

NOS ÎLES

The 1944 paper that influenced post-Occupation developments in the Channel Islands

Summary and Context

Mark Boleat, February 2022

Introduction

In March 1944 the Channel Islands Study Group published *Nos îles, A Symposium on the Channel Islands*, widely regarded as a perceptive and influential set of papers. This note summarising the paper and adds some context.

The publication and the collaborators

Nos îles is 106 pages long, comprising an introduction, 15 chapters, a conclusion and some statistics. The chapters are written independently and it is made clear that there has been no attempt to secure uniformity of outlook or presentation. With one exception, the authors of the individual chapters are not listed.

The introduction lists 21 people who contributed to the writing or publication of the paper but in addition there were a number of “collaborators who wished to remain anonymous”. The “convenor” and driving force was Philip de Veuille. The address of the Study Group is given as 22 Melbourne Road, Teddington, Middlesex, which was his home. The listed collaborators are shown below. The publication gives initials rather than first names. Limited research drawing on a helpful listing in Jerripedia, together with details from the England 1939 Register, Wikipedia and other records has been done to give more details

- Major General Sir Donald Banks, Guernsey, a distinguished military record in WWI, Permanent Secretary in the Air Ministry before the War and during WWII Director General of the Petroleum Warfare Department. Wikipedia records –

Sir Donald was most concerned with the welfare of his fellow islanders exiled as a result of the German occupation of the Channel, and was in constant touch with the Home Office and Civil Servants responsible for the welfare of evacuees. He felt that there must be an informed voice and body of opinion among exiled Guernseymen and women that could influence the British Government, and assist the insular authorities after the hostilities were over.

In 1942, he was approached by the Home Office to see if anything could be done to get over a reassuring message to the islanders, as it was known that, despite the fact that German authorities had banned radios, that the BBC was still being picked up secretly in Guernsey and Jersey It was broadcast by the BBC on 24 April 1942.^[16]

He was instrumental in the founding of the Guernsey Society in 1943, as well as the publication of *Nos Îles* by the Channel Islands Study Group, following a [symposium](#) in Oxford in 1944.

Sir Donald served as Chairman of the Guernsey Society from its formation in 1943 until the end of 1946, when he was appointed Vice President.

- W Bedelle-Aubin, Jersey, and prominent musician.
- Laurence Bisson, Jersey, a doctor of the University of Bordeaux and Reader in French Literature at the University of London, who wrote the Jersey section of the paper on education.
- Air Commodore Henry Brock, Guernsey, Deputy Commandant of the Royal Observer Corp, first secretary of the Guernsey Society.
- W E Coles, Guernsey.
- Major John Crill, Jersey, brother of Peter Crill, later Bailiff of Jersey.
- Philip De Veulle, listed in the 1939 Register as an oil company executive living at the Lawrence Hall Hotel, Richmond, secretary of the Jersey Society.
- Herbert Fleure, Guernsey, Professor of Geography at the University of Manchester.
- Arthur Grayson, Jersey, prominent architect including of West Park Pavilion.
- Edward Hyman, Jersey, trade unionist, CI representative of TGWU.
- Cyril Le Marquand, Jersey, moved to England before the War and became Assistant Director of Animal Foodstuffs at the Ministry of Food. Founder of the Jersey Progressive Party, later the leading Jersey politician.
- John Le Patourel, Guernsey. He is listed in the England 1939 Register as a Lecturer in History at London University and living in Aylesbury. He is the leading expert on the Channel Islands in the mediaeval period.
- Darcy Le Tissier, Guernsey, horticulturist.
- Harold Lucas, Guernsey, contributor to the chapter on tourism.
- Albert Messervy, Jersey, veterinary surgeon.
- Arthur Mourant, Jersey, prominent scientist.
- Major G Rice, Jersey.
- Charles Rumfitt, Jersey, founder member of the Jersey Progressive Party, Deputy in 1945.
- W F Syvret, Jersey.
- J P Warren, Guernsey, schoolmaster.
- Executive Staff of the Alderney relief Committee.

It is significant that the publication is about the Channel Islands, not Jersey or Guernsey, although some of the chapters or parts of the chapters are specifically on one of the Islands. That the Islands faced similar issues and needed to co-operate on some issues is a theme.

The introduction

The introduction stresses the loyalty to the Crown and the independence of the Islands. The concluding paragraph reads –

Above all, however, the high hope for the future of the Channel Islands is founded upon a lively belief in the capacity of the islanders to surmount, through their own sense of individual responsibility and service and by their own devoted efforts, whatever obstacles may lie on the road to yet greater happiness and well-being.

I - A Survey

This is largely a factual section. It brings out differences between Jersey and Guernsey (eg in the English Civil war and in agriculture) but also notes the similarities. Three specific quotes are worth noting -

- Autonomy is thus very strongly based and very deeply cherished; and it will be a matter for serious thought to allow for this in post-war schemes.

- Thousands of islanders who were evacuated to Britain will have learned other ways. Some who have remained at home will feel deeply the break in island tradition since 1940, and may be expected to react in various ways according to temperament. There will no doubt be those who wish to rehabilitate the old system as completely as possible; others will plead for innovations in various directions.
- The acquisition of residence in the Channel Islands by people coming to them to avoid income tax must be avoided in some way; and the islands will gladly enter into a general scheme of contributions for defence of the Commonwealth.

