

TEACHING OF JÈRRIAIS IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS

Lodged au Greffe on 9th June 1998
by the Education Committee



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PROPOSITION

THE STATES are asked whether they are of opinion -

- (a) in accordance with Article 18(4) of the Public Finances (Administration) (Jersey) Law 1967, as amended, to require the Finance and Economics Committee to grant a credit from the general reserve to the Don Balleine Trust of a maximum amount of £51,000 in the first year and £70,000 in the second year in order to fund a two-year programme to develop and test programmes of study for teaching Jèrriais to children aged 7-11;
- (b) to require the Education Committee to undertake a full evaluation of the programme prior to seeking approval for the extension of the programme beyond the second year.

EDUCATION COMMITTEE

NOTE: The Finance and Economics Committee does not consider that it is the appropriate Committee to provide funding for the proposals contained within the Education Committee's report and proposition, and believes that the Education Committee should be responsible for providing funding to the Don Balleine Trust.

Whilst supporting the principle of teaching Jèrriais in primary schools, the Committee considers that should the Education Committee wish to support this initiative, it should re-prioritise its budget to release resources to the Don Balleine Trust to carry out this work. The sum being requested is only small when compared to the overall budget for the Education Committee of £55.5 million.

The Education Committee requested funds for this initiative prior to the allocation of 1999 Cash Limits and it was not an item put forward for consideration. The Finance and Economics Committee was extremely disappointed with the

method employed by the Education Committee to increase its overall Cash Limit.

The Finance and Economics Committee does not support the granting of additional funds from the General Reserve.

Report

*‘‘I am always sorry when any language is lost,
because languages are the pedigree of nations’’*

Samuel Johnson 1773

Preamble

At its meeting of 13th October 1997, the Finance and Economics Committee considered a request from the Education Committee for funding for a proposed Jèrriais (Jersey French) teaching programme for primary school children. The Education Committee had requested that a grant be made to the Don Balleine Trust from general reserves to support the development and delivery of the programme.

The Finance and Economic Committee noted that the proposal had not been put forward to the Revenue Decision Conference and, therefore, circumvented the prioritisation process. Although it expressed support for the continuation of the Island’s national language it decided not to support the Education Committees request for funding, while agreeing that the project should be included in the Decision Conference process for 1999.

In view of the decision of the Finance and Economics Committee, the Education Committee is now asking the States to adjudicate.

Background

Our Island of Jersey has a rich and unique history and heritage. In recent years there has been widespread recognition that both must be recorded and cherished so that future generations may readily appreciate why it is that Jersey is able to enjoy a special constitutional status.

While the Island has made a significant investment to maintain and support our historic sites and artefacts, sadly in the past there has been very little effort to maintain our native language which evolved over 1,000 years. We know from the 1996 census figures there are now

fewer than 6,000 speakers of Jèrriais. It is said that when a community loses its language, it loses part of its soul.

Our Island language has helped to shape our culture and our heritage. It is rich in expressions and if we wish to retain an aspect of Jersey life which gives us a true identity, we are now approaching what may be the last opportunity to keep the language alive. There is still a reasonable number of native speakers who may be available to assist others in learning our language. Sadly, within a generation, this will no longer be possible unless positive steps are taken now.

There is a resurgence of interest in minority languages throughout Europe, as communities such as ours seek to ensure that they do not become swamped by the tide of European uniformity.

Jèrriais is one of a series of native languages which developed in various parts of the British Isles. Others include Welsh, Cornish, Gaelic and Gaelic Manx. In recent years there has been a renewed interest in the Manx language in the Isle of Man, supported, in no small measure, by Manx language courses for both the primary and secondary phases. The chronology of the Isle of Man experience is set out at Appendix B.

The Development and significance of Jèrriais

Dr. Mari C. Jones, Fellow of Peterhouse College, Cambridge, has taken a scholarly interest in Jèrriais and writes -

“Jèrriais is a Norman dialect with an ancient heritage, its origins stemming from the Norman presence on the Channel Islands in the tenth century. In the Middle Ages, Norman was a highly prestigious literary medium: it was that of, among others, the *Vie de Saint Alexis* and the *Chanson de Roland*. Furthermore, it is clear that Jersey was not without influence in the literary domain: Wace, the author of the twelfth century *Roman de Brut*, a work which had unmeasureable influence on medieval French and English literature, was a Jerseyman who would undoubtedly have spoken Jèrriais. Furthermore, he is clearly proud of his roots, including in his famous *Roman de Rou* the lines -

*‘Jo di et dirai que jo suid
Wace, de lisle de Gersui’*

“Jèrriais is not only important in the context of francophone literature but also in that of the history of the French language, since it preserves many features of medieval Norman which have never been attested in Standard French. Given the pervasive influence of Standard French on Mainland France, some of these forms no longer survive in the variety of Norman spoken in Normandy and are often only to be witnessed in Jèrriais.

