob in the section about resistance. There was an information board where it

gave a quick description about what she did during the occupation: her and her sister Suzanne Malherbe were arrested for sabotage, which here was described as "possession of a wireless and distribution of anti-German news sheets", as well as sheltering someone described as "a young forced Ukrainian worker" at their home in St Brelade's Bay. They were sentenced to death in November 1944 but the Bailiff managed to commute their sentences to Life Imprisonment – they were released upon liberation six months later. It also tells us that Lucie died, quote, "in her beloved Island of Jersey" on 8 December 1954. So she didn't live that long after liberation and died just after her 60th birthday. And she shared a house with her sister.

This got me thinking the obvious; given Lucie was described as single, was Suzanne really her sister, or is this all code for 'lesbian'. Did the lady at the front desk code me as being Queer-Friendly? Spoiler: if either of those were the whole story, I would not be doing this podcast. There was nothing in the museum about anything to do with a false name, or a secret identity, only that she was actively resisting the occupation. When I returned to the front desk, the lady asked me what I'd discovered and I told her what I'd see and what I hadn't seen. She told me, ah, well, now you need to go to the Jersey Museum to find out the rest of the story.

Interest piqued, that's where I headed next. And in the section dealing with the occupation I found another board with an identity card on, this time listing her occupation as "independent". So, a single middle-aged woman living with her sister who didn't have a standard or typical job, and seemed to be affluent enough to live that kind of lifestyle. The mystery deepens.

Nearby was a a wall with a series of sketches and extracts from poems and manuscripts on it. They were representations from two French artists in the 1930s who'd moved to Jersey in 1937 after spending many a childhood holiday there. Their names were Claude Cahoun and Marcel Moore. Two very solidly male French names, you might think.

And then I read on. And I now quote:
"Born Lucie Schwob and Suzanne Malherbe, they were romantic partners, creative collaborators, and stepsisters."

I see.

To continue:

"They lived together in 1920s Paris as Cahoun and Moore, defining and exploring their identities. They invented characters for Cahoun, often GenderFluid, enigmatic, and playful. But in 1937, as antisemitism and fascism were on the rise, they moved to St Brelade's Bay, a place of calm, familiarity, and privacy."

So.
Let me get this straight.
The lady at the Jersey War Tunnels saw me approach, and immediately thought: 'this person is giving off very Queer, no, more specific, very gender-non-conforming vibes, let's give them a story to follow that matches their identity'. Maybe she recognised the non-binary flags (there's precedent: the chap at one of the museums in Orkney recognised the asexual flag colours I was wearing), maybe she just felt I too was 'exploring my identity'. And then sent me on a journey of discovery to find out for myself, without telling me what she was doing. It's an amazing bit of museum-work.

There's a couple of questions that the Jersey Museum left unanswered, but they were easy enough to find out afterwards. So, they were stepsisters, but only because their parents married each other long after Lucie and Suzanne had met (indeed it's possible they were the ones who encouraged their parents to marry); they were lovers before they were stepsisters. They were artists in the 1920s, and Lucie herself came from a very creative family – her uncle Marcel was a symbolist and surrealist who was friends was the likes of Oscar Wilde and Marcel Proust. Under the guise of Claude Cahoun, he specialised in what we'd now refer to as selfies, but that underplays it – what he created was self-portraits of himself in multiple guises and personalities, taken from a huge variety of angles and made substantial use of mirrors and cutting-edge photo effects. They would have absolutely rocked Instagram and TikTok. Suzanne, under the name of Marcel Moore, was more of the 'Instagram Husband', but again, that underplays his role; he was a fashion designer and photographer, and they worked very closely together to produce the art.

Much of their work together in the resistance to German rule directly used their artistic flair. Suzanne was fluent in German, so quite a lot of their output hit home, to the extent they created the suspicion that the resistance was in fact ingrained in the occupying forces as well as the Jersey public. Resistance came naturally to both of them – even in the quite liberal pre-war France they were seen as outsiders because of their genderfluidity and non-standard lifestyle; in addition Lucie was Jewish, or at least of Jewish heritage – so much of their life and artistic work had always been a challenge to the prevailing society and culture. Note they both reverted to their birth names and gender when the German occupation came, and gave a front of being 'normal' citizens, as much as unmarried sisters living together in the 1940s could be I guess – doing what they needed to to survive, and be able to resist without suspicion. It's interesting to muse that I'm around their age and could, if necessary, give the front of being an uninteresting man. I wouldn't be happy about it, but I guess nor were they. But, most importantly, while they left France when the clouds of war were gathering, when war came to them, they stayed, regardless of how they stayed, and they fought.

