
MAYORAL TRAVEL 2009 – REPORT BACK

1. Purpose of Report

To report back on my travel to Hong Kong in March, and Europe and Japan in April/May.

2. Recommendations

It is recommend that the Committee:

1. *Receives the information.*

3. Background

In February Council gave approval for me to undertake official travel to Hong Kong in March, and Europe and Japan in April/May.

I gave the opening address at a Digital Entertainment Leadership Forum (DELF) in Hong Kong in March. The organisers paid for all travel, accommodation and meal expenses, so there was no cost to Council other than incidentals.

I had received several other travel invitations for 2009 and in order to save money opted to combine them into one trip to Europe/Japan in April/May.

Having been invited by the Governor-General, I was part of the Government delegation at the ANZAC commemorations at Gallipoli. I then travelled to France to fulfil commitments I made to two delegations last year from the Nord-Pas-de-Calais region and the city of Arras to make a reciprocal visit to them. While there I also visited the city of Lille to discuss education opportunities, and the village of St-Maclou-la-Briere and town of Le Quesnoy which have World War 1 and 2 ties with Wellington.

I then travelled to Japan to celebrate the 15th anniversary of the Wellington-Sakai sister city relationship. I also had several meetings in Tokyo.

4. Discussion

4.1 Digital Entertainment Leadership Forum (DELF)

Last August, I visited Hong Kong when returning from my official visit to China and gave several speeches on Wellington's transformation and growth.

As a result, a Hong Kong company called Cyberport organised a Digital Entertainment Leadership Forum in March focusing on Wellington's success in the film sector and its positioning as the creative capital.

I was invited to give the opening address at the forum detailing what factors have made Wellington successful in digital entertainment. I also took part in a closing keynote speaker panel discussion on building the next generation of successful digital companies.

Other speakers at the forum included Barrie Osborne, Executive Producer of the Lord of the Rings, Dave Gibson, Founder and Producer of The Gibson Group, Aimee McCammon, General Manager of Park Road Post Production, Jos Ruffell, Business Development Executive from Sidhe Interactive and Laurence Greig, Grow Wellington's Centres of Excellence General Manager.

The theme of the forum was: "*Innovate Locally, Collaborate Globally: the Success of Wellington, New Zealand*" and Wellington was showcased as a new creative capital of the global economy.

The New Zealand Consul-General Adele Bryant hosted a reception for the Wellington delegation and Hong Kong film industry professionals.

A Film Memorandum of Understanding was also signed between Wellington City Council, Hong Kong Cyberport Management Company Ltd, the Internet Professional Association and the NZ Institute of Screen Innovation Ltd during my visit. The MoU aims to open up future opportunities for local digital entertainment businesses and facilitate the exchange of technical skills and ideas, as well as increased investment.

While in Hong Kong, I also took the opportunity to meet with Mr HL Kam, the Group Managing Director of Cheung Kong Infrastructure, the company that purchased Wellington's electricity network from Vector. We discussed a range of issues including their interest in further strategic investment in the city. Those discussions are being followed up by staff on both sides.

I also met with 15 MBA students from Victoria University's Outreach Programme in Hong Kong, and spent a couple of hours discussing Wellington and our economy with them.

4.2 Turkey

I was invited by the Governor-General to join the Government delegation to attend the ANZAC commemorations in Gallipoli.

The delegation was made up of the Hon Sir Anand Satyanand and his wife Lady Satyanand, Veterans' Affairs Minister the Hon Judith Collins, Director General of Defence Legal Services Brigadier Kevin Riordan, the Principal Defence Chaplain Don Parker, my husband Rex Nicholls and myself.

We flew into Istanbul on 23 April and made the six-hour drive by car down to Canakkale. On 24 and 25 April we attended seven international commemoration services and other official functions. I felt honoured and privileged to lay a wreath at the New Zealand memorial site at Chunuk Bair on behalf of the Wellington Regiment.

Representing Wellington at the Gallipoli commemorations was one of the highlights of my mayoralty and an amazing experience that I will never forget. With my grandfather having been shot during the Gallipoli campaign and returned home wounded, the commemorations were particularly poignant for me. I was proud and honoured to be there.

4.3 France

St-Maclou-la-Briere

I spent a day in St-Maclou-la-Briere, the Normandy village of 500 people, which was saved by the heroic actions of Wellington pilot James Stellin. Instead of bailing out, Stellin steered his plane clear of the village after it got into difficulties during World War 2. He died in the crash.

At a ceremony held in 2007 to unveil a plaque commemorating James Stellin at Stellin Memorial Park in Northland, I gave a commitment to visit St-Maclou-la-Briere before the end of my term in office.

