

Jersey Studies

Paper 3

JERSEY'S PARISHES

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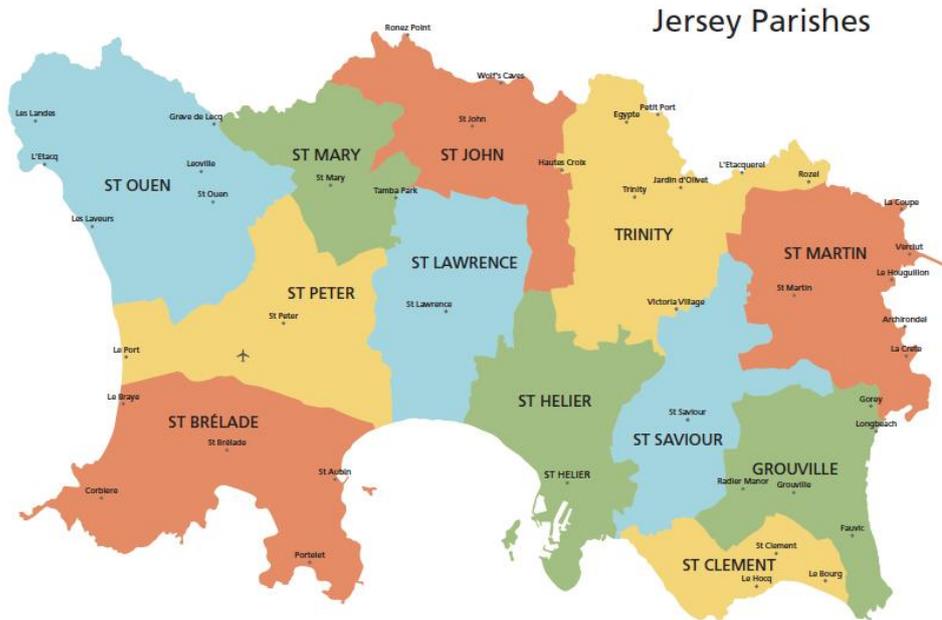
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I. INTRODUCTION

Jersey is divided into 12 parishes: Grouville, St Brelade, St Clement, St Helier, St John, St Lawrence, St Martin, St Mary, St Ouen, St Peter, St Saviour and Trinity. They are an integral part of Jersey's heritage and its society today.



II. Origin and growth of the parishes

The parishes date back to the 11th century, if not before, and probably originally evolved around a parish church and with boundaries reflecting natural features. The boundaries have subsequently changed little. It will be noted that each of the parishes has direct access to the sea, reflecting a clear intention, although in the case of St Saviour this is no more than a token.

The first substantive “census” in Jersey was the 1331 Extente, sometimes referred to as the Jersey Domesday Book. The Extente clearly shows that the parishes were firmly established. Jersey was organised by parish, ownership of particular bits of land were identified and each parish had named officers. The Extente also suggests the population of each of the parishes was in a fairly narrow range from about 500 to 1000. This may well reflect the initial intention of having administrative areas that were equally manageable in terms of population.

Over the years the distribution of the population between the parishes has changed markedly. St Helier is now by far the most populous parish while Trinity in particular has shown comparatively little population growth in the last 700 years.

Table 1 shows key population trends for the parishes.

Table 1 Population of Jersey by parishes, 1378-2011

Parish	1788	1901	2001	2021		Increase 2021/ 1788	Increase 2021/ 1901	Increase 2021/ 2001
	No	No	No	No	%	%	%	%
Grouville	1,262	2,513	4,702	5,401	5.2	328	115	14.9
St Brelade	1,756	2,231	10,134	11,012	10.7	527	394	8.7
St Clement	635	1,508	8,196	9,925	9.6	1,463	558	21.1
St Helier	4,064	27,866	28,310	35,822	34.7	781	29	26.5
St John	1,419	1,620	2,618	3,051	3.0	115	88	16.5
St Lawrence	1,598	2,292	4,702	5,561	5.4	248	143	18.3
St Martin	1,393	2,748	3,628	3,948	3.8	183	44	8.8
St Mary	869	934	1,591	1,818	1.8	109	95	14.3
St Ouen	2,025	2,246	3,803	4,206	3.9	99	79	5.9
St Peter	1,611	2,596	4,293	5,264	5.1	227	103	22.6
St Saviour	1,335	4,053	12,491	13,904	13.5	942	243	11.3
Trinity	2,058	1,969	2,718	3,355	3.2	63	70	23.4
Total	20,025	52,576	87,186	103,267	100.0	416	96	18.4

It will be seen that the three southern parishes of St Helier, St Saviour and St Clement have been the most rapidly growing since 1788. By contrast, Trinity and St Ouen have grown only slowly.

III. The parishes today – area and population

Table 2 shows key statistics for the population in respect of area, population and land use.

