

STATES OF JERSEY



PUBLIC HOLIDAYS: DESIGNATION OF 27TH SEPTEMBER 2021 – COMMEMORATION OF THE CORN RIOTS AND THE CODE OF 1771

**Lodged au Greffe on 28th January 2020
by Deputy M. Tadier of St. Brelade**

STATES GREFFE

PROPOSITION

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

- (a) to agree that Monday 27th September 2021 should be designated as an extra Public and Bank Holiday;
- (b) with reference to its Act of 20th November 2012, in which it agreed that 28th September should be recognised annually by the States of Jersey as ‘Reform Day’ to mark the anniversary of the events in Jersey of 28th September 1769, to agree instead that 28th September should henceforth be recognised annually by the States of Jersey as the anniversary of ‘the Corn Riots’;
- (c) to agree that the events of 28th September 1769 and the subsequent democratic reforms of 1771 be added to the citizenship curriculum in schools;
- (d) that there shall be an open day of the Royal Court and States Assembly building every year, where possible, on or around this anniversary; and
- (e) to request the Chief Minister to bring forward for approval the necessary Act under the Public Holidays and Bank Holidays (Jersey) Law 1951 to give effect to the decision.

DEPUTY M. TADIER OF ST. BRELADE

REPORT

This revised proposition is a consequence of having consulted widely with a cross-section of States Members and having taken on board the comments that were issued from Council of Ministers and feedback from the Chamber of Commerce.

This has led me to what I believe is a compromise position that the 250th Anniversary of the 1771 Code, arising from the Corn Riots of September 28th two years earlier, should indeed be celebrated and marked with a *one-off* public holiday on Monday 27th September. The following day will be a States day and there will be time to consider designating a part of that sitting to an appropriate commemoration of our democracy too.

This will allow us to mark this historic anniversary without the potential for a recurring expense and inconvenience of a yearly public holiday, which was flagged up by some.

The second amendment to the original proposition is that it will take place on the Monday instead of the Tuesday. This is (1) so that it helps hospitality with the long weekend; (2) so that it does not conflict with the States Sitting of the Tuesday.

The Public Holiday will coincide with what will hopefully be a wider annual cultural/civic programme led by the Greffe around the work of the States Assembly, Government called *Parliament Week*.

For my part, I will make sure that cultural funding is made available to put on a variety of events in an around the Royal Square to make sure that the weekend is accessible and enjoyable to all, building on the initial success of the open day of the States Chamber and Royal Court in 2019 and the music event that went with it.

Financial and manpower implications

Traditionally, we are told that the cost to the public sector of a bank holiday is of the order of £1.5 million. However, this does not mean that £1.5 million will be saved by not voting for this additional bank holiday. Most of that figure is notional. Public employees not working on 27th September will not be paid any more than they would if they were working.

There will, however, be an actual cost for those employees on shift work relating to time in lieu and overtime payments. I have asked the Treasury Department to provide these figures in relation to this proposal.

APPENDIX TO REPORT

P.102/2019 Report – Public Holidays: designation of 28th September from 2021 onwards

This year marks the 250th anniversary of the Corn Riots which took place on 28th September 1769. The background to the events of 28th September, their consequences, and the events themselves can be read in the attached [Appendix](#), and I would encourage Members to take a few minutes to read it. It truly is compelling stuff, and part of our shared heritage.

Background

On 20th November 2012, the States Assembly agreed part (a) of [P.107/2012](#), lodged by former Deputy T.M. Pitman, “*to agree that 28th September should be recognised annually by the States of Jersey as ‘Reform Day’ to mark the anniversary of the events in Jersey of 28th September 1769;*”.

However, the other parts of the proposition were lost, leaving the States in a position where they had agreed to officially recognise the day, but had not agreed how on what to do to mark it. Subsequently, nobody in the States took responsibility for recognising it formally.

Seven years later, I am pleased to say that, following collaboration between the States Greffe, the Bailiff’s Office, PPC, Jersey Heritage, Jersey Archive and myself, as Assistant Minister with special responsibility for Culture, the date will finally be marked *officially*. I am particularly grateful to them for their hard work on this.