We were met by Mayor Benoit Deschamps who took us inside his Town Hall to show us an aerial photograph of the village and surrounding area and introduce us to his Councillors. He did not speak English so we had an interpreter from a nearby village and were also lucky to have the Deputy Head of Mission from the New Zealand Embassy in Paris, Victoria Hallum, join us for the day and she was also able to help interpret.

After the introductions, a troop of returned servicemen who were parachutists in the Algerian War carried out a flag-raising ceremony and the New Zealand anthem was played.

We moved en masse about 50 metres down the road to the Town Square named Stellin Place in honour of James Stellin, and were joined by a large number of the villagers for the official ceremony.

There is a memorial for Stellin in the square and I unveiled a plaque commemorating our visit following speeches by Mayor Deschamps, Ms Hallum and myself. A beautiful wreath using the colours of the New Zealand flag was laid, and we then walked to the local primary school where I planted an apple

tree. An apple tree was chosen because James Stellin crashed into an apple tree as he fell from his plane. Mayor Deschamps further explained the significance in his speech:

“We are going to plant, in a moment, along with our friends from New Zealand, a tree to symbolise the sacrifice of our pilot. We wanted to plant it at the entrance of our school so that the children when they taste the fruit of this apple tree will think, as the years pass, that one day a young New Zealander far from home, come from the Southern Hemisphere, died so that they could live in peace and above all, that similar horrors would never be repeated.”

The ceremony was very moving. I was blown away by how deeply felt the sentiment is towards James Stellin. Even 55 years on, the memory of his selfless sacrifice strongly lives on and it was incredibly touching to see the story and its significance being re-told to small children at the ceremony so it continues through to the next generation.

While we were planting the tree, we looked up in surprise at the sound of small plane engines to find the village had organised a fly-over of three planes – one of them from World War 2 – to mark the occasion. I was very moved by the efforts that such a small village of 500 people had gone to, to welcome us.

We then carried on to the local village hall where we enjoyed a drink and a sandwich and watched two audio visual presentations about Stellin that had been put together for the occasion. They too were deeply moving.

Later in the day, following lunch with the Mayor and his wife and the former Mayor Pierre Lambert and his wife, who were instrumental in having the Stellin Place Memorial erected, we visited a local museum of Normandy traditions and were also taken to the field where Stellin’s plane went down. I also visited Stellin’s actual grave, which lies in the village cemetery just behind the Town Square.

All in all, it was a very special day. I think it’s hard for many New Zealanders to comprehend the regard with which we are held in places like St Maclou. Many French are still in awe of the fact New Zealanders came from so far away to fight for them, and they remain so very grateful. I guess only those who have lived through war and occupation can understand the depth of that feeling, but it was evident in the very warm welcome we received from the people of St Maclou.

We had been in touch with James Stellin’s relatives – his sister Bette and his cousin Sven – before we went and have sent them photos and copies of papers that the Mayor of St Maclou gave us to pass on to them on our return. Copies of the photos and papers have also been given to John Bickerton, the historian whose interest in the Stellin family resulted in the plaque at Stellin Memorial Park, and also Scots College, as James Stellin is an old boy.

Etretat

We had dinner with the organisers of the SolOceans yacht race that will stop over in Wellington in 2011. SolOceans will be the first solo round-the-world yacht race in 16-metre high-tech monohulls.

I had previously met the organisers when they visited Wellington and when they found out through the New Zealand Embassy that I was going to be in France, they asked to meet me in person again for an update.

Soloceans was to be held at the end of this year but, due to the global economic situation, the organisers and sponsors have opted to postpone it until the end of 2011. After discussions with the Director of City Services and Events and the City Events Manager before the trip, I was able to assure the Soloceans people of our continued support for a stopover in Wellington.

Lille

We had two meetings in Lille regarding possible education opportunities. Lille is France's fourth largest city with a population of 227,000 and has been working to establish itself as a European educational hub.

We met with Pierre Mathiot, the Director of the Institut d'Etudes Politiques de Lille or Sciences Po Lille and he was very keen to explore opportunities for links between his school and Victoria University.

There are nine Schools of Government (Institut d'Etudes Politiques) in France and to study at them is very prestigious. University-level students who are candidates to enter must sit a special exam at a national level and out of about 5000 candidates each year, only 400 are taken.

They already do exchanges with more than a hundred other institutions and universities internationally, but so far none in New Zealand.

I had been in contact with Victoria University before I left so have been able to report back on a very successful meeting that will hopefully result in the setting up of such an exchange arrangement. Professor Mathiot thought the first exchange could take place as early as next year. I also forwarded the information to Massey University to consider.

