

STATES OF JERSEY

OFFICIAL REPORT

SATURDAY, 9th MAY 2015

70TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE LIBERATION OF JERSEY2
The Bailiff:.....2
Her Royal Highness the Countess of Wessex:2
The Bailiff:.....2
Connétable L. Norman of St. Clement:3
The Bailiff:.....4
ADJOURNMENT4

[15:10]

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

70TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE LIBERATION OF JERSEY

The Bailiff:

Your Royal Highness, it is a pleasure on behalf of all members to welcome you to the Assembly here today [**Approbation**]. And, of course, it is a pleasure to welcome His Excellency as well. And a very warm welcome to all members. You will be aware that Her Royal Highness has a message for us from Her Majesty The Queen, delivered to the States and the people of Jersey, and I will now invite Her Royal Highness to deliver the message for us.

Her Royal Highness the Countess of Wessex:

A message to the Bailiwick of Jersey from Her Majesty The Queen on the occasion of the 70th anniversary of Liberation. “To the members of the States of Jersey and my most loyal people in that Bailiwick I send greetings on this the 70th anniversary of the day of their liberation from enemy occupation. I remember well the pleasure that my parents took in being able to visit Jersey on 7th June 1945, one month after Liberation, and the pleasure that I had in attending with Prince Philip the 60th anniversary of Liberation Day in 2005. The loyalty and support which I have received from the people of Jersey has been most gratifying and I am delighted that the Countess of Wessex is able to represent me on this very special occasion. On the occasion of the 70th anniversary we remember the many who suffered during the occupation of the Channel Islands, with all the hardships that went with that including food shortages, deprivations of liberty and restrictions on ordinary everyday life. And we remember all those who left the Island in 1940 and were unable to see their families left behind or regain their homes for the next 5 years; all those who left to join the service of Our Armed Forces; and all those who were deported to Germany. Today is a day for all the survivors of that generation and for the people of Jersey, young and old, to come together to give thanks for the success of the Allied Forces and the Liberation of the Island and to pass on the spirit of reconciliation to future generations. ELIZABETH R.” [**Approbation**]

The Bailiff:

Your Royal Highness. It is a privilege for me, on behalf of the States and the people of Jersey, to be able to respond to the message which you have kindly delivered to us on behalf of Her Majesty The Queen and in doing so to extend to you the warmest of welcomes on this very special day which we are so pleased you are able to share with us. On May 9th 1945, His Majesty’s Armed Forces freed Islanders from 5 long years of oppression by the occupying forces of the enemy, and today, 70 years later, all of Her Majesty’s people join together in this Island to celebrate that joyous occasion. For those who were present on that first Liberation day, the sight of British rather than German soldiers was extraordinarily uplifting and exhilarating. The invasion of Jersey in 1940 was an historic event as the enemy then knew. Not for centuries had any part of the British Islands been successfully invaded. The history of that invasion is marked in our everyday language when Islanders refer to “the Occupation”, because there has only been one such event. For those who were involved in any way, it was life changing. Some were evacuated from family and friends taking up residence in a war-torn England, itself facing times of severe hardship and deprivation. Some were deported to Germany where they were interned between 1942 and 1945, many of them children at the time whose lives have been forever affected by the loss of freedom which they suffered. Those who remained in Jersey had daily reminders of their loss of liberty and all the consequences of living under an enemy authority in times of war. Today in the 70th anniversary celebrations of liberation, we embrace the opportunity to grasp the spirit of reconciliation as Her Majesty suggested so that those with past differences resolve them and we can move forward in this

Island as an inclusive and outward looking community under Her Majesty The Queen. Your Royal Highness, the members of the States of Jersey, the Jurats and the members of the Court who are seated just outside this Assembly and indeed the people of Jersey are proud of their association with the Crown. We are most grateful to you for coming to Jersey on this historic occasion to help us celebrate the 70th anniversary of Liberation, and enabling us to renew our allegiance to Her Majesty The Queen whose visits here we remember fondly and with the greatest pleasure. We all gratefully seize this opportunity of expressing through you our deep affection for Her Majesty, who is held in very high esteem in this, the most southerly of the British Islands, and of reaffirming our loyalty and our respect for Her and for Her Royal House. **[Approbation]** I call on the Connétable of St. Clement.

