

The population and the people of Jersey

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First Part. Before 1806

I Pre-history and protohistory

There are no studies that deal only with the population of Jersey and the more general ones usually study it only for recent periods. Accurate and reliable figures can be obtained from census records that began in 1811; these increased in accuracy throughout the 19th century. A local census was held in 1806 and is mentioned below. In the period leading up to 1800, most of the information concerning the population came mainly from estimates made by contemporary or modern authors. I have tried, in this paper, to bring together these disparate observations, to compare them and to try to establish their veracity, especially with regard to the high density of the population, a characteristic feature of the demographics of the island since at least the end of the Middle Ages.

With regard to prehistoric settlement on the island, studies to date have been limited to the location and location of sites (1) and no analysis similar to that of Mathiassen in Denmark [2] has yet been attempted.

Hawkes's study on the archaeology of the island brings together all the research before 1937, while the more recent works are, for the most part, confined to the re-examination of some ancient sites and the discovery of some new sites. The complete description of the prehistoric settlement is relatively simple, as it is restricted to a narrow strip along what is now the island's coastline.

The first occupation of the island, discovered so far, dates back to Acheuléen, the last phase of the Lower Paleolithic — the earlier date suggested by Sinel in 1914 is no longer accepted. It appears that neanderthal man, from the Middle Paleolithic, occupied the island in large numbers; evidenced by numerous discoveries in the 60 caves of "La Cotte de St Brelade" and "La Cotte à la Chèvre". Then an inexplicable gap follows: there is no trace of the Upper Paleolithic or the Tardenoisian Mesolithic, although the latter appears with certainty in Morbihan, in France.

At that time, approximately, two major events took place that were profoundly to influence the settlement of the island. The development of the Atlantic coast as a very important cultural route determined the introduction of Neolithic culture in Brittany (Armoric), in particular certain kinds of beautiful megalithic tombs. The Iberian influence can be seen in the character of the covered walkways found on the island and in the ornamentation of cups of this period, as well as in the use of certain types of green rock ornaments.

The second very important fact was the lowering of sea level and the resulting connection from Jersey to the mainland. Evidence of this is in many areas of St. Helier. Jersey and the adjoining parts of France then became the meeting place of two distinct cultural currents, one land, the other maritime.

At the same time, the megalithic period saw the first settlement in Guernsey and the repopulation of Jersey. There is no population assessment, but Hawkes (op. cit., p.10) states that this period: "established in the islands a society enjoying a safe existence, with crops and herds that would provide the necessary stability, and tools that allowed families to build large and imposing tombs." The proportion of megaliths shows that the population was already in the thousands rather than in the hundreds. The population was mainly agricultural, but able to travel from the Jersey plateau to the low eastern wooded land where red deer could be hunted.

The introduction of agriculture, although it greatly increased the population, seems to have brought little expansion: populated areas tended to remain attached to what is now the coastline, leaving the central plateau largely uninhabited.

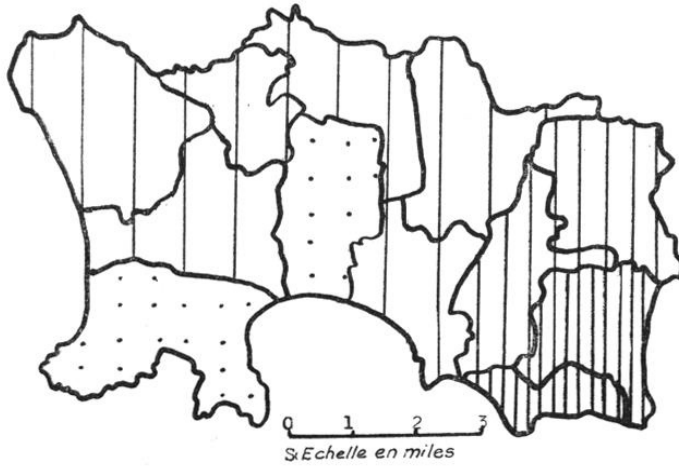
After the megalithic period, with the diminishing importance of the Atlantic sea routes, the Channel Islands, once again, became cultural outposts. From the Chalcolithic, identified at the Pinnacle site on the west coast of Jersey [3] and during the Bronze Age, Jersey maintained its thin connection with the continent, but at a low cultural level, and, according to Hawkes, a population that was declining significantly.