Among other points made –

- The economic life of the Islands will need careful consideration, in particular transitional arrangements in respect of financial assets and liabilities.
- “It seems possible that, with increased air travel, and curiosity to see a place occupied and fortified by the enemy, the tourist industry may even increase; and Jersey may well gain from this, but needs to watch lest her beauty be seriously diminished by uncontrolled building.”
- “The early potato industry again seems to have reasonable prospects. The tomato trade will find increased competition but, as the tomato is often a second crop on land that has yielded potatoes, it can probably survive.”
- “If the Jersey breed is still in good fettle in the island after the war, a large demand for pedigree beasts will help considerably.”
- “Jersey could thus look forward to a good future economically, but will need to bear in mind in new ways her proximity to France and her dangerous position in any possible war.”
- “It needs to be considered carefully whether evacuees who have made their way to some extent in Britain during the war should not be encouraged to stay where they are or helped to emigrate.”
- “Guernsey’s economic position is probably a more critical one than Jersey’s”, partly attributed to Guernsey’s less favourable topography.
- Alderney was described as “a special problem”, given that the entire population had been evacuated, and that prior to the War the population had declined, the Island had little sources or income and that the harbour was unsuitable.

II - The Political Development of the Channel Islands

This chapter, which almost certainly was written by John Le Patourel, began with a somewhat scathing comment on the study of history of the islands –

There can be few subjects upon which much has been written with so little understanding and to so little purpose as the history of the Channel Islands. The picturesque or sensational incidents in their long history, anything that has the makings of an anecdote in it, have indeed been told and retold, but it is difficult to find any serious attempt to understand their evolution as self-governing and politically self-conscious communities. The task of searching for information among the books that pass for histories of the islands can be exceedingly depressing; for they are interminably repetitive, annalistic and anecdotal; they solve no problems for they see none to solve.

One document (which is in the Société Jersiaise library) was singled out for praise –

There is only one work which shows any understanding of their political evolution, and that is the Memorandum prepared by the Attorney-General for Jersey in connection with the Jersey Prison Board Case, heard before the Privy Council in 1894.

The key purpose of this chapter was to examine the claim that the islands had learnt to govern themselves. The chapter has a detailed examination of the relationship over time between the islands and the English Crown.

In respect of the more modern history the chapter notes that the States have become more representative. Until the middle of the 19th Century they comprised the Bailiffs (appointed by the Crown), the jurats (elected for life), the rectors (Crown nominees) and the constables (elected by the ratepayers). “This could not be described as a very democratic body.” The changes by 1940, rather more significant in Guernsey and Jersey, were noted:

Although it is clear that in both islands the system of representation is capable of further development and improvement, the representative members in both assemblies already outnumber the permanent and ex-officio members.

The Islands were at this time “behind the times” in respect of social legislation –

The development of these powers in the island legislatures was probably to some extent a result of the great legislative hustle that recent years have witnessed, not only in the Channel Islands, but in all civilised countries. In the islands this legislation has been in part designed to bring their law more into conformity with modern conditions, as in the law of inheritance and in matrimonial law; in part it has been concerned with social legislation, that is education, public health, accident insurance, and so on. In both respects the islands have done much and still have much to do. If they were accused of backwardness in social legislation, they would reply very properly that they have had no serious problem of poverty for a very long time, and that the organisation of their main industry, market gardening; is such that a very high proportion of the work - people have a good chance of being their own masters one day, a prospect which Channel Islanders, certainly, may find more attractive than any amount of social insurance. A land of smallholdings and free enterprise (in the nineteenth century sense) has bred independence and self-reliance in its people. Whether these virtues, with their attendant defects, are those which will best meet conditions in the future remains to be seen.

The final three sentences in this chapter are highly significant – stressing that the Island’s governance structures are their own creation but that they need to be brought up to date –

But when all due allowance has been made for these unknown quantities, there remains no reasonable doubt that the law of Jersey and the law of Guernsey, their representative institutions, their modern administration, that is, the essentials of their government, are substantially the islanders’ own achievement. Channel Islanders may regard their institutions of government with affection, even with pride; but they will be false to their own traditions if they regard the future of their government in a spirit of complacent antiquarianism or narrow traditionalism. The work of modification and adaptation to changing conditions must go on continually, and the islanders have no greater boon to ask of fortune than to be allowed to get on with the job.

III - Co-operation between the Islands

This chapter begins with a perceptive comment –

The loyalties of the islanders, have however, also formed probably always been directed each to his own island rather than to the group, and they have seldom appreciated the advantages to be obtained from common action among a group of people having most of their vital interests in common.

