

Bailiff's address for Liberation Day

9th May 2010

1. This year marks the 65th anniversary of our liberation from the forces of Nazi Germany.
2. Although most of us know the story of what took place here on 9th May 1945, it is only those here today who were actually present all those years ago who know what it was really like to be free after nearly five years of occupation. It is to you that we look today to help us recapture the emotions of those precious moments, and it is you who deserve pride of place in our thoughts this morning.
3. The overriding emotion was of course joy; but there was sadness as well. Perhaps the combination is best appreciated in the poignant story of Captain Hugh Le Brocq. As a Jerseyman in Force 135, he took part in the liberation of his native island and flew the first Union Jack from the flagstaff at Fort Regent, but this was only hours after learning that his wife had died in Jersey a few weeks before liberation. Many others had of course not survived the Occupation (whether following deportation, illness or acts of resistance). For example, many slave workers, who had been brought forcibly to the Island had perished. In that connection it is fitting that we should recently have received a visit from the Russian Ambassador and he was able to express his appreciation of those Islanders who carried out acts of bravery, by hiding escaped slave workers at great risk to themselves.
4. Although only those who were here at the time know what it was actually like, subsequent generations can, of course, learn about the liberation from photographs, newspaper reports and from the memory of others. We can to an

extent therefore share in the experience. It is important that we should gather here each year as members of the Island community to remind ourselves of what liberation means today.

5. Of the images which have been passed down to us, perhaps the most vivid is of the crowds occupying this very square, looking up to see the Union Jack unfurled from the balcony of the Pomme d'Or Hotel behind me. Another is the scene the previous day in the Royal Square for the broadcast by the Prime Minister, Mr Winston Churchill, when he announced the impending liberation of 'our dear Channel Islands'.
6. There was however a third great gathering of Islanders, as those here in May 1945 will also remember, although it has not imprinted itself on the collective memory in quite the same way as the other two. On a sunny late Saturday afternoon on 12th May 1945, three days after Liberation Day, the focus of attention was again the Royal Square; it was crowded once more with excited Islanders. Just before 6.00pm, the doors of the Royal Court building swung open for a procession of members of the States and the Royal Court, preceded by the Royal Mace, that symbol of our special relationship with the Crown, which had been so carefully stowed away during the Occupation and which was then carried proudly before the Bailiff, just as it is carried today.
7. In front of the statue of King George II, from a platform draped with red, white and blue, the Commander of the liberating forces, Brigadier Alfred Snow, read a message from his Majesty King George VI. Less than four weeks later, of course, the King was to arrive in person. The significance of the King's words resonates for us today just as much as sixty five years ago. In the course of his message, the King said this: "*.....I cordially welcome you on your restoration to freedom and to your rightful place with the free nations*

of the world..... It is my desire that your ancient privileges and institutions should be maintained and that you should resume as soon as possible your accustomed system of government.”

8. The sacrifice which Islanders had made took different forms – whether by serving in the armed forces, by being parted from loved-ones through evacuation or deportation, or by enduring the privations of the occupation here in Jersey. Those sacrifices were being recognised in the King’s wish for the Island’s freedom to be restored, as well as the personal freedom of its people. Jersey was to resume its place as a self governing dependency of the Crown. Whilst the personal freedom of Islanders was uppermost in everyone’s thoughts on 9th May, it was the formal restoration of our Island’s freedom which was celebrated in that ceremony in the Royal Square three days after liberation.
9. Much has changed in the 65 years since then. Although still of vital importance, agriculture does not dominate the economy in the way that it used to. Tourism and then finance have overtaken it. Many people have come to the Island from elsewhere to make their lives here and bring up their families. But we are still an Island which cherishes its right to govern itself through the political representatives that we have chosen to elect through our parliamentary democracy, and by our laws, customs and institutions. The Island has been successful in economic terms since the war but it is not inward looking, as is shown by the magnificent response of Islanders to tragedies elsewhere, such as the Asian tsunami, the earthquake in Haiti and the floods in Madeira, to name but three.
10. Of course we are not the only ones who are celebrating 65 years since the end of the Second World War. The week before last, together with the Chief

Minister and the Constable of St Helier, I was invited to Bad Wurzach, the town with which St Helier is now twinned, to commemorate the 65th Anniversary of the opening of the gates of the castle in that town and the release of the men, women and children from Jersey who had been interned there since 1942. Many internees and their families also returned to the town for the recent visit. They spoke of the many acts of kindness they had received from the local people during their internment; and the Mayor of Bad Wurzach spoke of the fact that the end of the war was recognised now as liberation also for ordinary Germans from the evils of Nazism. We can be thankful for the spirit of reconciliation which now exists and the fact that we have had 65 years of peace in Western Europe since then.

11. But we are here today to celebrate the Island's liberation from occupation. Whether we were here on Liberation Day in 1945, whether the memory of it has been passed down to us by families or friends, or whether we are learning about it having come more recently to Jersey, from the United Kingdom, Ireland, Portugal, Poland or elsewhere, I hope that we can all give thanks this morning for our personal freedom and for the Island's freedom to determine its own future. Let us also give thanks for the privilege of being members of the inclusive Island community that has been shaped in the sixty five years that have passed since those momentous days in 1945.