The subsequent immigrants to the island seem to have been the Iron-bearing Celts towards the end of The Tène III of Déchelette (the 1st century BC), and from this period one can follow the occupation and settlement to modern times.

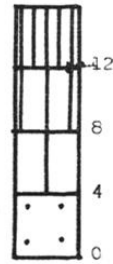
Information on the Roman occupation of the island is poor and one may even wonder if it was visited, although still inhabited. But again we are coming to a period where there is no direct evidence of establishment. This is the time of the island's Saints. As in many territories, the beginning of the Middle Ages was a period marked by few concrete facts. Island place names such as St Aubin and St Hélier celebrate mariners from this period, but the exact date of the origin of them is still doubtful.

Figure 1 Population of Jersey

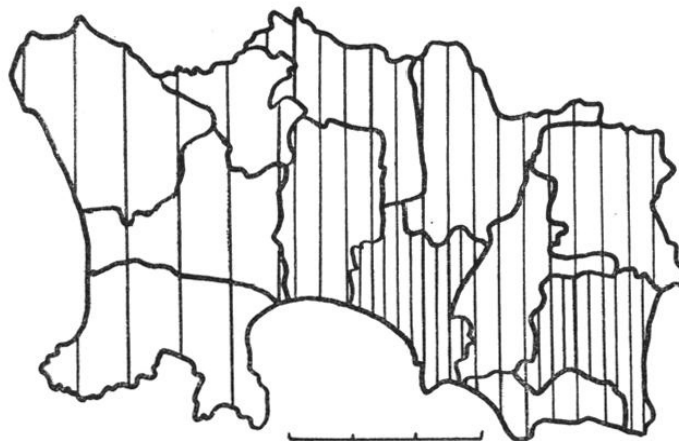
(a) 1331



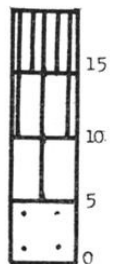
Maisons pour 100 acres



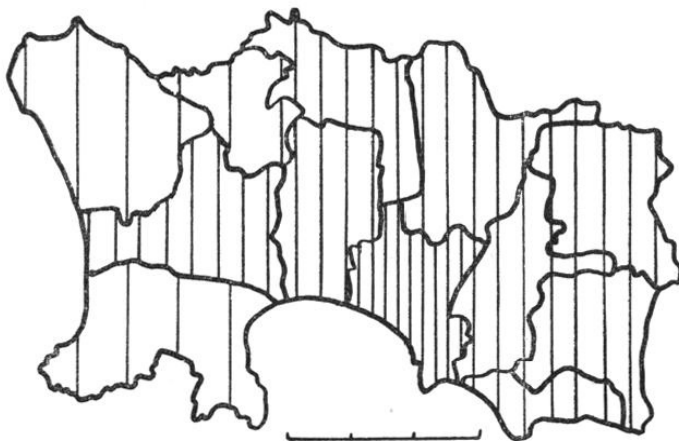
(b) 1685



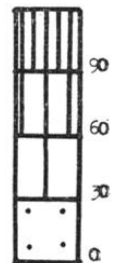
Maisons pour 100 acres



(c) 1806



Population pour 100 acres



II The beginning of the middle ages

The Norman invaders of Gaul probably made raids, if not substantial attacks, on the Channel Islands; but the islands were not included in the territory ceded to Rollo, the first Duke of Normandy. They were not added to its territory until 933. It seems that soon after, the division of the island into parishes began and we then find reliable data on the population of the island.