There is, moreover, a friendly but deep-seated rivalry between Jersey and Guernsey which arises from certain innate differences of which we have hints throughout historic and perhaps even prehistoric times. Guernsey's interests have long been more maritime and commercial; she has been more progressive in politics, more puritanical in religion and has absorbed more of English language and culture. Jersey's interests have been more purely agricultural; feudalism has been deeper-rooted and there has been, perhaps, a stronger sense of the value of established institutions in politics and religion. While her loyalty has, since the political separation from Normandy, been wholeheartedly to England, she has retained closer linguistic and cultural ties with the Continent. During the past century these differences have become less marked but they have by no means disappeared.

As we consider the possibilities of future co-operation between the islands it is well that we should have in mind the past history of such co-operation and, at times, the lack of it.

The chapter describes co-operation between the islands at an official and unofficial level up to including the period of the Occupation. The key message from the chapter can be summed up in this paragraph –

After the liberation the islands will have to face many problems in a greatly changed and disturbed world, and nearly every one of these problems will be common to all the islands. It will, therefore, be well for them to face them in common. In internal affairs, consultation should be the primary aim, with common machinery only if the situation should urgently demand it. The immediate internal problems will largely be the same for all the islands and in facing them a pooling of the knowledge and wisdom of the States and their advisers should prove to be of great value.

Communications and shared advertising for tourism were specifically mentioned as areas where co-operation would be helpful, with medical, veterinary and agricultural services also being mentioned.

The paper suggested that a small Channel Islands Council be established to have full administrative control over common services. It went on –

We have already mentioned the possibility of joint representation of the islands in dealing with the British Government and with other British interests. To this end it might be advantageous to maintain a permanent Channel Islands Office in London.

The paper concluded with a point about the willingness of the islands to work together –

More important, however, than any set scheme, is the disposition of the islanders to work together, and of this, as we have seen, there has been increasing evidence in the years immediately preceding and during this war. Without such a disposition the most elaborate scheme will break down. With it, even a most imperfect scheme will be able to work and to eliminate its imperfections in the course of its working.

IV – Agriculture

The paper on agriculture is divided into separate sections on Jersey and Guernsey, both of which have good analyses of the nature of the industry in the two islands. Potatoes feature prominently in the section on Jersey.

The prosperity of agriculture in Jersey rested on the ability to export early potatoes to the open English market before English earlies were ready and to export outdoor grown tomatoes during August to November when English glasshouse supplies were on the wane.

The paper also notes the progress made in growing tomatoes in the inter-War period and that exports of cattle have been dependent on freedom from infectious diseases.

The paper suggest that the future will depend on what happened during the Occupation, by the plans of the British authorities to meet post-War needs and then it identified as the single most important factor “will be whether the Colorado Beetle has now invaded the island and if so, how quickly effective measures can be taken to combat the pest”. The immediate post-War needs would depend partly on timing of liberation, very relevant for the potato crop. Logistical issues such as the availability of manure, tractors, barrels and sacks were mentioned and it was noted that shortage of labour could be a problem.

The section concluded on an optimistic note –

Whatever the particular agricultural problems the Channel Islands may have to face during the next few years, the fundamentals will remain unaltered—a favourable climate, a fertile soil and a high agricultural skill. We must hope that economic and other conditions will very soon allow the products of these once more to come to England to the advantage of buyer and seller alike.

The section on Guernsey noted that what had been written about Jersey “applies equally to Guernsey”. The tomato industry was of particular concern, with freight and handling being serious handicaps. As for Jersey, the Colorado beetle was mentioned as a threat. And as with the section on Jersey there was an optimistic end –

Growing has been Guernsey’s latest and most profitable industry. When the island is liberated, ingenuity will be found to utilise again the reservoir of energy and skill, the fertility of the land and the favourable climatic conditions which enemy occupation cannot destroy.

V - Trade and Finance

This paper, perhaps written by Cyril Le Marquand, is remarkably detailed, including many statistics for both islands. It noted that the cost of imports had to be met by income from exports, overseas investments and pensions of residents and income from the tourist industry and that these were likely to be substantially lower in the Post-War period than pre-War. It was estimated that the population of Jersey post-War would be 40,000, compared with 54,000 pre-war. Tourism was seen as being vital to restore prosperity and that there would be a big demand for holidays and that the islands should seek to provide the best holiday conditions. The paper concluded on this point –

There can be little doubt, if the islands are to maintain the same populations as in pre-war days, that they will need to have a tourist industry at least as large as before the war.

The immediate post-war issues were seen as being relief – medical supplies, food etc, the revival of trading and the return to the island of refugees and demobilised servicemen. Prioritisation of who should be allowed to return to the Islands was suggested –

The priorities which appear desirable from an economic standpoint, for permanent return to the islands during the post-liberation and relief period are:—

(i) Agricultural workers, public officials, doctors, bank and insurance officials, proprietors of established businesses; residents who make a declaration that they are self-supporting from external income; all servicemen and servicewomen upon their discharge from H.M. Forces.

(ii) Employees whose employers in the islands make successful application to the local authorities for a permit for their immediate return, and who are willing to return.

(iii) Other workers to return for permanent residence only when employment is in sight. It has to be remembered that as there is no unemployment insurance in the islands, an unemployed worker is a potential charge on the Poor Law.