Table 2 Parishes, key statistics

Parish	Area sq km	Population 2021	Population per sq km	Built Environment %	Cultivation %
Grouville	8	5,401	658	22	60
St Brelade	12	11,012	830	29	24
St Clement	4	9,925	2,262	37	46
St Helier	9	35,822	3,716	52	30
St John	9	2,051	332	17	63
St Lawrence	10	5,561	566	22	61
St Martin	10	3,948	384	18	63
St Mary	7	1,818	277	15	68
St Ouen	15	4,206	274	14	59
St Peter	12	5,264	448	22	48
St Saviour	9	13,904	1,498	34	53
Trinity	12	3,355	267	16	61
Total	118	103,267	859	24	52

Population density is highest in the southern parishes, 3,716 people per square kilometre in St Helier, 2,262 in St Clement, 1,498 in St Saviour, 830 in St Brelade and 658 in Grouville. By contrast, the figures in the country parishes are significantly lower at 267 in Trinity, 277 in St Mary and 274 in St Ouen. Similarly, there are marked differences in land use between the parishes. Over half of land in St Helier comprises built environment with St Clement and St Saviour also having relatively high proportions. By contrast, the country parishes have over 60% of land under cultivation and also the highest proportions of land in the form of natural environment (38% St Brelade, 23% in St Ouen and 21% in Trinity).

IV. Organisation of the parishes

The role of the parishes with links to websites of the individual parishes is set out in a [page](#) on the Government website.

The parishes all have the same structure. Each parish is divided into a number of Vingtaines (Cueillettes in St Ouen).

The principal officer of the parish is the Constable, who by virtue of that office is also a member of the States Assembly. The Constables are elected at the General Elections, held every four years, the electorate being the same as for the other members of the States Assembly. Each parish has two Procureurs de Bien Public, elected at the parish assemblies, and who act as public trustees. They maintain an oversight of parish finances and represent the parish in the care of parish property. Each parish also has a Roads Committee and Roads Inspectors.

For many centuries Jersey has had a parish-based honorary police system headed by the Constable. Officers are elected as Centeniers, Vingteniers and Constable's Officers, with various duties and responsibilities. Centeniers have the power to investigate a reported incident to determine whether there is sufficient evidence to justify a charge and if so whether the public interest requires a prosecution or whether the matter can be dealt with in some other way.

Each parish has a rector appointed by the Crown who is the head of the established church within the parish. The rector is supported by two surveillants (churchwardens) and two almoners.

The parish assembly is an integral part of the way the parishes operate. People registered as electors in public elections and ratepayers are entitled to attend assemblies. The parish assemblies elect the officers (other than the Constable), are responsible for the care of the roads and the promotion of local improvements, for setting rates and considering licencing applications. The Constable presides over the parish assembly for these purposes while the rector presides when ecclesiastical matters are dealt with.

Each parish has a parish hall in which the officers of the parish are based. In the country parishes each is at the centre of a village as is the parish church, the rector being an officer of the parish.

V. The Visite de Branchage and Visite Royale

The Visite de Branchage is a longstanding part of the parish system. Branchage literally means branches. The branchage law, which dates back to 1914, requires that any vegetation that overhangs roads or footpaths must be cut back, so that there is a clearance of 12 feet over roads and eight feet over footpaths, and that all trimmings are cleared. Twice a year, in the three weeks commencing 24 June and 1 September, the parish officers, led by the Constable, check that land occupiers have completed the branchage in accordance with the law. These inspections are called the Visites de Branchage.

Twice a year the Royal Court pays a visit to a parish to examine the parish's accounts and to be taken on a tour of parish roads, during which it may be asked to rule on disputes such as encroachment of a tree on the public highway. The Visite Royal is known to date from when Jersey was part of the Duchy of Normandy.

VI. The individual parishes

St Brelade

St Brelade is in the south west corner of the Island. It is one of the largest and most densely occupied parishes. It is also one of the most varied of the parishes including a port, tourist beaches - St Brelade's Bay being the Island's most popular beach, cliffs, the prominent archaeological site at La Cotte, the famous Corbière lighthouse, commons, part of the sand dunes and large residential areas. St Aubin is built around the port which was the centre of the cod fishing trade which flourished in the 18th and 19th centuries. The parish hall is in St Aubin while the parish church is in St Brelade's Bay. In the post-War period the area known as Red Houses has become a major residential area with substantial amounts of both private and social housing. The Railway Walk, as its name suggests on land that was previously a railway track, runs from St Aubin to Corbière.

St Peter

St Peter is in the west of the Island. It has only small coastlines, on both the west and south coasts, and includes part of the sand dunes. It is the home of Jersey Airport which occupies a significant part of the land area of the parish. The Airport dates back to 1937 and has been continually upgraded, the runway now extending to 1,7000 metres. Also in the parish, and next to the Airport, is the ground of Jersey Reds, the Island's rugby team. St Peter has a distinct centre including parish hall, parish church and shops.

