

CHILDREN'S EDUCATION IN PORT ST MARY

COWLEY'S CAFÉ and CORNAA BOARDING HOUSE

After a beautiful summer in 1940, it became apparent to the women internees that the children needed more structure in their lives, and it was decided to send them to school.



In Port St Mary, a kindergarten for children under the age of six was set up in Cowley's Café on the corner of High Street and The Promenade (pictured right). The headmistress of the school was a lady called Minna Specht, a teacher from Germany.



She was also in charge of a school which was set up for children between the ages of six and 16 at the Cornaa Boarding House on the opposite corner of The Promenade (pictured left).



Minna Specht (pictured left) was born in Germany and later taught in Hamburg. In 1933 she and some of her pupils left Germany and went to Denmark. In 1938, Denmark was under threat from Nazi Germany, so Minna left first to live in Wales and then in Bristol, which is where she was living when she was arrested.

During her time in the internment camp, she set up the schools in Port St Mary where she, along with the other internee teachers in both Port Erin and Port St Mary, educated the children in such a way that they would be prepared for the future, whether that should be in England or in Germany.

After her release, Minna worked in London with young people whose lives had been shattered by the war.

After her death in 1964, a primary school bearing her name was established in Frankfurt.