2021 and beyond

By the time this is debated, I envisage that we will have seen a successful commemoration and celebration of our heritage, with many people having visited our Court and our Assembly for the first time, and many others learning about our history through talks, discussion, and the very good video that Deputy R. Labey of St. Helier (and PPC) have created for the occasion.

The reason that I have suggested 2021 for the bank holiday to start is for 2 principal reasons –

- (i) 2021 marks the 250th Anniversary of the Code of 1771 and the democratic changes that were implemented in the Island, including the establishment of the States Assembly as the sole law-making body of the Island (originally, the [Royal Court](#) had legislative power, but by the sixteenth century a legislative assembly within the Royal Court was convened. The Royal Court and the States both legislated until, with the fixing in 1771 of the *Code des Lois*, it was established that the States had a legislative monopoly).
- (ii) It would allow a 2-year period for the business community and the States [to](#) make preparation for a new bank holiday.

Although Jersey does have *one more* bank holiday than England and Wales (due to Liberation Day), with 9 rather than 8, (Scotland also has 9), we are behind many other

countries, including France (14), Poland (13), Portugal (13), and Romania (15)¹. I accept that, in some cases, not all of these will necessarily be *movable* (if they fall on a weekend).

However, there are other reasons why Jersey should consider a new public holiday for what is a Jersey-specific event. It is quite common for countries to have one or more national day which is specific to their democracy. It often commemorates *independence* or a popular uprising in which a dictatorial government was overthrown.

The uprising of 1769 was an uprising *of the Jersey people* (including many ordinary residents of Trinity) against an *internal oppressor* – an uncaring, self-serving and corrupt Royal Court. It was, therefore, a '*coming of age*' for Jersey and its people in what turned out to be a *non-violent*, but effective protest which gave rise to the fundamental changes that laid the foundation for our modern system of democracy and jurisprudence.

The argument will be made that Jersey *already* has a *de facto* National Day in Liberation Day. This proposition does not try to usurp Liberation Day or diminish its significance in any way. But there are distinct reasons why 28th September could and should be made a public holiday, unique to Jersey. Unlike the Occupation, which was a consequence of geo-political forces beyond our control, and which saw the Island occupied by foreign, hostile forces and subsequently liberated by allied forces, the Occupation and Liberation were *done to* Jersey.

Cultural Identity

It is my hope that this new public holiday will tie in with a new drive to develop and promote Jersey's unique cultural identity. Whilst identity (especially collective identity) is often a contentious issue in itself, there are general cultural identity markers which can universally be shared, enjoyed and related to by all residents. The Corn Riots, though 250 years ago, remain topical, as we see a world-wide disconnect between political elites and the masses, the latter which find themselves in the familiar situation of facing spiralling living costs, without necessarily having the corresponding means to deal with them.

Other parallels to national and global politics, I'm sure, can be drawn.

I am keen that Jèrriais play an important role on this day, which would have been the native tongue of many of the protesters, and 28th September would also be a good day to focus on Jersey's rural and linguistic heritage, by promoting and celebrating our native *Norman* tongue.

This would be an opportunity for Jersey to reflect on its own unique past and present, and think about what kind of future community we want to build. To all intents and purposes, it should become the day when we celebrate and think about *our* democracy. Who knows, it may go some way to re-engaging with the Public and seeing voting figures increase.

It would also allow Jersey businesses to do their part to recognise a unique Jersey day, by giving their staff a day off and taking advantage of the cultural activities, if they so choose.

¹ <https://publicholidays.eu/>

I have asked for a modest sum of money to be set aside to bring the day to life, allowing for music and entertainment to be put on, but also for open days to continue in the Royal Court, States Assembly and the Archive/Museum (as appropriate). Historically, Jersey does not spend enough money on supporting outdoor events (compared to our European counterparts).

This will allow for a sustainable programme of events to be put on annually, which will hopefully add vibrancy to our town centre and increase the offering for visitors and locals alike.

Financial and manpower implications

Traditionally, we are told that the cost to the public sector is of the order of £1.5 million. However, this does not mean that £1.5 million will be saved by not voting for this additional bank holiday. Most of that figure is *notional*. Public employees not working on 28th September will not be paid any more than they would if they were working.