We also met with members of the Lille City Council and staff regarding education programmes they run, and we visited a cultural centre which may be interested in touring exhibitions. Information about that has been passed on to the City Gallery.

Le Quesnoy

We spent a day visiting Le Quesnoy, a walled town of 5000 people. Le Quesnoy was a German stronghold during World War 1. They held Le Quesnoy for almost

the entire war until being dramatically liberated by the New Zealand Expeditionary Force on 4 November 1918. The Kiwis scaled ladders set against the ancient ramparts of the town and took the remaining Germans as prisoners. Ninety three New Zealand soldiers died but no civilians.

To this day, Le Quesnoy continues to mark the important role that New Zealand played in its history. Streets are named after New Zealand places, there is a New Zealand memorial, and a primary school bears the name of New Zealand soldier Leslie Averill who was first up the ladder.

New Zealand is always officially represented at armistice commemorations in the town on 11 November, and politicians and other groups, including the All Blacks, have often visited the town. They have a Le Quesnoy/New Zealand Association that works to facilitate links between us.

They also commemorate Anzac Day and I had been invited to attend their Anzac Day celebrations this year. As I couldn't do so, we visited them a few days later instead.

Their Mayor, Paul Raoult, is also a national Senator and we were honoured and privileged to have him spend the day with us and show us around his town. Leading off from the town square is the Avenue des Néo-Zélandais, which leads to the Jardin du Souvenir (Garden of Remembrance) and the New Zealand battlefield memorial, commemorating the 1918 offensive. Set into the ramparts, the memorial, unveiled in 1923, can be viewed from across the now empty moat.

As in St Maclou, it was very moving to see our shared history firsthand and again, the honour and respect Quercitains feel for Kiwis was truly a privilege to experience. As well as visiting the ramparts and memorial, we toured several local war cemeteries and also visited the nearby village of Beaudignies and met the Mayor Raymonde Dramez.

Arras

In July last year both I and the Deputy Mayor hosted delegations from Arras (a city of 48,000 people) and Nord-Pas-de-Calais Regional Council. I was invited to make a return visit and again gave a commitment to try to do so before the end of my term.

Arras is a city within the Nord-Pas-de-Calais Region and is famous for the network of tunnels dug out by New Zealand soldiers during World War 1.

The Wellington Quarry: The Battle of Arras Memorial opened last year. It commemorates the more than 400 New Zealanders working for the New Zealand Tunnelling Company who in 1916 tunnelled over 7 km to join up medieval chalk mines to form a 24 km network of tunnels that extended beyond the no-man's-land that separated the German and Allied lines.

The purpose of the tunnels was to house 24,000 soldiers to await a diversion attack before the Chemin des Dames assault in 1917. To help navigation around

the network of interconnected tunnels, the Kiwis named them in a geographically accurate way after cities and towns in New Zealand.

Both delegations who visited Wellington last year told us they wanted to pay homage to the New Zealand tunnellers by building and maintaining close ties with New Zealand and exploring the prospect of cultural, economic and sporting ties with us.

Visiting the Wellington Quarry: Battle of Arras Memorial surpassed all my expectations. Being able to walk in the steps of the Allied soldiers and New Zealand tunnellers from all those years ago, to see how they lived and have a glimpse of the enormous challenges they faced, was a very moving experience.

It is an exceptional and unique way of keeping those memories alive, and the site of many visits by New Zealanders who had family members who helped build the tunnels.

We also visited the memorial opened in 2007 in memory of the 41 New Zealand tunnellers who lost their lives.

The Senator-Mayor of Arras Mr Jean-Marie Vanlerenberghe hosted a formal dinner for us attended by 16 people including the President of the Regional Council Mr Daniel Percheron and the Arras MP Mrs Catherine Genisson.

We also had a meeting with representatives of the schools that have already formed exchanges links with Wellington schools and those who are hoping to. I had contacted the Wellington schools concerned beforehand – St Patrick's College, St Catherine's, Scots College, Queen Margaret College and Holy Cross School in Miramar – and was able to pass on their feedback and wish list.

I have been in contact with the schools since my return to report back on those discussions and as a result, it looks likely that an exchange between Scots and Queen Margaret's and Lycee Baudimont will take place for the first time later this year. The first formal exchange between St Catherine's and Lycee Robespierre will take place this year, with two girls coming out to spend a year here. This follows students from both schools making short-term visits to each other over the past couple of years.

We also met Mr Alexis Konieczni, the coach of the Arras Rugby Team, which is currently hosting three rugby players from St Pat's and one from Rongotai College. In talking to him and the teachers at the school's meeting, it was obvious how much value these educational and sporting links between our two cities are adding for all involved. I hope they will continue to strengthen and grow into a very close friendship.