Financial problems were categorised under four headings –

- Losses, which will be subject to war indemnities, to restitution by the enemy, or to compensation for common-cause losses, including grants for the revival of industries, etc.
- The pre-war debt.
- Foreign exchange losses and currency re-establishment.
- All other kinds of expenditure or liabilities resulting from the enemy occupation.

It was suggested that pre-war debts could be consolidated and that new borrowing might be necessary including the States establishing their own savings departments and certificates.

The paper suggested that in 1938 Jersey had outstanding debt of £1,271,190 (about £90 million in today's prices) and a modest revenue deficit. The financial position pointed to the need for tax rates to be higher, exemption limits to be lower and for indirect taxes to be increased. However, the merits of low tax were stated –

To attract [tourists] in future we must offer advantages in day-to-day living costs to counterbalance the high fares. Therefore we must seek to keep all taxes at a low level. One means of keeping rates of taxation at a low level in the islands will be to develop a large tourist industry so that imports and consequent local profits increase and the scope for taxation widens.

The paper noted that the poor law, lighting and roads were parochial responsibilities and that there was a good case for these functions to be centralised.

Little scope was seen for new trades or industries although it was thought that there might be good prospects for a Channel Islands co-operative fishing industry, perhaps including the revival of the oyster trade.

The paper concluded by emphasising the importance of communications to England.

VI - The Tourist Industry

Tourism merited a detailed paper on its own and it dealt specifically with Jersey although noting that the arguments applied equally to Guernsey, although it had only a fraction of Jersey's accommodation. It considered that the Islands could expect a reasonable increase in tourist numbers and a longer season than pre-war. The attractions of the Islands were described as –

First, the adventure of the sea or air journey, the feeling of going abroad and the semi-historical associations. Thirdly, and by no means the least attraction, the low price of wines

and spirits, tobacco and cigarettes. Finally, there is the desire to get away from crowds, the sense of freedom from train timetables and rigid organisation.

Concerns were expressed about Channel steamer accommodation and lack of amenities for wet days. It was noted that: "Some islanders seem to have a prejudice against the visitor traffic", partly attributed to the establishment of three holiday camps in beauty spots attracting the "younger and poorer element". The paper was clear on what needed to be avoided –

There is one point on which all the former visitors questioned are in agreement: that is the avoidance at all cost of organised beach entertainment, automatic machines, fun-fairs and all the other trappings for which Blackpool, Brighton, Southend and Margate are famous.

The benefits deriving from tourists' expenditure were well understood –

Collectively, tourists consumed large quantities of liqueurs, wines, spirits and beers, and they smoked much tobacco and cigarettes bought in the island and dutiable there. Allowing, in addition, for what each passenger was permitted to take from the island into the United Kingdom free of United Kingdom duty, the revenue derived by the States from this source was considerable.

The wider benefits of tourism through increased harbour revenues and increased spending power and tax liability of those who benefited from tourism were also understood. The paper commented –

- Without the direct and indirect contributions coming into the States treasury from the tourist industry, it would have been necessary, in order to produce the same aggregate revenue, to tax the islanders more.
- The provision of shops, hotels, dance halls and cinemas, and the visits of first-class repertory companies (such as the Malvern Players) for thirteen-week seasons, and of concert parties, brought some definite cultural benefits which all sections of island life enjoyed.
- The general standard of living in the island tended to move up with the rise of the island as a tourist and residential resort rather than as the result of agricultural developments.

The paper concluded with a detailed section headed "some ideas for development". The first suggestion was to lengthen the season through a combination of concentrating publicity on earlier and later sunny weather, providing amenities for early and late holidaymakers and getting agreement of hotel keepers to "out of season" charges. Other points mentioned were the need for wet weather entertainment, eg bands, conference facilities, encouraging local orchestras, better facilities for yacht owners and given the importance of internal travel "whether all transport for public hire (other than hackney cabs) should not be publicly owned". It then listed "other desirable amenities" –

- A children's nursery at Havre-des-Pas and West Park and paddling pools for older children.
- A new West Park bathing pool.
- An interest to be taken in the wellbeing of recreation ground such as that at Grève d'Azette.
- Increased numbers of shelters, seats, sign posts and public conveniences around the coast and in the country.
- The proper upkeep of existing cliff paths and their extension where possible.
- Access to all headlands and beaches to be opened up.
- The Jersey National Trust to be helped.
- Beach wardens to give warning against dangerous bathing places and to keep the beaches clean.
- The creation and upkeep of better flower displays in public gardens and parks.

- The provision of youth hostels.
- The Island talent to be used for example by establishing an open air theatre and having an annual pageant.
- Summer schools to be run.
- Golf tournaments to be organised.

The paper suggested the establishment of a Tourism Committee together with a Tourist Development Corporation to help foster the industry, and cooperation with Guernsey on publicity outside the United Kingdom.

VII - Town and Country Planning.

The paper, perhaps written by Arthur Grayson or Philip de Veulle, noted that the increase in the visitor trade and in the number of residents had resulted in the towns becoming more and more crowded and that “every plot of land in the urban area areas had become of high value and, until very recent years, could be built over to the fullest extent without let or hindrance thus creating in many cases the slums of the future”. Inside the towns the traffic problem was seen to be acute. The past was summarised as –

All these unsatisfactory conditions have been brought about by building without any sort of “master” plan and virtually no control. We must arrest this type of development, which was destroying before our very eyes so much that was beautiful and unique. It was unplanned development and quite unworthy of the islands.

