

Bailiff's Christmas Message 2009

It is but a few weeks since celebrations were held to mark the 20th Anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall. The speed of change has been such that it is sometimes easy to forget the hardship and oppression suffered by so many prior to its fall. Of course there are many other parts of the world where freedoms which we take for granted are absent.

During the course of the year I attended the triennial conference of the Commonwealth Magistrates' and Judges' Association where we heard at first hand of the horrors of young children forced to become soldiers and carry arms and of countries where judges and magistrates may be subject to considerable pressure from powerful governments to find in their favour.

We in Jersey have the good fortune not to face such problems. We have a long history of domestic autonomy and of freedom under the rule of law administered by independent judges. However, 2009 has brought its own challenges. We have not been immune from the effects of the credit crunch. Some have lost their jobs with all the distress and hardship which that can bring; and even those who have retained their employment are feeling the effects of the economic downturn.

In addition, the United Kingdom remains involved in a war in Afghanistan and young soldiers of the Jersey Field Squadron have volunteered for duty both in Iraq and in Afghanistan despite all the dangers that this brings. The Island can be very proud of them.

It is when times are hard that the need for the community to help those suffering as a result is particularly pressing. It is a tribute to the generous spirit of Islanders that, despite all these difficulties, they continue to give generously to charitable activities, both financially and, equally importantly, with their time; and it is impressive for example, that the Poppy Appeal raised the record sum of £170,000 this year. Furthermore honorary service continues to play an important part in our community and I pay tribute to members of the Honorary Police and all those who give of their time for no reward to help others in the community.

This is the first occasion on which I have had the privilege as Bailiff of writing a Christmas message for readers of the JEP. I am very honoured by my appointment and I would like to take advantage of this opportunity to emphasise the importance of making all those, who have committed to Jersey and made it their home, feel that they belong here. Jersey is a very welcoming community and there is no place for discrimination between Jersey people on grounds of race, creed or national origin.

Christmas is a time for rest and relaxation as well as an opportunity to reflect on those world changing events in Bethlehem over 2000 years ago.

My wife Joan and I wish all your readers a very Happy Christmas and a peaceful and enjoyable New Year.