There will, however, be an *actual* cost for those employees on shift work relating to time in lieu and overtime payments. I have asked the Treasury Department to provide these figures in relation to this proposal.

Taken from https://www.theislandwiki.org/index.php/The_Revolution_of_1769

Author: Mike Dun

The Revolution of 1769

Jersey revolution 1769 – by Michael Dun, published as an Appendix to a report accompanying a proposition to the States in 2012 calling for official recognition of the events of 28th September 1769

‘Little event’

The two famous revolutions of the 18th century, the American War of Independence of 1775–1783 and the French Revolutionary War that started in 1789, were preceded by a minor little skirmish in Jersey that history has largely forgotten. But the issues that caused Jersey people to rebel against their autocratic government and the dreadful poverty that many endured were remarkably similar, and the ‘little event’ was to prove just as important to the Islanders as the more famous rebellions were to the American and French peoples.

In Jersey during the 18th century, government was in the hands of the rich few. The [Bailiff](#) was [Lord Granville](#), who lived in England, never visited the Island and took little interest in its affairs. He was descended from the de Carteret family and they were virtually hereditary Bailiffs for several centuries. In 1769 [Charles Lempriere](#) served as [Lieut-Bailiff](#) in a [Royal Court](#) that was the all-powerful governmental and administrative body. There was a very weak States Assembly over which he presided, too.

Democratic representation was almost unknown. Only the wealthier men of the Island’s 25,000 residents voted for the Parish [Constables](#) and [Centeniers](#) and Charles Lempriere, Seigneur of Rozel, Dielement and many other fiefs, filled the important positions with his relatives, like brother Philip as [Attorney-General](#) and Receiver of the Revenues. His father, father-in-law, cousins and brothers-in-law were [Jurats](#) and this was a time when Jurats were much more important than they are today.

The [Lieut-Governor](#) was a very weak and sick man named Thomas Ball, described by the political writer Dr. John Shebbeare as a man “who possessed no more idea than an oyster, and like that animal, seldom opened his mouth but to take in fluids”.

Not only did Islanders endure a despotic form of government, but the remains of a feudal system still prevailed and the land was divided up into hundreds of fiefs over which Seigneurs had the right to extract tithes from the unfortunate people who lived there.

Annual rente

Thus, every year, most Islanders had to pay to their Seigneurs so many chickens or apples as a *rente*. The most important imposition was that for wheat or corn, and every year the important Seigneurs, like the Lemprieres, would fix the value of the ‘wheat rente’ with their friendly miller and baker allies.

When wheat or corn was scarce, the price increased, so the Seigneurs stood to receive more money and poor people couldn't afford to pay, either in cash or in wheat if there was a bad harvest, even if they had a piece of land to cultivate.

In 1768 there was a severe shortage of wheat around England and France, so the price was already high, and it was a great opportunity for the Lemprieres and their friends to extract as much money as possible from the Islanders. Not only was it expensive, but wheat was scarce and many Islanders faced starvation. Even in a good year, the Island did not produce enough wheat to satisfy Islanders' needs.

In August 1768 a [Jersey Chamber of Commerce](#) had been formed to represent the interests of ship owners and to deal with threats to the Islands smuggling trade from newly appointed English Customs Officers – a theme that influenced the American Revolution, too. But in Jersey the Chamber was also aware of the problems of the poor and in October and December arranged to purchase cargoes of barley at St. Malo, and offered these for sale at “30 sols the cabotel”, for the relief of the Island's poor.

However, it was only a temporary relief, and during the spring and summer of 1769 the shortages became worse and the Lemprieres actually arranged to take wheat out of storage to ship to France in order to sell it at a high price, and they even organised for shipments from Southampton to be diverted there under false papers. Many people were killed at Cherbourg and other places in France during corn riots.

Women detained

In June Capt. John Messervy, who was involved in shipping corn to France on his ship *Marie*, was detained and 14 women were taken by the Vicomte to the quay under arrest for allegedly trying to ship small quantities of wheat in the vessel. Among the women were Claire Huet, Coline Ruet, Barbe De Ray, Marie Hamel, Suzanne De St. Lo, Marie Ruel, Anne La Secille, Jeanne Bertram. Marie La Noire, Barbe Paris, Julienne Bertram, Anne Couliere, and Margaritte Le Brun.