St Ouen

St Ouen occupies the north west corner of the Island and includes most of St Ouen's Bay, the longest bay in the Island, famous for its surf. The long sandy beach also hosted motor racing for many years. Running alongside the bay is a road colloquially known as the "Five Mile Road", the longest straight road in Jersey and which has also been used for motor racing. St Ouen is the home of a number of significant historic buildings including La Rocco Tower in St Ouen's Bay, the ruin of Gronez Castle, and St Ouen's Manor, home for many years of the seigneurs of St Ouen, the de Carteret family. St Ouen's Village, in the centre of the parish, includes the parish hall and the parish church.

St Mary

St Mary, on the north coast, is the second largest parish in terms of area and by far the smallest in terms of population, the home to just 1.8% of the Jersey population. It shares with St Ouen Grève de Lecq, a small but beautiful beach. A significant geographical feature is Devil's Hole, a natural crater in a solid cliff measuring about 30 metres across and plunging 60 metres down. It has been caused by the sea gradually eroding the roof of what was once a cave, until it collapsed and formed a crater. The result is a blow hole as the incoming tide pushes air upwards. The parish is the home of La Mare Wine Estate, a 20 acre working estate well known for its wines and local produce including black butter. St Mary's village, like the parish itself, is tiny.

St John

St John is a rural parish in the north of the Island with just two settlements, St John's Village and Sion. Ronez Quarry on the coast has been the source of high-quality granite for many centuries. The cliffs at Frémont Point, Sorel Point and Ronez Point afford some of the best views in the Island. Bonne Nuit is a particularly attractive bay with a small harbour, which is the finishing point for the annual Sark to Jersey rowing race.

Trinity

Trinity on the north coast is one of the largest parishes in terms of area but has the second smallest population and the lowest population density, the population being spread throughout the parish. This is in marked contrast to 1788 when its population was second only to that of St Helier; of all the parishes it has changed least in the last few hundred years. The parish has the highest point in the Island, Les Platons, and Bouley Bay, reached by two steep hills, which for many years were the venue for a hill climb. Trinity is home to the Jersey Zoo and the world-renown Durrell Conservation Trust and also the Royal Jersey Agricultural and Horticultural Society Showground.

St Martin

St Martin occupies the north east corner of the Island and for many centuries was in effect the capital of Jersey. In recognition of this, construction of Mont Orgeuil Castle was commenced in the 14th century. The castle is the most distinctive built structure in Jersey, and is recognised as one of the finest medieval forts in the British Isles. The Castle overlooks Gorey Harbour, once the centre of the oyster fishing industry. North of Mont Orgeuil is St Catherine's breakwater, another impressive structure, but in reality just one leg of a planned harbour that was never completed. Gorey Village has a number of hotels and restaurants; it and Maufant are the main residential areas. The parish hall and parish church are inland and in a rural part of the parish. The parish includes the Écréhous, a group of islands and rocks, 10 kilometres north east of Jersey.

Grouville

Grouville occupies the south east corner of the Island and includes the impressive Royal Bay of Grouville, which today is the centre of Jersey's shellfish industry. Mont Orgeuil Castle, which is partly in the parish, overlooks the Bay. Alongside the Bay is the Royal Jersey Golf Club, a traditional links course with Fort Henry as an unusual feature. Inland is one the Jersey's most noted archaeological site at La Hougue Bie. The population of the parish is concentrated along the coast, while the parish church and parish hall are inland. The parish includes the Minquiers, a group of islands and rocks, about 15 kilometres south of Jersey. The largest of these is Maitresse, which is about 50 metres by 20 metres and has about ten stone cottages in various states of repair.

St Clement

St Clement on the south east coast is the smallest parish in terms of area but one of the most densely occupied. It is very much a coastal parish, the population being concentrated on the coast. The parish hall is at Le Hocq, one of a number of bays in the parish, the others being La Rocque, Green Island and Greve D'Azette. The parish church is inland, on what is known as the "Inner Road". Samarès Manor is one of the finest manor houses in the Island.

St Saviour

St Saviour is very much an inland parish. It does have a tiny part of the coast, at the Dicq. When the parishes were created many centuries ago the intention was that every parish would have direct access to the sea, but in the case of St Saviour this is no more than a token. The parish is residential in nature with a high density of occupation. The parish includes most of the Island's secondary schools, Highlands College and Government House, the home of Jersey's Lieutenant Governor.

St Helier

St Helier is the capital of Jersey and by far the commercial and residential centre of the Island. It is home to 35% of the population in just 7% of the land area. The land area has been increased in recent years through a reclamation scheme. The reclaimed land now houses a number of apartment blocks as well as the Jersey International Financial Centre, providing high quality offices. The parish also has two major historic buildings, Fort Regent, overlooking the town, and Elizabeth Castle, on an islet just off the harbour.

St Lawrence

St Lawrence is in the centre of the Island, with a relatively small part of the coast in St Aubin's Bay. Jersey War Tunnels and Hamptonne Country Life are both in the parish. Over 700 years ago the fast-running streams resulting from north/south slope of the Island provided the power for water mills, which were essential to grind the corn. One of these mills, Quetevil, was in a part of St Lawrence, now called Waterworks Valley, as it is the home of Jersey Water, which is responsible for water supply in the Island. The valley includes Millbrook and Dannemarche reservoirs.