

STATES OF JERSEY

OFFICIAL REPORT

SATURDAY, 9th MAY 2020

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[10:30]

The Roll was called and the Dean led the Assembly in Prayer.

COMMUNICATIONS BY THE PRESIDING OFFICER

The Bailiff:

1.1 Welcome to His Excellency the Lieutenant Governor

I would like to begin by welcoming His Excellency the Lieutenant Governor to the Chamber for this special sitting this morning to mark the 75th anniversary of the liberation of Jersey by enemy occupying forces. **[Approbation]**

1.2 Welcome

I would also welcome everyone listening to this sitting over the radio and online on this important day for all Islanders. This sitting takes place in unusual circumstances and although I am in the States Chamber, as usual, as is His Excellency and the Connétable of St. Helier and the Dean, all other Members are participating remotely over the internet. We have become accustomed to conducting sittings in this way over the last few weeks and it has been successful but we are all, I am sure, looking forward to the time when the Assembly can meet together in this Chamber in the usual way.

1.3 Formal ceremony broadcast

Following the sitting, the traditional formal ceremony usually held in Liberation Square will be broadcast at 11.30 a.m. this morning. It can be followed on BBC Radio Jersey or it can be viewed through the Liberation75 Facebook page or YouTube pages. My chambers have distributed DVDs through the Parishes so, hopefully, those without internet can see the celebrations as well. I warmly encourage anyone who can to follow the ceremony. It contains many of the elements of a traditional Jersey Liberation Day. I now call upon the Connétable of St. Helier to deliver the Liberation Day address.

PERSONAL STATEMENT

2. The Connétable of St. Helier will make a statement on the occasion of the 75th Anniversary of the liberation of the Island

2.1 Connétable A.S. Crowcroft of St. Helier:

One of the many pleasures of the role of Connétable is how much time we get to spend with our Parish senior citizens at our many Parish events, lunches, coach tours, tea dances. We hear about their long and varied lives in Jersey, or careers that have taken them all over the world. But it is striking how often the Occupation stories come back, and it is a privilege to listen to such stories of childhood that seemed as fresh to the tellers as if the events had taken place the day before. Recently I was up at St. Ewold's Care Home hoping to find inspiration for the Liberation75 poetry project organised by the Jersey Art Centre. I met a spritely lady who pointed herself out to me, aged 15, in one of those famous photographs of the crowds in front of the Pomme d'Or Hotel with a sailor from Force 135 borne aloft by cheering crowds. Another resident told me how he and his younger brother had taken it into their heads to pelt with stones a passing German staff car. His stone had passed neatly through the partly opened window and struck an officer on the brow. I should have asked him, with an aim like that, if he went on after the war to play cricket. The boys scarpered, hiding in a nearby hayloft, but were unable to pull the ladder up behind them so up came the German officer, blood running down his face from a nasty gash above his eye and understandably furious. But their tears saved them from the thrashing they expected, instead they were frogmarched home. I often wonder what his parents' reaction was when they opened the door. Of course, had those boys been a few years older their fate would no doubt have been different and for all the stories we are told, one can only wonder about those we cannot know. For some the consequences could be tragic, even

keeping a radio or borrowing a motorbike, as Frank Le Villio did after his precious machine was requisitioned. Or for those Islanders who bravely sheltered Jews or escaped slave workers in what are for me the most moving of the stories. Islanders who paid for their acts of charity with their lives. Since Liberation Square was created for the 50th anniversary celebrations in 1995 the work of collecting such stories has gathered pace. It is as if Philip Jackson's evocative sculpture of a rejoicing family group has been a catalyst for the growing interest in Jersey's wartime story, adding to the almost sacrosanct status of the Square for Islanders. This process has been taken forward on many different levels; Islanders who had lived through the Occupation often did not want to remember or talk about the difficult times, worrying about loved ones overseas, while keeping children clothed and fed. This was particularly challenging for St. Helier residents, for whom it was difficult to grow food or find fuel. But some of them were encouraged to share their experiences at the events, which are increasingly part of Liberation Day, with stories that have been recorded through the work of Jersey Heritage and our local media. Other groups and individuals have come forward, adding their wartime experiences to the Jersey story. It took until 2006 for the plight of the evacuees to be remembered in an annual ceremony on the Albert Pier. Close by where some of the bombs fell on 28th June 1940 an annual service of remembrance was also begun in the new millennium, with crystal clear eyewitness accounts. While up on Mont de la Ville there was recognition of the forgotten army and how moving it was to see one of our few survivors of that theatre of war at the annual wreath laying last summer. Representatives of the Normandy Veterans Association, now sadly depleted from the dozen or so who used to attend the notable anniversaries hosted by the French Government, still make an annual pilgrimage to the Normandy landing beaches where so many of their comrades fell, and several of them have written their stories down. Only last September a plaque was unveiled on the Albert Pier to mark the deportation of the Jersey internees, a much fitter tribute than the older one on the side of the former tourism building. To these personal locally driven efforts have been added the fruits of scholarly historical research into such neglected heroes of the Occupation as Canon Cohu and Dorothea Weber. In the lead up to today, the 75th anniversary, there was talk of this being the last big commemoration of Liberation Day. I do not think that it will be. There is no sign of any diminished interest in the experience of Islanders during the Second World War, nor in what the end of Occupation meant for them. 9th May has become our national day with more and more events happening each year, both at Island and at Parish level, attracting tourists to the Island as well as being appreciated and valued by locals, especially our young people. Liberation Day for me is the day in the year when I derive the most pleasure from the fact that Jersey is my home. It is so good to wake on Liberation morning and find the sun is shining - it usually is - to walk down through town, joining the stream of cadets, St. John's Ambulance and members of the Band of the Island of Jersey and all the uniformed groups and associations and members of the public, all moving with a common purpose towards the Royal Square and Liberation Square. We have to set off early in order to join the Liberation breakfast at the Town Hall, which quite apart from being a good meal to set one up for a busy day, with sponsored food prepared by volunteers, provides the first of several opportunities to hear those liberation stories with which I began.