The paper argued the case for a “master plan for each island”. This should begin with a comprehensive survey of existing conditions. The plans should enhance the unique natural features of the Islands, define limits of the towns and villages, delineate the main traffic routes and indicate the various types of building that will be required in particular areas. The need was identified in St Helier for “a good “through road” running east to west”, and reconstruction of the railways and reinstatement of abandoned lines “may offer possibilities which should not be overlooked”.

A number of specific suggestions were made –

- The coastline of Jersey should be more accessible and there should be ample provision of footpaths on the coastline.
- Some of the picturesque old fortifications might be developed as “pleasances”, Elizabeth Castle, Martello towers and Mont Orgueil Castle being specifically mentioned.
- The traditional architecture should be allowed to exercise more influence on contemporary building.
- More use should be made of granite and the colour of buildings is of great importance.
- The towns need to be opened up through the provision of miniature parkways and generous provision of open spaces, the main streets in the town should be replanned as streets and not piecemeal, the continental atmosphere of the towns could be enhanced by open air cafes and the introduction of fountains trees shrubs and flowers, and adequate parking should be provided to keep the streets clear of stationary vehicles.
- Houses should be planned in well-considered groups not scattered at random. Part of the need for additional housing might be met by the provision of carefully designed blocks of flats.
- Industrial building should be camouflaged, for example by planting trees.
- Some of the long lost street names in patois or French should be revived.
- Where railings and fences have been removed these should not be reinstalled.
- All forms of outdoor advertising should be strictly controlled.
- Penalties should be imposed for littering.

- Wherever possible telephone and electric cable should be underground.
- There should be a States policy to prevent excessive cutting and lopping of trees and the planting of new trees.

The paper concluded by saying that much of the beauty of the Islands had been destroyed or spoiled by pre-War developments but that much that is beautiful remains and there is an urgent need to prepare plans for future development which should “endeavour to absorb all that is best in the current ideas on planning”.

VIII - Land Utilisation

The paper began with the comment that the future prosperity and well-being of the Channel Islands depends, in order of priority, on a healthy agriculture, the British “rentier” resident and the tourist industry.

On agriculture, two main needs were identified: an acceptance of the value of trees for the retention of the fertility of the soil and legislation to ensure that no further agricultural land would be used for building.

The coastlines were regarded as one of the Islands’ most precious assets with preservation requiring proper conservation of and access to the coastal areas, tenants of communes not being permitted to lease out portions of their commune for the erection of beach huts or other semi-permanent structures and the establishment and continued maintenance of coastal pathways.

On footpaths proper access to the countryside could be secured by the preservation of existing footpaths and where traceable the old sanctuary pathways. It was suggested that a footpath Commission be established to survey existing paths, seek new rights of way, recommend the opening of further paths and give publicity to their proceedings.

The paper suggested that any fresh forms of industrial development or continued extractive industry such as quarrying in the coastal areas should be banned. It was considered that all road widening or other development schemes should be required by law to include provision for the replacement of trees necessarily felled and the planting of others.

On planning, the paper suggested that each island should be zoned in order to define clearly coastal belts, agricultural and rural areas, towns (“all of which can be said to have reached their maximum permissible size”) and nature reserves. The paper was emphatic on one point –

There should be a complete ban on speculative building as such, and particularly on any attempt by island or non-island interests to “cash in” on the islands’ post-war housing difficulties.

The paper concluded with some general comments –

Owing to the limited amount of space available in the islands, land and its proper use are so important that the interests of the community as a whole should come before the interests or wishes of the minority. So long, however, as owners are allowed to do whatever they please with their land, physical planning is not possible—or at least it cannot be properly carried out. Not infrequently, the community eventually has to bear the burden of rectifying the results of neglecting the public aspects of the use of private property. The time has now arrived when we should regard our land, its beauties and its productivity as a matter of public concern and

as our trust for those who are to follow after us. If we are to do this effectively we must accept town and country planning as a necessary part of wise government.

IX – Education

This paper is divided into separate sections on Jersey and Guernsey. Uniquely among the papers it is stated that the section on Jersey is a paper by Dr L A Bisson, Reader in French literature at Oxford University, read before the Jersey Society in London in October 1943. This paper seems out of tune with many of the others – backward looking and making comments that today seem inappropriate, particularly in respect of the number of children deserving a first-class education.

The paper begins by emphasising the importance of the teachers and the taught rather than type of school or curriculum. In respect of the “taught” the paper said that the pupils should be grouped at an early stage “so that they will receive the sort of education for which they are most fitted”. In respect of teachers the comment is made that

Almost the only generalisation I can make with any certainty after 25 years is that a school is entirely and exclusively the product of its Head. He or she alone, by the force of personality and character and example rather than precept can radiate and diffuse and inculcate that *discipline* of right thinking, that *urge* to right living. That influence is exerted on staff and pupils alike.