However, our information on the medieval distribution of the population is still meagre. An attempt was made by Rybot [4] to solve the problem of the founding of parishes. He asserts that the parishes could hardly have developed themselves to their present form by chance. The first major division of the island seems to have been in three "ministeria". Opinions vary with respect to specific boundaries, but Rybot suggests the following division: a western portion of the present parishes of St. Ouen, St. Peter, and St. Brelade, a central portion included St. John, Trinity, St. Lawrence and St. Helier, while the eastern section included the other parishes: St. Martin, St. Saviour, Grouville and St. Clement. Ewen [5] and de Gruchy [6] both place St. Mary in the Western Ministry and give them the names — going from west to east — of Crapoudoit, Groceio and Gorroïc, while Rybot reverses the names of the central and western parishes (fig. 1 a).

Rybot suggests that when, probably in the 11th century, the division into ecclesiastical parishes was made, there was an attempt "to divide the island into equally populated portions and conveniently sized areas." Physical characteristics, soils, etc. determined the division of the ministria —the western region, with sand dunes, had a smaller population and was divided into three parishes, while in the central and western sections the better soils were able to maintain more people and were divided into 5 and 4 parishes respectively. Evidence for this theory is scarce, but it is likely that this equal distribution of the population would be a reasonable basis for a subdivision of the island. The founding dates of the various parish churches are another subject on which we have no certainty, but they are all mentioned in various charters of the 11th century.

Location of the parishes

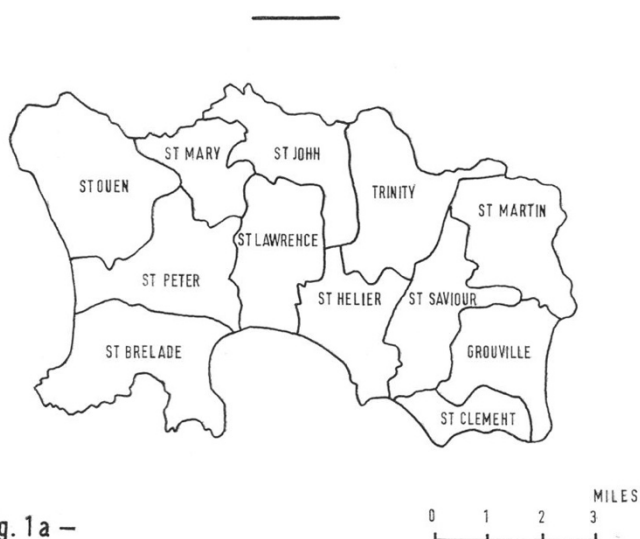


Fig. 1 a —

III From the 14th Century to the 17th Century

If we accept as a reasonable hypothesis that most parishes had, during the 11th century, a population comprising about the same number of inhabitants, the first truly trustworthy assessments, for 1331, offer an interesting picture of change through the 12th and 13th centuries. The evaluations were based on the 1331 fouage and made by de Gruchy [7]. The fouage was a three-year tax payable by every islander with 20 shillings of net income in the tournois currency in personal property and by widows with 40 shillings or more of net income — except their clothes and other effects which should not be included in this kind of property — (exempt were priests and clerics of parishes and some nobles and other land owners as well as some of their tenants) according to the custom of the country , at a rate of 12 pence per family.

The assessment of the island's population for the year 1331 seems to have coincided with the three-yearly assessment because the values of the fouage are given for each parish only for the assessment of that year - among the evaluations that have survived.

Table 1. — Profiles of the fouage rate for Jersey, 1331 (in livres tournois).

St-Ouen : 10	Trinity : 10
St-Peter : 8	St-Helier : 8
St-Brelade : 6	St-Martin :10
St-Mary : 41 1. 5 sols	St-Saviour : 10
St-John : 5	Grouville : 10
St-Lawrence : 51 1. 10 sols	St-Clément : 6 1. 10 sols

At 12 pence per family we get a number of 1865 families paying tax on the island. The mere enumeration of the figures allows some doubt, but without the means to verify their accuracy, we must accept them as they are. De Gruchy thinks that 5 people per family give a normal average, pointing out that some probably had more, while others had only one person. From this we can deduce a population of 9,325 , which, considering those that were exempt from the tax (de Gruchy suggests about 700), gives a population estimated at about 10,000.

