

FRANÇOIS SCORNET: COMMEMORATIVE STATUE

**Lodged au Greffe on 17th July 2001
by Senator P.V.F. Le Claire**



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PROPOSITION

THE STATES are asked to decide whether they are of opinion -

- (a) to agree that a life size statue of François Scornet should be commissioned from a local artist and erected in the Parade Gardens opposite the Free French Memorial in St. Helier;
- (b) to charge the Finance and Economics Committee to make available the necessary funds to meet the cost of the creation of the statue;
- (c) to charge the Policy and Resources Committee, in conjunction with any other appropriate committees or bodies, to make the necessary arrangements for the commissioning of the statue.

SENATOR P.V.F. LE CLAIRE

Report

On 13th December 1940, 16 young Frenchmen, members of France Libre, a movement of French army cadets dedicated to escaping France during the war, set sail in an open sailing boat escaping from the port of Dourduff (near Morlaix in Brittany, France) to join General Charles de Gaulle in London. Their aim was to reach England where they could join the Free French forces that would one day return to liberate their motherland. The 16 young men set sail in a small boat and encountered bad weather which destroyed some of their navigational equipment and the rest was washed overboard. After several hours on the rough seas, together with their poor navigational skills, they were mistaken into thinking Guernsey's coast was that of the Isle of Wight. They sailed jubilantly into Vazon Bay, Guernsey singing the Marseillais, only to be immediately captured by the German sentries. The young men were interrogated, and as Jersey was the German Command Headquarters, six of them were sent to Jersey for trial.

The trial took place in the Old Committee Room in the States Building. After more interrogations seeking a ring-leader, François Scornet and four others were condemned to death. Scornet, considered the ringleader, was in the event the only one executed. François's parents were sent for and attended as witnesses. François Scornet was held in the Grand Hotel under guard, where at his request a local French priest, Father Mare, performed the last rites, and Scornet was then allowed to write a last letter to his parents.

"I believe the end of my existence has come. I will die for France, bravely facing the enemy.... in an hour it will be finished.... be assured that I will die a good Christian.... for the last time I embrace you."

The priest then recounted this story, saying that he, Scornet, the firing squad and a coffin were placed into a lorry and driven to St. Ouen's Manor. 12 German soldiers who were to form the firing squad, together with the French Catholic priest, Father Mare, and a coffin, drove to St. Ouen's Manor. François was tied to the stump of an ash tree and he kissed the Crucifix before Father Mare retired. The firing squad then took aim, while Scornet continued to call out - "Vive Dieu! Vive La France!" ("Long live God! Long live France!"). He was executed by a German Military firing squad at 8.20 a.m. on 17th March 1941. He was only 22 years old. He was left there all day and was later removed. He is believed to be the only civilian shot by a German firing squad in Jersey during the war.

Four years after Scornet's execution, in August 1945, his remains were exhumed to be transported back to France for reburial in his native village of Ploujean, near Morlaix, where the village square has been renamed in his honour. The Chroniques de Jersey published an account of the event, as recalled by Father Mare, who administered the last rites to the condemned man.

I believe that the statue should have been sited in the grounds of St. Ouen's Manor as a fitting way to establish a permanent memorial to this young French hero. The comments previously tabled by the Finance and Economics Committee (Note: The Finance and Economics Committee does not support this proposition as it does not believe that public funds should be expended on a statue that will be sited in the grounds of a private residence.) put a stumbling block in the original location, and the planned unveiling by Mr. Nelson Le Quesne (the man who took François down from the tree where he had been left tied all day) on the 60th anniversary was scuppered.

The Seigneur of St. Ouen had indicated that he would be willing to allow the statue to be placed in the grounds and consequently changed his mind, but continues to support the memorial statue in another public location. This I have managed to achieve through the generous and hard-working support of Connétable Le Brocq, Mr. Peter Noble and the St. Helier Paris Roads Committee. (A drawing of the approximate location is attached for information purposes only.) Preliminary enquiries have indicated that the overall cost of the statue will be between £20,000 and £25,000. Any unspent monies will be returned to the States. Any monies needed beyond £25,000, although unlikely, will be raised through fund-raising events.

"The greatest love a person can have for his friends is to give his life for them."

John Chapter 15 verse 13 The Holy Bible.

