

Opening Address by The Bailiff of Guernsey

It is with great pleasure that I extend a very warm welcome to all of you attending this 14th Conference of the World Guernsey Cattle Federation. I know that some have been here previously but for others it is a first to our beautiful island. Many of you have travelled considerable distances to be here – from Australia, Canada, New Zealand, South Africa and the USA. You are indeed all welcome, as are of course, those of you from the UK who have had less far to travel.

I am delighted that Ray Watts, is here both as your President and as a local farmer and I welcome particularly your Vice-President, Jim Lichtwark from Taupiri in New Zealand and your Chairman, Neil Jensen from Wisconsin. I should take this opportunity of paying tribute to Bill Luff who has been Secretary for, I believe, 24 years and for his devoted service to the Federation.

I would like to begin by explaining the role of the Bailiff. Some of you may come from jurisdictions where the Bailiffs perform rather different duties. In fact when you heard I was coming you may have expected that I would be removing the tables and chairs from the hotel. Don't worry; I will not be doing that.

In Guernsey and in Jersey, the office of Bailiff dates back to the days of the Dukes of Normandy when the Bailiff had wide responsibilities for the administration of his Bailiwick. These days my responsibilities are more narrowly defined but still very varied. The Bailiff is appointed by the Crown and I was appointed last year by Her Majesty The Queen. I am first and foremost the principal judge or chief justice. Our courts have jurisdiction over all civil and criminal matters arising in these islands. In terms of crime, that means everything from minor traffic violations to the most serious offences including the occasional murder. In the civil courts, it means everything from actions for the recovery of petty debts to the most complex civil disputes arising from the sophisticated nature of some of the work conducted by the financial institutions in the Island.

On the judicial side, I am the Chief Judge. I am also the Presiding Officer or Speaker of our parliament, the States of Deliberation. I decide the order in which members of our States will speak in debate and I call them to speak but I have no vote and no right to speak in the substance of the debate. My duty is to preside, to ensure good order and to ensure that debate is conducted in accordance with good parliamentary practice.

The Bailiff is also considered to be the civic leader of the Island and it is in that capacity that I am invited today.

It has been suggested that as many of you will not be fully familiar with our constitutional status that I should take the opportunity to say something about it before making some observations on the reason that you are assembled here.

The Channel Islands have unique relationships with the Crown which have evolved over nearly 1000 years. We were part of the Duchy of Normandy from about the tenth century. Normandy is that part of the French mainland which is closest to us and which we can see easily on a clear day, whereas we are so far from England that we never see that country.

Interestingly, Normandy remains to this day the home of a thriving dairy industry producing milk, butter and cheese products which are sold throughout France and elsewhere in Europe. I understand that the Isigny cattle of Normandy and the Froment de Léon breed from neighbouring Brit-

tany might be considered to be ancestral relatives of the modern Guernsey breed.

The most famous Duke of Normandy was William the Conqueror who in 1066 travelled to England and joined battle with the English King Harold. at Hastings. Having defeated King Harold, possibly with the assistance of some of our Guernsey ancestors, Duke William became King William of England, William the First. He was then both Duke of Normandy and King of England. His victory marked the start of our association with the English Crown.

Since Duke William's victory at Hastings in 1066, no attempt has ever been made to incorporate the Islands into England or the United Kingdom. It follows that unlike most of the Commonwealth, the Channel Islands were never conquered, settled or subjugated by England or the United Kingdom.

For nearly 150 years, the monarch held the titles of Duke of Normandy and King of England. Then, in 1204, following King John's loss of Normandy, the Channel Islands maintained their allegiance to him who they recognised as their King and Duke and did not transfer their allegiance to Philippe Auguste, King of France. This was despite many attempts by the forces of French monarchs to secure permanent control of the Channel Islands.

Guernsey is a Crown Dependency not a colony or a protectorate. It is geographically a part of the British Isles, but is not a part of the United Kingdom. We are not, and never have been, represented in the Parliament at Westminster. Our link is with the Crown, not Her Majesty's United Kingdom Government.

For many centuries after 1204 monarchs reaffirmed the liberties and freedoms granted by their predecessors and sometimes added to them. They did so in Royal Charters. Successive Charters reaffirmed our exemption from English taxes and customs dues. We were treated in England as the King of England's subjects so that we were not liable when importing goods into England to pay the taxes and duties payable by foreigners. They also confirmed that civil and criminal law cases should be heard in our Islands by our own judges. For a few centuries the English Kings and their Court in England maintained the French language as their principal language – as did we in Guernsey, in our parliament until the 1920s and in our Courts until the 1930s.

In the course of this Conference you will have the opportunity of hearing some eminent speakers on a variety of diverse topics including Farming in Guernsey, Farm Management, Opportunities for Feeding the World and Guernsey Genetics. You will share with each other your current experiences as breeders of Guernsey cattle and how they relate to your own herds and businesses. You will no doubt address the difficulties and challenges which you face in the present global economic climate and discuss how best to keep herds and farms both profitable and sustainable in the future. All these issues need to be considered in the context of a declining world population in Guernsey cattle.

I am advised that the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation and the European Union have both identified the importance of maintaining livestock genetic diversity as being critical in sustaining, and indeed improving, basic human needs. This diversity is, however, under threat. It is an alarming statistic that 20% of farm livestock breeds are at risk of extinction and that in the past six years 60 breeds of farm animals have become extinct – on average one breed per month.

However, there is hope for the future.

The Guernsey breed has the potential to achieve all the requirements of a sustainable programme. There are important differences in milk composition that make Guernsey dairy products attractive both to the health conscious and conservation minded markets.

As Guernsey cattle breeders you have a not insignificant part to play in assuring that the world is fed in the future. Current population predictions indicate that world food production will need to double in the next four decades. However increased yields and efficiencies must not be achieved at the expense of animal welfare. Cows that are both productive and healthy are the most profitable. No doubt you share this sentiment and I am sure that is a primary consideration for you.

The maintenance and development of Farm Animal Genetic Resources is vital to the survival of the human race. You can take pride in the fact that you, and other farmers of Guernsey cattle, are playing your part in this.

For Guernsey men and women the Guernsey cow is an Island icon and part of our living heritage and we rely on you to ensure that future generations can maintain their pride in this unique breed.

In conclusion I trust that you will have a positive and successful conference and, when the time comes for you to leave these shores, you will depart with fond and happy memories.

J'vous souhaette tous aen bouan temps dans not' chère p'tite Ile dé Djernési.