The map (fig. 1) is an attempt to represent these figures and compare them with more accurate figures that can be found for the years 1685 and 1806. The most striking feature would seem to be the concentration of the population in the four eastern parishes: St. Martin, Grouville, St. Clement and St. Saviour. The town of St. Hélier, however, was not large enough to make St Hélier the most populous parish on the island: it became so around 1685 and this has remained so since then.

The scattering of the population and the absence of real villages were two of the hallmarks of the distribution of the population at that time. Small groups of houses, bearing family names (e.g., Ville-es-Nouaux), began to form and later clusters around churches and road crossings, but it was not until the 17th century that real villages appeared and these were mostly coastal, such as St Aubin and Gorey. The location of the houses at that time was also of interest because the plateau land seems to have been avoided and the houses "were

looking for valleys or combes that penetrated the plateau on either side and led from the springs to the valleys, thus providing shelter and water near the plateau where almost all the best land was located." [8]

A halt in the steady growth of the population occurred in 1348 when Jersey suffered from the "Black Death". No detailed analysis of the impact on the island exists, but it would appear that mortality was high because royal taxes on fish could not be collected, for perhaps two-thirds of the inhabitants of the diocese of Coutances, including the bishop, died in the plague from 1345 to 1348 [9].

From the end of the Middle Ages to the end of the 17th century we have little or no information. The Extentes of 1528 and 1607 concern only the ferme [the rent due to the King from his tenants] and do not give receipts of fougage so that they cannot be compared on this basis with those of 1331. An account of the invasion of Jersey by Pierre de Pontbriand and Pero Nino in 1406 gave a total of 3,000 men as a defence force: if we accept this figure and use it as a basis for extrapolation, we would remain with a figure for the total population of the island around 20,000. This figure is hardly believable, and this narrative must be dismissed as something erroneous [10].

IV The 17th and 18th centuries

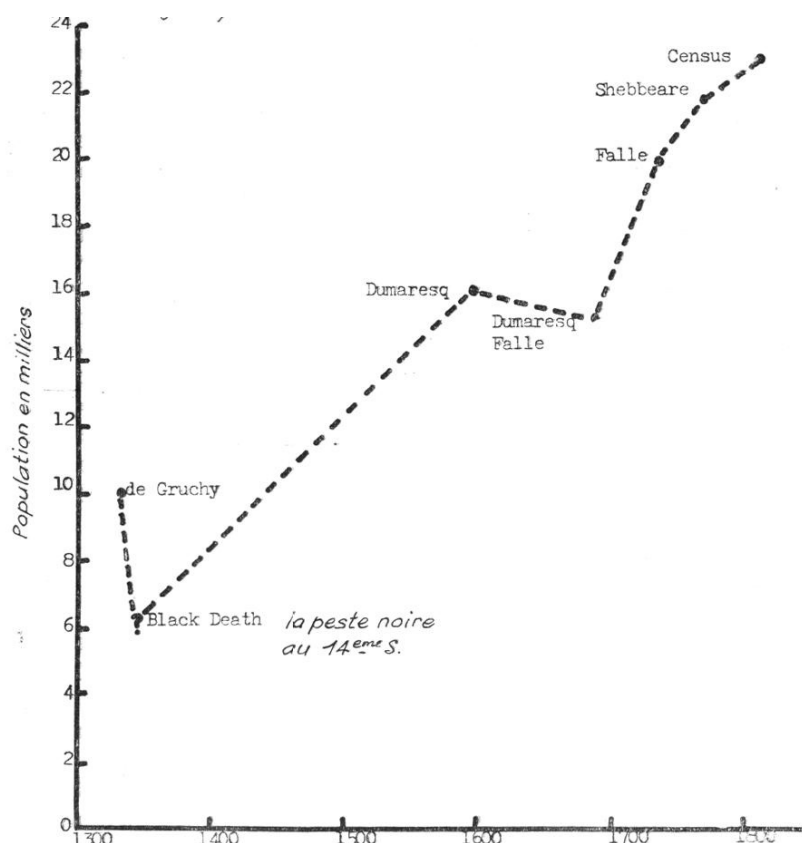
The following population assessment, to which we do not give significant credibility, is found in Dumaresq's account of the Island [11]. He alludes to the number of hearths on the island in 1594, which would amount to 3,200. If again we expect an average of five people per hearth we come to a population of about 16,000. Visiting the island in 1629, Heylyn noticed that the population was poor and "devoid of humanity" and estimated the number of people at about 30,000.