[10:45]

From Islanders who lived through the Occupation or whose experience of the Second World War were as evacuees, internees or serving members of the armed forces. Then it is time to move up to the Royal Square, a place which in itself is rich in historical associations of our Island's loyalty to the Crown, which by now is humming with activity and expectation and presenting a feast of colour and sound as the bands and marchers gather ahead of the procession down to Liberation Square. But first there is a special meeting of the States; this meeting. Down in the Square the seats are full, people are waving their flags and the singing has started. Is this meeting of the States Assembly important? I think it is. In fact, while I never go through the States Members entrance into the Royal Court building without a sense of pride, and I am sure this is true for all Members of the Assembly, it is a feeling that is multiplied many fold on Liberation Day as we pass the

Territorial Army's honour guard, pin a carnation to our lapel and prepare to answer *present* at the *appel*. The procession with the Royal Court and the clergy from the Royal Square to take our seats in Liberation Square reminds us of our role and purpose in being entrusted with public office. I was never more convinced of the significance of a participation in the Liberation Day service than when a former Constable of St. Saviour, although he was a very sick man, still made the effort to be present on the dais. Who does not have a lump in their throat when the moment of Jersey's liberation is re-enacted? The window goes up in the former harbour office and the flags appear, and then from the Pomme d'Or and finally on the flagstaff at Fort Regent. After the final march past, which I am honoured to be able to watch and applaud with the Lieutenant Governor, and with you, Sir, and the Chief Minister, and the cavalcade of vintage and military vehicles, we are invited into the Pomme d'Or for refreshments and a chance to say thank you to the many and various people who have taken part in the celebrations. It was here in 2002, my first Liberation Day as Constable, that I introduced myself to a man next to me in the queue for coffee who said he was from Germany. At the time I was concerned about the way some visiting language students had been treated in St. Helier so I said I was looking for a German town to form a twinning with, and could he suggest anywhere. He looked at me quizzically, probably wondering why I did not know who he was, namely the Mayor of Bad Wurzach, the town where Jersey internees had been held through the war and which had sought for years to twin with St. Helier. But one thing led to another and happily there is now a twinning, which has done a great deal to promote reconciliation, cultural exchange and friendship between the communities, which were once on opposite sides of the war. Liberation Day afternoon presents another pleasurable and rewarding opportunity to mingle with people who are eager to share their memories of Occupation over the cream teas, which are offered in the Island's Parish Halls. From the Town Hall you can look up Old Street where in September 1943 the shooting of an escaped Russian slave worker by the German Military Police was witnessed by the late Joe Mière. That is why it is important to make time between lunch and tea to go up to Westmount for the solemn service and wreath laying organised at the Slave Workers' Memorial. This has rightly become an integral part of Liberation Day for many Islanders before they go on to the numerous gatherings where our freedom is celebrated. I hope I may be forgiven, Sir, for having used the opportunity, which you have kindly given me to address the States Assembly on the 75th anniversary of Jersey's liberation, simply to describe what the day is normally like for me. I did this because our celebrations on this particular Liberation Day are anything but normal so I felt it would be appropriate to remind Members and those listening what this special day can be like and what it will be like again. Our celebrations this year were set to be the biggest for many years with an enormous amount of preparation that went into them, by your team, Sir, by the Parishes, and by lots of other groups, organisations and individuals. I am hopeful that much of this work will not have been wasted as the parties, concerts and community celebrations will be rolled over to a future date when we celebrate Liberation Day again in a packed Chamber, in a Royal Square with the bands and tourists in our own Liberation Square, in our Parishes, family groups and among friends, with visitors and newly arrived residents. We will continue to listen to the stories of Islanders who experience those challenging years, to record them, and to value them. I had been looking forward to sharing in the Liberation festivities at St. Ewold's Care Home today and finding out by videolink what several of the residents thought of the poem their stories inspired me to write. Sadly, the boy who threw stones at the occupying army and went unpunished died a few weeks ago. May he and the thousands of other Jersey men and women who experienced the first Liberation Day but who are no longer with us to celebrate its 75th anniversary rest in peace. And those who are still with us, who take part in today's celebrations from their own homes or wherever they may be, I wish them and all Jersey people, on behalf of all States Members, a very happy Liberation Day. **[Approbation]**

The Bailiff:

Thank you, Connétable. The States stands adjourned until Tuesday, 12th May.

ADJOURNMENT:

[10:51]