Whether the women were heroines or villains was not clear, because soon afterwards, several hundred more descended upon the Jersey harbour to prevent this or other ships from sailing and the Lieut-Governor, called to maintain order with his troops, was persuaded to unload the wheat cargoes for sale on the quay, so that the Island women had something to feed to their families.

It was a breakthrough – a unique victory for direct action in Jersey.

Unfortunately the Lemprieres and their important friends did not relent and the Lieut-Bailiff declined a Chamber of Commerce request to travel to London and discuss various matters with the London government, claiming 'ill health' as his excuse.

There was no newspaper in Jersey at this time, so accurate records of everyday life were difficult to find, but the wheat rente was fixed at the high price of 44 sols (or sous) per cabotel and a great many people were in desperate circumstances.

Edward Hocquard

Edward Hocquard was typical, as Shebbeare explained:

“He carried to the farmer-general 7 cabotels of rente wheat, or 3½ bushels English measure. It was rejected as not good, although no man would dare to bring but the best, because they knew that the consequence would be the refusal of it. The poor man was commanded to pay 2 shillings in money, to be added to the wheat; or 54 sous per cabotel in money. With the latter it was impossible for him to comply, he had not 6 sous upon earth. To accomplish the former, he was obliged to borrow from the poor people who lived at hand; and by their assistance he was unable to raise more than 18 pence. With many a prayer to take that sum, and protesting that he could borrow no more, that and the wheat were taken together.”

The Lemprieres were screwing for every penny and there was no proper avenue for redress or appeal. Again, Shebbeare explained:

“But Philip Lempriere was the Attorney-General, the Receiver and the Farmer of the Revenues; and on that account he would not undertake an action against himself. There was no [Solicitor-General](#) to adopt the cause; nor would another Advocate defend an action against the brothers. The Lieut-Bailiff and one of the Jurats participated in the profits of the receipt; and a majority of the Bench would so soon have passed an act to abolish the 10 Commandments, as one that should diminish the profits of the Lemprieres.”

It wasn't just the poor people that the Lemprieres bullied. Charles and his brother had a long running feud with Nicholas Fiott, a successful merchant and their former partner in the “Charming Nancy” privateer and other ventures. On one occasion they sold his one sixth share in the vessel without even telling him, and when he complained about their behaviour to the Privy Council, they locked him up for Contempt of Court. Fiott was no friend of poor people, but they shared a common cause in the struggle against the Lemprieres.

Fiott joined with others and invited John Shebbeare to Jersey. He was a Doctor of Medicine from Bideford, but was famous as a scurrilous political writer and campaigner, and he had served 3 years in Newgate jail and stood in the pillory for various libels against important people, including the King. Shebbeare's daughter Elizabeth was married to Charles Le Geyt, a former Army Officer, and he was also part of a sympathetic group that even included Moses Corbet, the Lieut-Bailiff's father-in-law. Shebbeare was put to work producing pamphlets attacking the Lemprieres.

Philip Larbalestier

The summer of discontent continued during 1769 until Philip Larbalestier was arrested in St. Saviour and sent to the grim prison near Charing Cross for a month on bread and water on 23 September. He had been found guilty of insulting Deputy Vicomte George Benest. The dispute probably arose over the non- payment of wheat rente. Larbalestier also had to beg his pardon and pay a 100 livres fine (about £7 sterling). His father pleaded with the Court to let him come home on an assurance to keep him out of taverns and that he would not let him stay out late.

For some reason, the incident seemed to have been the last straw for many discontented residents and before sunrise on 28 September they began to assemble in the Country parishes, and some carried sticks.

In Trinity about 200 political innocents gathered together behind Thomas Jacques Gruchy, a 50-year-old local man who had made his fortune and lost it in Boston as the owner and commander of a British privateer and as a smuggler. He had emigrated to America as a young man and married Mary Dumaresq there and prospered. They lived extravagantly in a grand house and kept a servant “black slave girl” called Tamuse, and he probably picked up some New World political ideas and joined the Freemasons. But, for some reason he went bust and returned to his Trinity roots and was soon restored as a respectable churchwarden and parish official.