This number can hardly be accepted in the context of Dumaresq's report and that of a directly comparable assessment made by Poingdestre. These two estimates were made three years apart towards the end of the 16th century. The first estimation, that of Poingdestre [12] is vague, although it is based independently on research, for he notes that "it has long been believed that this island of Jersey contained fifty thousand people of all sexes and ages; but it is easy to prove otherwise; and that there are no more than twenty thousand." It bases this estimate on assize rolls and on the number of communicants in each parish, taking into account children and the infirm.

Dumaresq and Falle [13] both agree that this number is quite high. Dumaresq bases his argument on the number of houses in the island, 3,069, and on the number of men able to bear arms, extracted from the assize rolls, about 3,000. From these two figures he concluded that the population was no more than 15,000 people. The map of houses in each "vingtaine" was used for the construction of Figure 1 (b).

Falle, in his second edition [14], accepts the 1694 assessment made by Dumaresq (15,000), but reveals that the population of the island had increased considerably over the previous forty years and would be about 20,000.

Figure 2 Graph to show the estimated growth of the population of Jersey



The town of St. Helier itself, he said, had approximately 2,000 people at the very least, while the "vingtaine" of the town had more than 400 houses, up from 210 in 1685. He said the whole island was getting more built.

The key factor in the increase in construction seems to have been the subdivision of the land between all the members of a family which, at that time, still gave enough land to the younger sons to build their homes and start to exploit the land on their own behalf. Later, in the 19th and 19th centuries, this fragmentation was averted by the purchase, by the eldest son, of the shares of the youngest for an agreed sum [15].

It was around this time that we had the first true census which has been preserved [16]. Unfortunately it refers only to the parish of St. Clement: it is a report by the "constable" of the parish to Edmund Fielding on the number of men between 16 and 60 years of the parish on the evening of July 7, 1737. (See Table 2.)

Table 2. — Men between 16 and 60. Parish of St Clement, 1737 (by vingtaine).

Vingtaine	16-20	21-30	31-40	41-50	51-60
De Samares	11(4)	11(6)	13(2)	11(2)	6(2)
Grande Ville	2(1)	13(6)	13(1)	13(-)	6(-)
Rocquier	2(1)	4(1)	10(1)	4(-)	2(-)

(The figures in brackets show the number of people absent from the parish on the night of the census.)

St. Clement was divided into three vingtaines —Roquier, de Samares and Grande Vingtaine — with a population of 118, 213 and 206 inhabitants respectively, a total of 537 for the parish, of which 146 were men between the required ages.

This census reveals a population for the parish lower than Dumaresq's estimate for the year 1685 and is in stark contradiction to Falle's suggestion of a growing population over the entire island. However, small areas of depopulation are understandable, especially in a parish so close to the town of St. Helier. St. Clement also shows a relative decline in population density from 1331 to 1685: it was the most densely populated in 1331 but fell to 3rd place around 1685.

Another factor that may have influenced the population of the parish is illustrated by the number of men aged 16 to 60 absent at this time of year. 16% of all men were absent, 75% of those aged 16 to 30.

It was during this first part of the 17th century when the sea became important as an occupation alternating with the exploitation of farms, as a means of existence for the inhabitants of the island, and it seems likely that the families of the men, who had abandoned the farm and were occupied in the new fishing industry, went to the town of St. Helier.

No other censuses exist for the period between 1737 and 1806, and during the 17th century we were again at the mercy of topographers with a non-demographic spirit and whose calculations were usually incoherent and inaccurate. Some authors of pamphlets that made a great impact on the literature of the 16th century on Jersey were ignorant the population or gave magnified assessments to promote themselves.

Read [17] estimated the mid-century population to be about 20,000, although it seems likely that this figure was copied from Falle. However, it seems reasonable to admit a steady increase in the population of the island; in about 1770, a reliable estimate [18] gave a population figure of more than 22,000 and noted that this increase was due to natural increase rather than immigration.