Connétable L. Norman of St. Clement:

Thank you for inviting me to give this address. It is an honour and a privilege, and especially this year to give it in the presence of Her Royal Highness the Countess of Wessex. I imagine that members who have given this address in the past have asked themselves “why me?” – and I am no different. I wondered, Sir, why I have been asked to give it. Then it occurred to me. For the first time since 1945 there is no one in this Assembly, elected or appointed, who was born before May 9th 1945. I should point out, rather hurriedly, that I am not the member closest to having been alive on Liberation Day - I missed it by over 2 years. I understand that one of our colleagues only missed it by 4 months and another two by less than a year! Perhaps one of them will make this statement next year! For those of us not old enough to remember the Occupation it is difficult even to imagine what Islanders must have gone through. Those who spent those 5 years here endured much deprivation, loss of liberty and uncertainty of how the war and the Occupation was to end – and not even, in many cases, knowing how the war was progressing. Although many, at great risk to themselves, maintained contact with the outside world with that wonderful thing called a crystal set. There was much heroism in those dark days but, as I said, in circumstances that we too young to have had the experience can only wonder at. I am fortunate that I am able to speak with my mother who spent the Occupation here, and who is with us this afternoon, who was only 22 when the war ended - sorry mother, I have given your age away. But I was pleased to be able to speak to her about her experiences, and with many others who live in God’s own Parish, St Clement, about theirs. For each of them their experiences were different, but in many ways similar. At the beginning of the Occupation there was curiosity mixed with apprehension. In some quarters there was fear of raping, pillaging and stealing at gunpoint. That did not happen. The German forces were, on the whole well-disciplined. They did not steal at gunpoint. They had no need to. They took what they needed through legal channels under the terms of the Hague Convention for the conduct of occupying armies, not with revolvers, but with sheets of printed forms signed in duplicate, triplicate or quadruplicate. A system of administration generations of civil servants have learnt from. Not the stealing, of course, - just the form filling! The presence of the German forces was heavy. In France as a whole, there was one German soldier to every one hundred civilians. In Jersey, at times, the ratio was one to three. Clearly, they were everywhere. Every third bus passenger was a German, as was every third man in the queue at the barbers. There existed in the Island a mute acceptance of what could not be changed, and life adapted. In 1942 the atmosphere changed. Initially with the arrival of the foreign workers. Firstly the forced workers, including hundreds of republican Spaniards who had taken refuge in France after the collapse of the Republic in 1939. Then the shiploads of slave workers, mostly civilians, from the occupied Soviet Union. This gave Islanders a glimpse of what life under the Nazis could be like. And of course we remembered the slave workers formally earlier today. Apprehension returned and at the end of that summer came the deportation of local civilians, those not born in the Island, to internment camps in Germany. The acceptance of a difficult and sad state of affairs turned to fear and even, in some quarters, hatred, as tighter rationing was imposed and shortages increased. Those who were

deported, either because of their birthplace, or because of minor misdemeanours, some no more than children, of course suffered more than most and their relief as their camps were liberated in Germany and other places in mainland Europe can only be imagined – and those who did not return are remembered with affection and pride. After the battle of El Alemein late in 1942 and the fall of Stalingrad in January 1943, Allied victory seemed the most likely outcome of the war. Hope was sustained and increased by the steady advance of the Allies up the Italian peninsula and the eventual defeat of Mussolini. Finally came D-Day, June 6th 1944. While this marked the beginning of the end of the war, it also marked further months of increased hardship and deprivation for Islanders and their occupiers, relieved, eventually, by the Red Cross ship Vega. It was a time when parents starved themselves to ensure that their children had what little was available. It was a time when the German forces themselves scavenged for swedes and other vegetables left behind in the fields to sustain themselves. It was a time when, if you had a slice of bread, you had to decide to eat it before you go to bed when you were hungry, or try to sleep and enjoy it in the morning. How can we understand these emotions and these choices that had to be made? Of course many Islanders were able to leave Jersey before the occupying forces arrived. They played their part in many different ways in securing the final victory. But they did this in circumstances of extra difficulty because they knew not of the conditions back at home in Jersey or the fate of their families and friends. They were heroes every one. Today we celebrate Liberation Day. Yesterday, we celebrated Victory in Europe Day when Winston Churchill uttered those immortal words “And our dear Channel Islands are also to be freed today”. 70 years later those words still send a shiver down my spine. For those who heard them in 1945, what wonderful emotions they must have experienced. **[Approbation]**.

The Bailiff:

Is the adjournment proposed? The States now stand adjourned until 9.30 on Tuesday 12th May.

ADJOURNMENT

[15:31]