In 1763 he had also secured the job as Collector of the Greenwich Sixpences at the rate of 6 pence per month from all mariners engaged in the Channel Islands. This was a job undertaken by Customs Officers in Britain and America, and he was not popular with ship owners or the new Jersey Chamber of Commerce.

Yet in September 1769, Gruchy was leading the main group of dissenters in the Parish of Trinity and they were headed for St. Helier to confront corruption.

At St. Martin, Amice Durell from St. Helier, carrying a long stick with a lantern, was leading another group of about 100 into the capital.

Revolutionaries in town

Within a few hours between 400 and 500 hundred “revolutionaries” arrived in St. Helier and passed by the hospital, then under construction and where Mr. Luce, a half pay lieutenant in the navy was superintendent of the works. He was probably the same Jean Luce, master of the *Marie* sloop seized for smuggling in May 1768 by the newly appointed Customs Officers, and he and some of his men agreed to join the procession. They closed up the site and they all marched to the Cohue, the Royal Court building where ‘L’Empereur’ was holding court.

What happened next was reported in Felix Farley’s Bristol Journal – belatedly – in November:

“Our accounts of the affairs at Jersey from the Register of Certificates bearing date 2nd instance say that all matter respecting the civil government were then at a stand, owing to the rising of the country people, who assembled and went to the Court House and forced their way in, compelling the Governor and Court, then sitting, to sign an order consisting of 13 Articles, one of which was for the expulsion of all revenue officers and this order has been published in the market and in all the churches in that Island. The letter adds that the Lt. Bailiff and many of the Jurats have repaired to the Castle out of reach of the mob and put themselves under the protection of the military force.

Four or five companies of the Royal Scots at Winchester are ordered to hold themselves ready to embark for the Island.”

The ‘Register of Certificates’ referred to was Thomas Haskins, one of the English Customs Officers, and he had also written to the English Treasury with a similar letter

which added “The Lieut-Bailiff has advised Customs Officers to be careful for their safety”.

The Jersey Revolution was more like the Boston Tea Party than might have been at first realised. Jersey’s wheat was very much like America’s tea. It tipped the balance of tolerance in favour of direct action against the oppressions of governmental authority.

But, what did the Jersey Revolutionaries actually want?

Passive revolution

The Jersey Revolution was a remarkably passive affair. Nobody was sacrificed on the Guillotine or even molested. The assembled Royal Court, a “Cour d’Heritage” which included Lieut-Governor Thomas Ball, received the dissenters and their complaints with sufficient politeness and co-operation to allow papers to be processed. The Lempriere Brotherhood would not have enjoyed the experience, but they played along and must have wondered at the rude simplicity of it all and whether some more ominous experience awaited them.

It is likely that Thomas Gruchy did the talking, and it was in French. The small Royal Court building would have been crowded, even before the country people arrived in their rustic gear, because the *Cour d’Heritage* was only held three times a year, ran for two days and was a partly ceremonial occasion for Seigniorial loyalties and obligations to be confirmed. It was especially important in the context of tithes and the payment of wheat *rentes*.

There would have been many important people present in their best clothes. The Lieut-Bailiff and the Jurats wore their scarlet robes, and as Shebbeare wrote, “appearing at half leg most gracefully below; the dignity of which is heightened by a pair of dirty boots”.

The Court assembled behind the Royal mace awarded by King Charles II to his loyal subjects and the Lieut-Governor, as the current Royal representative and not speaking French, probably looked on in some state of bewilderment. The Jurats present were probably Jean Le Hardy, Jean Poingdestre, James Pison, Jean Dumaresq, Francis Marett, Charles Hilgrove, Daniel Messervy, James Lempriere, Josué Pison and Edward Ricard.