4.4 Japan

The purpose of the visit to Japan was to commemorate the 15th anniversary of the Wellington-Sakai sister city relationship. Wellington and Sakai have been sister cities since 1994. Since then there has been a high level of exchange

between the two cities, mainly cultural, educational and sporting exchanges and reciprocal visits in alternate years. It is six years since I last visited there.

The Sakai Government hosted a formal 15th Anniversary Sister City Celebration and I also had official meetings with the Mayor of Sakai Mr Keisuke Kihara, the Sakai Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Tourism Department and Education Bureau of Sakai Municipal. The focus of these meetings was on promoting Wellington as a tourism destination and an attractive city for investment and doing business.

I gave a presentation to 400 women at the Sakai City Women's Organisation and met Shimano Inc¹ to discuss business opportunities and explore the possibility of them sponsoring events in Wellington. I also made various visits including to Sakai's new Kyodo venue, the Japanese Archery Association, and the construction site of a new headquarters for the Sharp Corporation.

In Tokyo, I met with the Japan Foundation and Mr Michihiro Kayama, President of the Council of Local Authorities for International Relations (CLAIR) in Tokyo to seek funding and support for the Japan Festival of Wellington in July and the Wellington Artist to Japan Residency Programme. Both confirmed their support and agreed to provide funding.

Various things came out of the visit that we are following up including the possibility of an Osaka-based rugby team playing a series of games in Wellington as a curtain-raiser to the Rugby World Cup in 2011, and a Wellington soccer team to travel to Sakai in 2010 as part of the opening celebrations for the Sakai National Soccer Training Centre.

Other cultural and education opportunities were discussed and it was confirmed 19 students from Sakai would arrive in Wellington in July for a three-week study programme. A visit by an archery group was also confirmed for September this year.

4.5 Costs

There was no cost to Council other than incidentals for the trip to Hong Kong.

Attempts were made before the Europe/Japan trip to seek funding from external organisations to offset some of the costs, but these were unsuccessful.

The Europe/Japan trip was budgeted to cost \$20,805 and the actual cost was \$22, 846. The increase is mostly the result of accommodation in Japan costing more than had been budgeted.

¹ Shimano is a large corporation with a turnover of NZ\$3.8b for the year ended 31 December 2008, that is headquartered in Sakai and makes cycling components, fishing tackle, and snowboarding equipment.

5. Conclusion

The purpose of the Council's International Relations Policy is to establish links with the world in order to contribute to the social and economic wellbeing of the city. The Council is committed to attracting business, jobs and talented people and developing our workforce. The economic benefit is realised particularly through enhanced business opportunities, tourism, and international students². The cultural, social and goodwill benefits are very significant but it is not possible to express them in monetary terms.

I have been criticised for undertaking this trip at a time when we are all tightening our belts in the global economic recession. While I understand the sentiment behind those criticisms, I do believe the trip more than met the objectives of our policy. International relations delivers economic benefits but is also about promoting Wellington on the international stage, fostering relationships and linkages, adding to our sense of place, and enhancing goodwill and understanding.

This trip achieved all those things. In France and Japan, I did media interviews which helped to profile our city internationally. In France, the education links forged are bringing new people and knowledge to our city with huge potential for the future. And the relationships started and developed can in future grow into something that produces tangible economic benefits to our city.

In Japan, my visit strengthened the existing ties between Sakai and Wellington in the areas of education and culture. We sought and achieved funding for the Japan Festival and confirmed reciprocal visits to further enhance our sister city relationship.

So while it is indeed important for us to be aware of our spending in these difficult economic times, we need to be conscious of not completely shutting ourselves off from new opportunities for growth and development. The building of international relationships through travel is one of those opportunities

Contact: Mayor Kerry Prendergast

² For example, a 2008 report by Infometrics conservatively estimated the impact of foreign fee-paying students on the Wellington economy at \$116m per annum.

Supporting Information	
1) Strategic Fit / Strategic Outcome	<i>The travel supported Council's overall vision of Creative Wellington-Innovation Capital and the International Relations Strategy</i>
2) LTCCP/Annual Plan reference and long term financial impact	<i>The travel was funded out of the International Relations Budget (COST01 and C145)</i>
3) Treaty of Waitangi considerations	<i>There were no Treaty of Waitangi considerations</i>
4) Decision-Making	<i>This was not a significant decision in terms of the Local Government Act 2002</i>
5) Consultation	<i>No consultation was needed</i>
6) Legal Implications	<i>There were no legal implications</i>
7) Consistency with existing policy	<i>The trip was consistent with the Council's International Relations and travel policies</i>