

**STATEMENT MADE BY THE CHIEF MINISTER ON
LIBERATION DAY, 9th MAY 2014**

Sir, firstly may I thank you for asking me to deliver the States Liberation Day address, I consider it a great honour.

I do not want to wish away the months, especially in an election year, but this will be your last Liberation Day as Bailiff. I know there will be time for thanks in due course, but I wanted, on this our most important day, to publicly record the gratitude of the States Assembly and of everyone in Jersey, for your unstinting commitment and dedication to serving our community. Thank you.

Sir - much has been written about our Occupation and our Liberation. Equally, many stories of everyday people have not been recorded and have not been spoken of. I would therefore like today to tell some of the stories of a lady who has been very special to me. Gran welcomed me into her family and accepted me as if I were her own grandchild. She would never in a million years have imagined that her stories would be spoken of in this Assembly.

Gran and Pops - together with their children - farmed in Trinity during the Occupation, and I know they considered themselves fortunate to have been farming. As she often reminded us – ‘we didn't suffer too much during the Occupation as we had food’.

Gran and Pops farmed near a German camp, which of course had its own daily trials - like soldiers coming to get water from the pump in the yard. On one occasion a soldier asked if he could have some swedes. They told him they didn't have many. Once he left, they covered the pile with marigolds. Pops feared the soldiers might return at night to steal them, so he arranged a wire at knee height at the entrance to the barn and attached a bucket with tin cans so if they came back the soldiers would walk into it. Sure enough in the middle of the night they came, there was a terrific clanging, which set the dogs off. The soldiers hid, the dogs carried on barking, until eventually the men left with nothing.

Like many families they kept a radio – which of course was illegal. One radio was correctly handed into the Parish Hall, but another was kept. It was stored in the loft amongst the hay. Pops would often go and listen to the news, but Gran listened only once and after that was too scared to listen again.

When a Russian slave came knocking on the kitchen window looking for something to eat, Gran recalled occasionally giving him food - until Pops told her to stop, for fear of repercussions. The man did carry on coming back to eat the turnips though, always leaving the good ones for the cattle.

Just like for many Island families - the daily lives of Gran, Pops and their children were taken up with trying to outwit the occupying forces. This was often in small ways, like killing pigs under the cover of darkness, hiding parts of their carcasses in potato barrels,

siphoning fuel to use in Pops' lorry and telling the milk inspector that the cows had stopped production and were dry, so they could keep milk back for the family.

Food became scarce at the end. So much so, that the occupying forces ate any form of meat they could. Gran recalled on one occasion seeing a German soldier with a violin case. As she passed by, she heard the sound of a cat meowing from within.

These kinds of stories will be familiar to many, but it is important that we all remember this is part of our history.

While the Occupation may not define us, it does help to make us who we are today - as a community.

In preparation for this address, I asked the children from Les Landes School what Liberation Day meant to them. Year six pupils wrote the following poem: -

Many stories to unfold
Nature replaced by concrete.
Barbed wires, bunkers.
Cut off from the world.
Food slowly diminishing.
Nothing left to eat.
Privileges lost
Freedom snatched away.
Family and friends shipped away across the sea,
Never to see the Island again.
Lessons we must learn.
Don't be greedy, make do with what we've got.
Keep going and never give in.
Stay strong and learn from our mistakes.
Think about this for future and not just the past.
Help others and not just ourselves.
Others will help, if we help them.
People cheering, hats flying through the air.
The British arrive and save the day.
Sadness turned to happiness.
Through the hard times and good times
The stories and memories must live on.
Celebrate our freedom.
It is our history - we must not lose it.
What happened is important.

Sir I'm not sure that I can add to the words of the children. We recollect these stories not just for our past, but for our future. These stories, the first hand memories of those caught up the Occupation, must live on.

The restoration of freedom was a momentous occasion for those who lived through those years – and every year we must continue to celebrate the freedom we enjoy to determine our own future.

Sir - today we thank God for Liberation.