

Louisa Gould



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Louisa Gould hid a Russian prisoner of war in her home on the island of Jersey. She was arrested and sent to a concentration camp where she ultimately paid with her life.



'I had to do something for another mother's son.'

Photo courtesy of Jersey Heritage

Louisa Mary Le Druillenec was born on 7 October 1891. She grew up in St Ouen, one of the 12 parishes on the island of Jersey, with five sisters and three brothers.

Louisa married Edward William Gould and they ran a food shop on the island. In 1933 Edward died, leaving Louisa to run the shop and raise their sons, Edward and Ralph, alone. Her sons went on to secure scholarships to study at Oxford and then Edward served in the Royal Navy Volunteer Reserve.

With the invasion of France in June 1940, approximately 30,000 Channel Islanders (one third of the total population) were evacuated to Britain. Louisa was among those who decided to stay.

Believing Jersey and Guernsey to be defended by Britain, the Luftwaffe bombed the islands and killed 44 people. On 1 July 1940 German officers came ashore and quickly obtained control.

Under the new regime, a curfew was imposed, ID cards had to be carried and radios were banned. A register of Jews on the island was created, all Jewish businesses had to publicly identify themselves and some Jewish islanders were deported to concentration camps. Islanders born on the British mainland began to be deported to Germany.

In July 1941 Louisa received a message that her son Edward had been killed in action in the Mediterranean.

Three months later, in October 1941, a Soviet plane piloted by a young man named Feodor Buryi was shot down in Germany. After trying to stay undetected, Feodor was caught and sent to a prisoner of war camp, before being transported to Jersey to work.

Feodor was one of many captured Russian soldiers termed *unttermenschen* (sub-humans) by the Nazi regime and used as slave labour. Many of these soldiers were sent to the Channel Islands and used to build four concentration camps on the island of Alderney – the only ones on British territory during World War Two. The soldiers were badly treated, many suffered malnutrition and some died.

Feodor was sent to a notoriously brutal work camp, but during a job on Jersey, after two previous attempts, he finally escaped on 23 September 1942.

Feodor lived for three months in a hay-loft belonging to René Le Mottée - a courageous man who thought it was his duty to help the Russian allies - until someone from the local community informed their occupiers. Feodor then approached Louisa for help, and with her dead son in mind, she bravely agreed to help him.

Louisa welcomed Feodor into her family. She gave him the nickname 'Bill', taught him local manners and English with a French accent so the Germans would not believe he was Russian. When asked why she wanted to help 'Bill', Louisa reportedly said: 'I had to do something for another mother's son.'

'Bill' stayed with Louisa for 20 months. As time went on Louisa felt more relaxed about hiding Bill, believing him to be safe. Bill ran errands for Louisa and mixed with the local community. Louisa also had a hidden radio and frequently passed on news about the outside world to her customers.

But not everyone on the island agreed with Louisa and some of her neighbours wrote a letter to their occupiers informing them about Bill. Fortunately, Louisa was alerted in time and Bill went into hiding.

The *Geheime Feldpolizei* (German special force) searched Louisa's house, where they found papers showing that he had been there and labels from Louisa and her sisters from a Christmas present for Bill. The Germans also found Louisa's forbidden wireless, and she was arrested.

Louisa was sent to prison on 25 May 1944. Days later the Germans searched the house of Louisa's sister, who sheltered Bill after Louisa, and she too was arrested, along with many others, including Louisa's brother Harold Le Druillenec, who had simply listened to Louisa's wireless.

Louisa was convicted on 22 June 1944 and received a two year sentence for 'failing to surrender a wireless.' One week later, Louisa and Harold were deported as part of a group of 20 political prisoners from Jersey. Harold was sent to the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp and went on to be one of only two British survivors from the camp.

After three imprisonments in France, Louisa was taken to Ravensbrück concentration camp. There she spent her last months giving English lessons to other inmates, before falling ill and eventually being taken to the gas chamber. She was murdered on 13 February 1945.

After living at Louisa's and then her sister's house, Bill was cared for by Bob Le Sueur, who had already helped Bill with his ID card. Bob had also helped many other escapees find a safe place to live.

When the war ended, Bill worked as a translator, before returning to the Soviet Union. He was approached by British Intelligence who asked him to consider being a spy, but Bill declined. As with many repatriated Soviet citizens, Bill was greeted with suspicion and remained under surveillance by the KGB for twenty years after his return. In 1992 Bob Le Sueur visited Bill and his wife in Russia.

Louisa and Bill's story is told in the film *Another Mother's Son*, released in 2017.

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