

Speech for visit to Bad Wurzach

Friday 5th October 2012

Herr Bürgermeister, Chief Minister, Ladies and Gentlemen

1. My wife and I are delighted and honoured to have been invited to Bad Wurzach for this occasion. We remember with great pleasure our last visit in April 2010 on the occasion of the 65th anniversary of the Liberation of the Internees from the Schloss here in Bad Wurzach. I know that I also speak for the Chief Minister, who is equally pleased to be here.
2. This visit marks 3 separate events, all of which are important. First, it is 70 years since the deportation of the Internees from Jersey in September 1942. Secondly we mark the launch of the English translation of the wonderful book by Gisela Rothenhäusler about life for the Internees in the Schloss; and thirdly we celebrate the 10th anniversary of the twinning between St Helier and Bad Wurzach. I wish to say a little about each of these matters.
3. First, the deportation. Those of us who were not alive at the time can only imagine what it must have been like for those families who were told in September 1942 on one day's notice that they were to be deported from Jersey to Germany. No time to prepare, no time to give real thought as to what should be taken and what should be left behind; and most importantly no time to say goodbye to friends and relatives. It must have been the most shocking and frightening event.
4. As a graphic example of this, there is the tragic case of Adelina Bowden. Shortly before the deportation she had received the terrible news that both of her sons were missing in action and believed to be dead. That coupled with the strain of the deportation was too much for her. Shortly after her arrival in

Bad Wurzach she died of heart failure, but it was probably of a broken heart. What was particularly tragic was that when her husband returned home at the end of the war, he was informed that in fact both of their sons had survived in Japanese prisoner of war camps and were both alive and well.

5. Secondly, there is the book. I really wish to congratulate Gisela Rothenhäusler for this wonderful record of life in the Schloss that she has written. As she has rightly said, it is very important for the young people of both our communities to know what happened and for that to be accurately recorded by direct evidence from those who were there at the time.
6. The book describes not only the hardship suffered by the Internees but also the many kindnesses which they were shown by the people of Bad Wurzach. This is why the title of the English translation is particularly apposite. The English title is 'Reaching across the barbed wire'. And that is what happened. Despite the fact that the Internees were imprisoned in the Schloss, friendly relations were established with many of the residents of Bad Wurzach.
7. I was present at the launch of the translated version in Jersey two weeks ago and was fortunate enough to be given a signed copy of the book. I have not yet had the chance to read it in full but I have read some parts of it. It gives examples of the Internees making the best of their situation, I liked the story of the football tournament organised for men over 50. This was played only at walking pace! And the trophy, made from recycled tins from Red Cross parcels, was engraved with the words 'Wurzach Wonderers 1943'.
8. As an example of 'Reaching across the Barbed Wire', I noted that internees were often taken on walks into the surrounding countryside and this allowed

them to interact with people from Bad Wurzach. I particularly liked the story of the pub known as the Hasen which apparently became such a well known centre for bartering that people would just happen to drop in when they knew the internees would be going there and would buy the guard a beer whilst they undertook their business!

9. The book records many examples of acts of friendship and kindness shown by residents of Bad Wurzach. For example, several shopkeepers such as the butcher, the greengrocer and the baker would often slip the internees a little food. A number of townspeople would also give little gifts to the children who were internees. Lola Garvin speaks of being given a doll's pram by a kind hearted local woman and of taking the pram all the way back to Jersey at the end of the war.

10. I also like the account of Godfrey Le Cappelain who volunteered to work on a local farm. Apparently, at mealtimes, the farmer's daughter would keep filling a tankard with cider. As Godfrey Le Cappelain put it:-

“We were supposed to work, but frankly we were a bunch of drunkards. We'd go marching back to the camp, singing patriotic songs with the guard telling us to keep quiet.”

11. The book really is the most wonderful record of this period of history and I would like to commend Gisela Rothenhäusler for the detailed research and the hard work that she has put in. I would also like to pay a particular tribute to Angela Francey who was responsible for the translation into English and has devoted the last 3 years or so to that enormous task. Thank you to both of you. Books like this cannot be published without sponsorship and I would

like to thank the Oberschwabische Elektrizitätswerke who were the main sponsors of the book.

12. But I have left the most important aspect till last. Whilst we must never forget the events of the past and it is important to remind ourselves of them so that we learn the lessons of the past, it is surely to the future that we must devote our greatest energies. That is why the Twinning arrangement is so important and I am so pleased that it has been successful. It is important because it will forge friendships through to the next generation. There have been many exchanges and, as I mentioned last time, one of the highlights was the participation of 5 students from Bad Wurzach in the performance in Liberation Square before Her Majesty The Queen on the 60th Anniversary of Liberation.

13. More recently the Jersey Youth Theatre has visited Bad Wurzach once again and I know that they greatly enjoyed that trip. During the course of the launch of the book in Jersey, I heard of an exciting event which will be taking place next year. Four cyclists from Jersey plan to bicycle to Bad Wurzach and back. They will leave Jersey on 28th April, which is the anniversary of the Liberation of the castle at Bad Wurzach and will bicycle all the way to Bad Wurzach, bringing with them good wishes from Jersey. They will then cycle back from Bad Wurzach to Jersey carrying a message from Bad Wurzach in return. They intend to arrive in Jersey as part of the Liberation Day celebrations on 9th May. One of the cyclists is the nephew of an internee at Bad Wurzach which lends a very personal aspect to the trip, which is intended to raise money for the Red Cross. This will be a splendid event and I wish it every success.

14. Finally Herr Bürgermeister I would like to thank you and the people of Bad Wurzach for your generosity in inviting all of us from Jersey, including a number of those who were interned, to join you on this occasion. The fact that the Twinning was achieved owes much to the efforts of your predecessor Herr Morczineitz and of course Herr Hermann Bilgeri and I am delighted that they are both here today. However, you were the Bürgermeister at the time of the twinning and your commitment and dedication, together with that of Constable Simon Crowcroft, has been critical in making the twinning the success that it is. I am only sorry that Simon Crowcroft is unable to be here today. He would have been, but for the fact that his wife has broken a bone in her foot and he has had to stay behind to look after her and the family. Of course you and the Constable need assistance and I thank all those who have worked to make the Partnerschaft a success.

15. So thank you to the people of Bad Wurzach for your kindness and hospitality and for the way in which you are looking after us during our visit; congratulations to Gisela Rothenhäusler and Angela Francey for the book and its translation; and finally my good wishes to you Herr Bürgermeister and the people of Bad Wurzach. I have every confidence that the Twinning arrangement will flourish and will cement and strengthen the already strong bonds of friendship which have developed between the peoples of our two communities.

16. For the benefit of our friends here in Germany, I would like to repeat that last passage in German, although I hope that I will be forgiven for my poor German.

17. Ich bedanke mich bei den Bürgern von Bad Wurzach für ihr freundliches Entgegenkommen und ihre Gastfreundschaft und für die Art und Weise wie sie sich während unseres Aufenthaltes um uns gekümmert haben.

18. Meine Gratulation geht an Gisela Rothenhäusler und Angela Francey für das Buch und seine Übersetzung und schließlich gehen meine besten Wünsche an Sie, Herr Bürgermeister und die Menschen von Bad Wurzach.

19. Ich habe große Zuversicht, dass die Partnerschaft blühen und sich weiter festigen wird und die bereits bestehenden starken Bande der Freundschaft, die sich zwischen den Menschen unserer beiden Gemeinden entwickelt haben, noch stärker werden.