The paper offered a few general opinions

Jersey should preserve its independence and education and not slavishly follow the English model. There should be fostered in all schools a healthy local patriotism “every jersey boy and girl should have a clear idea of how the island is governed, of the growth and development of its constitution”.

A University College in Jersey, which some have advocated, would be a rash and undesirable experiment. It would be superfluous to found a university institution in a community which has no academic, literature or cultural traditions of its own and which already has an intimate link with Oxford.

A good system of secondary education is infinitely more important than the question of higher education. Victoria College was regarded as the nucleus of an excellent secondary school but there was the hope that it would remain a small school not much above 300 boys “and I very much doubt whether a community the size of Jersey produces more than 300 boys at a time who are really worth a first-class humanistic education”. Similar comments were held to apply to the former Jersey Ladies College.

Academic education and vocational training do not mix very satisfactorily

There should be a universal continuous system of general education for the average child from infancy to school leaving run on democratic lines selecting for the higher secondary training only the very limited number of children really suited to it.

Adult education is a difficult problem but if organised tuition is to be arranged it should not be done through night classes, which do not work.

The section on Guernsey is very different in structure largely comprising a description of the pre-War arrangements. There were some useful concluding comments -

In conclusion it may be said that the island's education system is a flexible instrument evolved to meet the needs of a small community. The policy of the Education Council is not static, neither does the Council appear to have any desire slavishly to follow the English system in its entirety. It cannot be said, however, that every islander is satisfied. Many desire to see an increase in the number of children attending the intermediate and secondary schools. Some wish to see the introduction of an entrance examination to be taken by all prospective pupils of these schools. Others ask for additional aid to be granted to students desirous of entering the universities and training colleges. Advocates for the extension of manual training for boys and domestic science for girls exist. These are only some of the changes that are urged. The need for their adoption is, no doubt, always under consideration. Such criticisms as these are to be welcomed as symptomatic of a healthy community which, conscious of its past, is concerned for its future.

X - Labour Conditions and Social Services

The opening paragraph described the pre-War position –

Jersey depended for its livelihood and its prosperity largely upon the cultivation for and export of potatoes and tomatoes and the attraction of, and catering for, holiday visitors. The significance of these facts is that a large section of the working population depended mainly upon seasonal employment for its main source of income. In the winter months there was considerable under-employment and unemployment, but at no time did this reach the scale when it might have become a serious social menace.

Owing to the importance of the time factor, labour had to be imported into Jersey for the export and visitor seasons and so a considerable amount of money was paid in wages to workers who took a substantial portion of such wages out of the island with them at the end of their contracts.

Guernsey was seen as providing more stable employment.

The cost of living in both Jersey and Guernsey was considered to be higher than in the UK while hours of work were higher and wage rates were at the same level or lower. It was noted that trade unionism had reached the Channel Islands after only the Great War but generally it was more difficult to organise workers than in the United Kingdom.

This was partly the result of the apathy already mentioned and partly the result of the fact that most people did not read newspapers of a type to give them a background for the formation of opinions of their own on political and social issues.

The close personal relationship between employer and employee, the thrifty nature of the Islanders, emigration by the more ambitious and simple tastes were all held to contribute as to why the people in the islands accepted with little protest the lack of adequate social services or even factory regulations that had been established in the UK and other countries for many years.

However it was suggested that in the future the position would change because Islanders had experience of working conditions in the UK and in the services and "in any case, the further advance in social services which is expected to take place in the United Kingdom and the growth of "social" government everywhere can hardly leave the Channel Islands unaffected".

On social services it was noted that until the evacuation Jersey's only social services was its social assurance, in effect a workman's compensation scheme, there being no unemployment or health insurance or old age, widows or orphans pensions, although there had been proposals for an old age pension scheme but which had not been implemented. Unemployed workers could only obtain relief as parish poor.

For the future the paper was clear

Full health and release from the fear of want, in sickness, unemployment and old age, are the pre-requisites for full creative living. At no time in their history have the islands needed more than now to develop the full vigour and resourcefulness of the people. Much less in the future than in the past can they afford not to take positive measures for ensuring full health and full productive and consumption capacity.

The question was raised as to whether social services could best be provided by the Islands themselves singly or in joint schemes or by contracting-in with the UK schemes.

XI – Music

Although it is not stated it is assumed that this paper was written by W Bedelle-Aubin, a prominent musician.

The paper notes that the dearth of folk songs in the Islands is a strange fact attributed probably to the former close links with Normandy. Pre-Occupation it was considered that musical interest in Jersey was predominantly individual performance whereas in Guernsey the standard of choral and orchestral work remained at a very high level. It was noted that the Jersey Green Room club ("still very active") had been remarkably successful in producing practically all of the works of Gilbert and Sullivan.

Social changes were noted, winter evenings of making music at home gradually being superseded by journeys to St Helier to go to the cinema to dance or to patronise other amusements.

The paper hoped that music would become an essential and normal part of education.

Despite the disadvantages under which Islanders lived it was noted that they had produced a remarkably high standard of musical performance. The eisteddfods were identified as being particularly significant.