Sadly their story doesn't really end well. Though both survived the war, much of their art was destroyed while they were imprisoned, and whatever happened in those six months took their toll on Lucie specifically, who never recovered her health and died a few years later. Suzanne outlived her by 18 years before dying by her own hand at the age of 79. They're buried together in St Brelade's Church, in a grave engraved with their birth names.

As for their genderfluidity, they both have Wikipedia articles whose talk pages discuss this at length, including the use of pronouns and which to use to describe them, given both that pronoun discourse is a phenomenon that didn't exist until long after both were dead, and that they were French, a language structured with gender and, at the time, without a non-binary option. When I reached that point of the Jersey Museum, with the revelation, I was prepared to describe them both as Trans Men. However my subsequent research revealed that Lucie herself actively wrote "Masculine? Feminine? It depends on the situation. Neuter is the only gender that always suits me." and even as a woman tended to present quite strongly androgynous, so she seemed comfortable using both he and she, and if alive today would also probably feel most comfortable using they/them; indeed as a creative artist and active society rebel, maybe even neopronouns. But of course we can't know that.

Look, I'm not saying I'm like Lucie Schwob. We lived in different times, different backgrounds, and had different life goals. What I am saying is that, well, two things. Firstly, we have always existed. People like them, people like me. People who aren't comfortable in the identity and culture we were assigned and brought up as, and who spent their lives exploring and discovering who they really were. We're not a new phenomenon created by the likes of Tumblr; the only thing the internet, that forums and sites like that, have done is to make it easier for us to find each other, and, more importantly, find ourselves, to be able to answer the questions we didn't even know we could ask, that help to make us realise why we never felt as happy or comfortable in our lives as those around us. And secondly, society and culture has always found these difficult conversations to have, and when faced with it would rather ignore it or repress it. In this age of creeping authoritarianism and an apparent desire to return to traditional family values and structures, remember, it's people like them, people like me, who'll be near the front of the action. Not the very front; other minorities and more obvious 'untraditional' cultures and beliefs bear the initial brunt; but just because they're not coming yet for people like me, people like many of you, my dear audience, doesn't mean they won't. When they kill one of us, they kill all of us; there is more strength in union than individualism. Keith Porter Jr. Geraldo Lunas Campos. Parady La. Renee Nicole Good. People who have been killed in the last month in the USA in suspicious, dubious, or downright criminal ways at governmental approval. And it could happen here in the UK too, if not directly by authority, then certainly by influenced groups. And we're a lot more passive than most countries, and society is a lot more naturally prone to right-wing thought. It has always been thus: the song "Smalltown Boy" by Bronski Beat, seen as a seminal (so to speak) gay anthem, was released in 1984 and talks about a gay man escaping the homophobia in his small town and seeking community in London. Forty years later, /me peers at Kirkby-in-Ashfield, I'm not sure anything's changed.

I wonder what people will say about us, about you, about me, in 80 years time. I hope no-one writes a presentation called "The Ballad of Nel Scroggie". I hope they don't need to.

{end pod jingle}

Well that's about all for this episode. Join me next time for another episode Beyond The Brochure, Until then remember, as leading Civil Rights activist Kwame Ture said: "The universal law of human nature: Where there is oppression there is resistance, and where oppression grows, resistance grows". And if you're feeling off colour, keep on getting better.

{Outro voiceover:
Thank you for listening to this episode of Travel Tales From Beyond The Brochure. I hope you enjoyed it; if you did, tell your friends that I rocked your socks. If you wear socks when listening to my pod; that's your call not mine. And don't forget to leave a review on your podcast site of choice.

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Show-notes are available on my website: barefoot-backpacker.com.

Until next time, have safe journeys. Bye for now.}