Immigration had been a feature of the island's demographics since the Middle Ages; coming largely from the British Islands, the rate seems to have been weak but fairly steady and it was not until the 19th century that immigrants flocked to the island in large numbers, as a place to retire.

Immigration to find a tax haven seems to have been particularly developed during the 20th century. However, the British Isles were not the only source of immigrants; more of them came from France. Since the mid-17th century, political and religious refugees from France have been able to settle on the island of Jersey. The accession of Elizabeth I, in 1558, allowed the Huguenots to come and with the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes, 130 years later, a flood of refugees came to the island.

A small number continued to arrive on the island of Jersey during the 17th and 18th centuries, but the French Revolution provided another type of refugee: the royalists. Between 1790 and 1795, 3,000 to 4,000 priests and aristocrats arrived in the Channel Islands. The figure cannot be established accurately, but when the British Government decided to form a French refugee regiment, 3,500 were enlisted on the island of Jersey alone. They were the basis of the ill-fated Quiberon Bay expedition and only a very small number returned to the island of Jersey.

A temporary increase in the population occurred in 1799 when a Russian army, defeated in Holland, unable to return to Russia and banned from landing in England, was confined to the islands of Jersey and Guernsey. 6,000 to 8,000 officers and men were divided between the two islands, creating enormous problems with food, especially since both islands maintained garrisons above their normal strength.

By 1806, the date of the first real census, the population of the islands had returned to more normal proportions. The information contained in the census gives the number of families, boys and girls (under 16 years of age), men and women, by parishes and "vingtaines" (territorial districts). At that time, the parish of St. Helier had the densest population (2,936 people per 100 acres), with 4,420 (65% of the parish population: 6,460) in the "Vingtaine de la Ville", which formed the bulk of the town of St. Helier itself.

On the rest of the island, the population was remarkably dispersed, ranging from 522 people per 100 acres (St. Ouen) to 754 per 100 acres (St. John). The least populated parishes were St. Ouen, St. Brelade and St. Mary, where much of the island's uncultivated land was located. The small towns of Gorey and St Aubin were both well formed, while small hamlets became a character of the island's settlement, although still in an embryonic form (fig. 1 c).

Table 3. Jersey Population 1806 (after analysis) (19).

<i>Parish</i>	<i>Men</i>	<i>Women</i>	<i>Boys</i>	<i>Girls</i>	<i>Families</i>	<i>Total</i>
<i>St Helier</i>	1,471	2,031	1,323	1,635	1,447	6,460
<i>St Ouen</i>	488	480	376	588	334	1,932
<i>Trinity</i>	473	539	395	459	343	1,866
<i>St Brelade</i>	503	671	311	289	277	1,774
<i>St Peter</i>	385	451	357	487	289	1,680
<i>St Lawrence</i>	406	405	377	473	301	1,661
<i>St Martin</i>	408	378	300	467	326	1,553
<i>St John</i>	357	381	318	453	245	1,509
<i>St Saviour</i>	355	396	311	353	269	1,415
<i>Grouville</i>	301	352	310	362	242	1,325
<i>St Mary</i>	245	242	191	287	154	965
<i>St Clement</i>	185	227	138	165	132	715
<i>Total</i>	5,577	6,553	4,707	6,018	4,359	22,855

Some facts of general importance should be noted with regard to the population at that time, especially in view of the subsequent developments. The town of St. Helier dominated with about 2,090 households, while the rest of the population was still largely rural. The population density in the countryside of the island was fairly uniform, and high.

Another interesting fact is that the average number of people per family exceeded 5.2. This finding may suggest that the use of the figure of 5 per family, for older periods, is too high, as the average is slightly higher later, in the 19th century; this suggests that this was the beginning of a general increase in family size throughout the island.

The study of the population of Jersey before 1806 remains largely uncertain when examined in detail, but the major lines are clearly revealed and there is general agreement in the writings of the various authors.

A later article on the island's population, after 1806, is in preparation, in which we will draw up a general assessment of the development of the population of the island from the beginning.

(to follow.)

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