The paper noted that it was impossible to guess what the standard of music would be in the Channel Islands as they had been isolated from any knowledge of musical activities in England. It was suggested that after Liberation a competent lecturer or lecturers should visit the islands to make the people familiar with musical developments since the summer of 1940 and that this should be followed by a series of recitals by well-known artists from London. "Good music should prove not only a steadying influence but an invigoration to all Islanders in the difficult but promising days ahead".

XII – Alderney

The paper on Alderney is remarkably detailed, covering the pre-War history, government and economy of the Island. The whole of the island had been evacuated in 1940. A voluntary relief committee had been formed in London for the purpose of representing the Alderney people in Great Britain.

The section on the future noted that Alderney's problems would differ from those facing Jersey and Guernsey, as their administrations were still functioning and where many of the adult population

remained in the Islands. It was considered that the mode of life that existed up to the time of the Evacuation was unlikely to return. A number of suggestions had been made for future development –

- The growing of seed potatoes for export to Jersey.
- The development of a Channel Islands fishing industry on a cooperative basis.
- Pigs should be bred for home consumption and export and curing and smoking of bacon might be undertaken.
- An air service with England, Jersey and Guernsey would be beneficial.
- Home industries such as wicker basket-making etc.
- The extraction of magnesium from sea water and of iodine from seaweed, although the former would require a large and cheap supply of electricity.

XIII – Sark

The chapter on Sark is similarly very detailed for a small island, with a particularly long section on history. The concluding paragraph reads –

Sark presents an interesting example of partial adaptation of old arrangements to modern needs, a lord of the manor unable to speak in the assembly unless he himself owns some of the farms which carry votes, a legislature without elections that yet has some claims to speak for the people though the cottagers have no spokesman or vote, officials who in some cases have a great deal of work and responsibility, but who are unpaid save for small fees against expenses of journeys to Guernsey and a few other matters. The old manorial system was still very much alive in 1939; it may need patching after the war, but one may hope there will not be a too great break with the past.

XIV - Democracy in the Channel Islands

This important paper begins with some general observations on the nature of democracy to put the subsequent comments in context. The impact of the War is explicitly noted -

Unsuspecting and unprepared, the Channel Islands have been plunged violently into the maelstrom of world war. All the islanders, whether they left the islands or remained, have been living under entirely new and different sets of conditions. New experiences—bitter or fruitful—have been gained. New perspectives have been set. Thousands of islanders have, for the first time, seen something of English life and of its industrial communities. Many have experienced some of the social benefits which the struggle for democracy has earned. Some will have seen the working of English local government at first hand. Those who have suffered under the occupation will have seen their public rights ruthlessly over-ridden, their law-making made subservient to an alien rule, and their cherished freedom and independence trampled upon. All will have become newly conscious of the economic and political factors which enter into the workings of government. All will have reflected upon, and made comparison with, the things they formerly knew in the islands. This wider understanding will help us to see more clearly than before the distinguishing characteristics of the constitutional and political setting of the Channel Islands in its negative, as well as in its positive, aspects.

In making comparisons with Britain the absence of political parties and of any concentrations of wealth or economic power was noted, but on the other hand there was a strong if declining influence of the churches, forms of patriarchal or oligarchical rule to which the majority of Islanders are strongly attached with the historic office of Jurat still combining judicial, legislative and administrative functions. The paper asked the question of whether the net product constituted an efficient organism for meeting the needs of the society it serves. It was noted that there had been little evidence of any general desire for radical changes in the form of government.

Issues for the future were identified, including that the islands were lacking in measures of social relief and security which had been current in many countries for decades, but on the other hand the need for such measures was less in other communities. The spirit of voluntary service which had characterised the Islands' legislative and administrative systems was regarded as "a priceless asset which should not only be preserved but extended into new forms of community work".

The paper concluded by saying that the democracy in the Channel Islands must be subject to well considered adjustments which will be of a different pattern from elsewhere.

We must choose our own path of democratic development according to our peculiar ways and traditions, determined to face realities and not abstractions. We can avoid some of the weaknesses inherent in democracy elsewhere if we build on the solid foundations of our respect for traditional forms, a strong community consciousness and an understanding of the worth of co-operation. Mingling "la luddite et l'audace" we can move far on the road of political progress towards yet greater freedom and happiness.

Conclusion

This section merits reproduction in full –

Many aspects of the life of the islands have been touched upon in this book, but it is not claimed that the picture presented is in anyway complete. For example, nothing has been said about the proud history of the militias of the islands, or of the military future of the islands. No attempt has been made to consider the complicated legal issues that are likely to present themselves after the liberation of the islands. Nor has any detailed study been made of the financial problems which must arise. Nothing has been written about the psychological effects of the Nazi occupation and rule. The residue of suffering which the enemy will leave behind, and which will bear hardly on the lives of many for years to come, has not been discussed. In the absence of precise, and authoritative information on these subjects no good purpose would be served in giving expression to individual ideas and feelings about them.