In the linguistic context, Jèrriais remains a fascinating attestation of the people with which the Islanders have been in contact - a linguistic potted history. As well as revealing its Latin origins and Germanic superstrate, Jèrriais bears evidence of contact with the Celts in the form of words of Gaulish origin, the Normans in the form of words derived from Norse, and the English. Even more striking, and of particular fascination to linguists, is the wealth of variation observable within Jèrriais itself. The most unobservant speaker of Jèrriais would be able to identify a speaker as being from either east or west Jersey, and most could be more precise than this. Such extraordinary variation on an island of only 45 square miles makes Jèrriais a remarkable variety. Indeed, I consider it to be so noteworthy that I have included its

compulsory study as part of the linguistics course of the French degree at the University of Cambridge.

Although its numbers of speakers may be declining, Jèrriais is well placed to overcome this. Unlike many other minority varieties, it has been codified and standardised, principally via Dr. Frank Le Maistre's *Dictionnaire Jersiais-Français* and Paul Birt's grammar and coursebook *Le Jèrriais Pour Tous*. These are reinforced by other works such as the *English-Jersey Language Vocabulary* and the *Glossary of Jersey French*. Such a high degree of standardisation is rare in minority varieties and provide a solid platform from which Jèrriais can be taught in the education system. Moreover, there also exists a stock of authentic modern Jèrriais literature in the shape of the novels of George d'La Forge, the numerous stories and poems published in *Lé Bulletin d'Quart d'Art dé l'Assemblée d'Jèrriais*, *Les Chroniques du Don Balleine* and the quarterly *Nouvelles Chroniques du Don Balleine* and the hundreds of short articles that have appeared in the *Jersey Evening Post*.

To conclude, Jèrriais represents not only a fundamental part of the local culture of Jersey but also a unique linguistic variety with an ancient heritage. It would be very sad if it were lost, especially now when conditions are ripe for its maintenance. Furthermore, it is imperative that action be taken as soon as possible, while a pool of native speakers still exists and while there is still time to re-establish an intergenerational chain of transmission."

Parental interest

In March, 1997, Senators Jean Le Maistre and Len Norman wrote to the parents of the Island's primary school children, seeking their views on the introduction of Jèrriais as a voluntary extra-curricular activity. The response was overwhelming with no fewer than 732 families (see Appendix A) indicating a wish to enroll their children on such a course. This level of interest suggests that it would not be possible to meet the demand with a small group of volunteer Jèrriais speakers.

Rationale for the teaching of Jèrriais

The reasons for studying Jèrriais are mainly cultural; the language is unique to Jersey and is therefore a central, precious aspect of our heritage.

There must also be a tourism dimension, as Jèrriais has potential for increasing interest in the Island. Visitors are always fascinated by the fact that this small Island has a rich and separate history from both England and France and a unique language which is a clear manifestation of its identity.

For our children to learn Jèrriais would promote cultural identity. Even a few words of Jèrriais, allied to an interest in place names and signs in use throughout the Island, would engender a feeling of belonging to, and having pride in, our heritage.

Proposal

Experience in the Isle of Man confirms the need for the development of high quality teaching materials and the co-ordination of the programme by a fluent speaker who can take classes as required. This co-ordinator would also monitor and evaluate the quality of teaching which is provided by others.

It is intended that the co-ordinator would work with a group of schools in piloting and refining the programmes of study, which would, in the first instance, be offered to pupils between the ages of 7 and 11. To fulfil this commitment the co-ordinator would be full-time and involved in the project for a minimum period of two years.

Once the programmes of study and their supporting materials are fully developed, they could be made available to all primary schools with extra-curricular classes or classes within curriculum time supported by part-time peripatetic or volunteer staff.

Long-term considerations

The initial programme could constitute the starting point for a learning programme which could develop significantly. Measures for future consideration might include -

the development of interactive materials, using information technology;

secondary provision to build on experience gained in primary schools;

the introduction of certificated courses;

renewed interest and involvement in adult education.

Financial and manpower Implications

Phase One: Development and trialling of Programme
(Years 1 and 2)

Year one

Jèrriais Language Officer	£36,000
Study programme development cost	<u>£15,000</u>
	£51,000

Year Two

Jèrriais Language Officer	£36,000
Assistant teachers	£28,000
Course materials/expenses	<u>£6,000</u>
	£70,000

At the conclusion of Phase One, a full evaluation of the programme would be completed by the Education Department. This report would be presented to the States by the President of the Education Committee so that the States could determine whether to proceed to the second phase which would initiate the extension and further development of the programme.

Phase Two: Extension and Further Development of Programme
(Year 3)

Jèrriais Language Officer	£36,000 pa
1.5 Peripatetic teachers	£45,000 pa
Course materials/expenses	<u>£6,000</u> pa
	£87,000

Endorsement

This initiative has the full support of the various groups who are involved in the presentation of the language, including the Don Balleine, l'Assemblée d'Jèrriais, La Société Jersiaise, l'Association Jersey - Coutançais and Le Congrès des Parlers Normand Jèrriais.

Resources

There is a wealth of materials available in Jèrriais which would be of value in developing the programmes of study. These include the following publications of Le Don Balleine -

- Dictionnaire Jersiais-Français by Dr. Frank Le Maistre, O.B.E.
- English-Jersey Language Vocabulary by Dr. Albert Carré, Dr. Le Maistre and P.M. de Veulle
- Lé Jèrriais Pour Tous by Paul W. Birt, M.A.
- Lé Bulletin d'Quart d'Art dé l'Assemblée d'Jèrriais
- Les Chroniques du Don Balleine and Les Nouvelles Chroniques du Don Balleine
- Histouaithes et Gens d'Jèrri by George F. Le Feuvre
- Jèrri Jadis by George F. Le Feuvre
- Folksongs of the Channel Islands (from Folksongs of Britain and Ireland, Cassell Ltd).
- Original Songs in the Jersey Language
- A Brief History of Jèrriais by Professor N.C.W. Spence
- Jersey Norman French is Fun! Cassette Tapes
- Jersey Norman French is Fun! Joan Tapley & Intermediate Students of Jèrriais
- Jersey Language Cassette Tapes 1-5 with accompanying booklets

Les Séthées Jèrriaises de l'Eisteddfod du 22 et 23 d'Novembre,
1993 Video Tapes 1 and 2

APPENDIX A

COLLATION OF RETURNS ON THE TEACHING
OF JÈRRIAIS

SCHOOL	Support for class	Number of families with children to be enrolled	Number of adults to be enrolled
Bel Royal	35	24	16
First Tower	40	36	23
Grands Vaux	22	18	04
Grouville	26	21	17
Janvrin	24	22	12
JCG Prep	58	47	26
La Moye	38	37	23
La Pouquelaye	29	24	15
Les Landes	36	25	17
Le Squez	27	25	16
Mont Nicolle	36	28	17
Plat Douet	22	21	13
Rouge Bouillon	51	42	14
St. Clement	18	15	11
St. John	17	13	09
St. Lawrence	59	40	24
St. Luke	31	26	10
St. Mark	18	15	11
St. Martin	19	16	12
St. Mary	22	21	16
St. Peter	27	24	15
St. Saviour	32	25	17
Trinity	16	12	08
Victoria College Prep	29	14	07
Springfield	03	03	01
Beaulieu Convent	33	22	07
De La Salle College	42	30	12
Convent FCJ	97	62	29
Helvetia	21	14	07
St Georges	12	10	09
TOTALS	940	732	418

APPENDIX B

Chronology of IOM experience

- 1765 Up to this date Manx Gaelic, an offshoot of Old Irish, is the majority language.
- 1765-1950 Influx of English speakers, gradual decline of Manx.
- 1974 Ned Maddrell, last of the native speakers, dies but substantial tape recordings of Manx are available.
- 1990 Gallup quality of life survey reveals 36 per cent of islanders want Manx taught in schools.
- 1992 Dr. Brian Stowell appointed Manx language officer - ex physics lecturer from Liverpool University, he had acquired fluent Manx going around the Island recording native speakers as a schoolboy.

Two Manx speaking primary teachers are appointed.

A two-year primary and a two-year secondary course is devised, *Bun Noa*, each consisting of six modules, e.g. one per term with heavy emphasis on the spoken language and useful Manx.

	<u>Recruitment figures</u>	<u>Primary</u>	<u>Secondary</u>
1992	September	1,141	314
1993	September	924	114
1994	September	813	139
1995	September	791	129

- 1996 A comprehensive report is presented to Tynwald.

Dr. Brian Stowell retires and Phil Kelly replaces him as Manx language officer.