We must, nevertheless, prepare ourselves to face the results of four years of Nazi rule, momentarily masked though these may be by the excitement and joy of liberation and reunion. The islands and islanders must have already suffered much. The further progress of the war and the process of liberation may impose still greater suffering before the islands can regain their former freedom. Adjustment to the conditions that must ensue in a war-torn Europe and in a world painfully groping towards better ways of living together in amity, instead of in fear and suspicion and under the threat of war, will not be quick or easy.

Yet we may be confident that the individuality and traditions of the islands will not weaken or disappear, though the day-to-day outlook may be in some respects changed. The Channel Islands have always had that great and inalienable heritage of self-government, to which other communities, far larger and potentially greater than they, aspire. And as the Nazi occupation of the islands has automatically involved the loss of local autonomy and their time-honoured freedom, so will their liberation carry with it the promise of an early restoration of their cherished liberties and independence.

The studies in this book have shown the patterns of community which have partly been created by the islanders themselves and have partly evolved from the changes in external and internal conditions experienced in the course of time. Their design and inspiration have been constant throughout. Loyalty to the Crown, a sturdy independence of character, a strong

attachment to self-government, a remarkable capacity for adaptation to changing economic conditions: these great virtues, sharpened, even, by the experience of war, will again provide the foundations upon which the edifice of the future happiness and prosperity of the islands can safely rest.

Statistics

The paper concludes with tables showing population and trade with the United Kingdom separately for Jersey and Guernsey.

The importance of the publication

So how influential was *Nos Îles* in shaping post-Occupation developments in the Islands? It is impossible to say with any precision. The papers correctly describes the issues that would need to be considered and the very different environment, and it is reasonable to assume that they contributed to the climate which enable important political and social reforms to be implemented. But other factors played a part including more people in the Islands reading British newspapers and generally being more conscious of life elsewhere.

A number of the collaborators, notably Cyril Le Marquand, but also Charles Rumfitt and Philip de Veulle, were instrumental in making change happen. Cyril Le Marquand returned to Jersey after the Liberation and became a founder member of Jersey Progressive Party, together with Charles Rumfitt. Le Marquand campaigned for the reform of the States. He was elected to the States in 1948 and quickly became a leading States member, as President of the Committee of Essential Commodities, a supporter of the highly controversial introduction of a social security scheme and involved in the reorganisation of Jersey Electricity of which he became Chairman. In 1957 he was elected as Senator, topping the poll. He became President of the Finance and Economics Committee and also subsequently the Policy Advisory Committee from its inception in 1973 to 1978. Together with Ralph Vibert, he played a leading part in helping to secure a favourable position for Jersey when Britain joined the European Economic Community in 1972.

The new States set up at committee to draw up a scheme for the reform of the Assembly. Following careful consultation and discussion at parish meetings there were two major reform acts in 1948. These provided that jurats in future would be elected not by popular suffrage but rather by an electoral college. The jurats would no longer sit in the States, being replaced by 12 senators elected on an Island-wide basis, the rectors would cease to have seats *ex officio* and the number of deputies would increase from 17 to 28. This was widely accepted; indeed it was impossible to defend the previous structure. The introduction of social security, however, was strongly opposed in the country parishes and was not implemented until 1951. Educational provision was expanded, divorce was legalised in 1949 and utilities were expanded.

Marguerite Syvret and Joan Stevens in *Balleine's History of Jersey* (1958) had a brief section on *Nos Îles* and its impact.

No one who watched the departure of the occupying force in 1945, or returned to the Island in the following months after enforced exile in England, could have what was to happen in the next 35 years of the 20th century. A group of these exiles, in 1944, published *Nos Îles*, a symposium on the Channel Islands, in which they set forth, often prophetically, though occasionally with undue pessimism, the post-war needs of the islands. These included secondary education for all, a further development of the tourist industry, an encouragement of the traditional forms of agriculture and greater cooperation between the islands in matters of mutual concern. There were no plans for new trades or industries, as they considered that the possibilities for these were very limited. Perhaps their most penetrating glimpse of the

future was their insistence on the need for careful planning of land utilisation. But what they could not reasonably be expected to foresee was how quickly Jersey would recover from the austerities and tribulations of the Occupation, the tremendous growth of the economy and the population that was to come, with all the political, social and environmental problems that this would create.

Colin Platt in his *A concise history of Jersey* (2007) added that “many of the internees, on returning to Jersey, joined the ranks of the reformers” “And one of the principal causes of social unrest on the island, coming into particular prominence in the last year the war, was the barely disguised operation of a black market in St Helier from which almost everybody except the rich was excluded.”

Platt noted that in November 1944 three escapees from the Island, one of them the future Bailiff of Peter Crill, were debriefed in the Home Office. Four general trends of feeling emerged in the debrief, the first of which was “a very strong feeling for internal reform”.

Platt noted pent up hostility to the authorities “felt as much by the Islanders who had remained at homes by the returning communities of exiles. The old-style paternalism of the inter war years had no place in a society which had shared equally the humiliations of five years of German rule; and political change was inevitable. In London, a committee of exiles calling itself the “Channel Islands Study Group” had worked during the War on a series of proposals for post-war recovery which included electoral reform.” The Progressive Party, recruited largely from disadvantaged returnees, did well in the election in December 1945, and committed to constitutional reform which had the strong support of the Bailiff.