Rebels’ demands

Priority on the rebel agenda of complaints was almost certainly that the export of corn, bread and flour should be prohibited and that the import of foodstuffs should be allowed in accordance with Island privileges. Furthermore, they would have called for a general rate for the whole Island for the repair of high roads and that rich and poor might contribute according to their circumstances; that the rates of wheat tithes should be consistently applied and be subject to appeal to the court, that parish Constables should consult with their parishioners before laws and regulations were changed. Also, that Constables should be elected every three years; that market regulations be properly applied, His Majesty should appoint a King’s Advocate; the impôt should be applied to improve the harbour and that all laws and ordinances be collected together in a proper book.

For reasons not clear, the rebels wanted Philip Larbalastier released from prison.

Revolution demands that somebody should be released from the Bastille and 28 September was Phillip's lucky day.

Various Acts against Nicholas Fiott, including his Contempt of Court, were also to be reversed and he was to become Constable of St. Helier.

Finally, the rebels supposedly wanted all Revenue Officers expelled from Jersey.

Perhaps this was just the smugglers like Capt. Luce venting their spleen, but it was especially curious since the Officers could have been allies to the protesters by ensuring that corn was only legally exported. Perhaps the Officers had been colluding with the Lemprieres?

Records erased

Precisely what happened on this historic day was not preserved in the Islands records. If there were 13 Articles and if the Court agreed to them or to repudiate previous enactments, whatever was written down on 28 September was obliterated by a scribbling pen, by Order of the King in Council, one month later. Yet even through the scribbling it can be deduced that there were not 13 Articles or much else to record the rebels' demands.

Other Court Books were remarkably blank for 28 September 1769. It was, so far as the Lempriere government was concerned, like a day that did not happen.

Nevertheless, job done, revolution achieved, the "mob" dissolved or as Shebbeare described it:

"The common people of the isle are too brave to commit acts of cruelty, and generously left these invaders of their rights to the justice of their sovereign. In this manner, having accomplished their design, they retired in quietness, to their own houses."

Even the Lieut-Bailiff was allowed to return peacefully to his country house, four miles out of town, on horseback with his wife riding pillion. The next day, when Lempriere went to inspect a house he was having built, the workmen gave no trouble. "He was then in the middle of those who had been the most active on the preceding day. Not a word, nor gesture expressed their resentment."

It was all very curiously civilised and the Lieut-Bailiff must have experienced some sort of delayed shock, because on Saturday he declined to join the Jurats at the Royal Court. And, contrary to the Bristol newspaper account, it was only on 6 October that Lempriere summoned a special meeting of the States of Jersey (virtually the Royal Court by another name) at [Elizabeth Castle](#), where protected by thick granite walls, troops and the rising tide, it was agreed that he should be sent to England with his brother Philip and Jurats Jean Le Hardy and Josué Pipon. The purpose was to attend upon the Privy Council and to have their recent conduct applauded, to ask for more troops to be shipped over and their authority confirmed to deal with the troublemakers.

Lempriere was all the more apprehensive because the Jersey Newfoundland fishing fleet of 60 vessels was due back soon and that carried 1,500 potential supporters of the rebellion.

London visit

Evidently Lempriere was now well enough to travel to London where he dismissed the grievances of the rioters and claimed that they were:

“Some factions of jealous persons of a spirit of disrespect in some of the lower classes towards their superiors.”

On 24 October Lord Weymouth signed Royal Orders sending the Jersey delegates back to their Island duties with 200 soldiers under Lt-Colonel Rudolf Bentinck’s command, to protect them and to maintain peace. The Royal instructions restricted Lempriere’s powers of trying the offenders in his own Court and required that complaints and grievances should be collected and sent to the King as petitions.

Upon their return, the Lemprieres published the latest Order in Council, offered £100 reward for apprehending the leaders of the rebellion or “revolte” and obliterated four pages of the Cour d’Heritage record. The Cour De Catel record ledgers survived with no entries for September at all.

Over the next six months dozens of Islanders were rounded up and detained in prison for a week or two on the basis of spurious charges and rumours, many connected with non-payment of wheat rentes or the signing of petitions.

The dissenters had drawn up a well drafted 27-article petition for reform (it contained nothing about expelling Customs Officers) and were collecting signatures, much to the discomfort of the Lemprieres, who viewed it as a seditious activity.

Sedition was a very serious crime because the punishment could be death or transportation, yet almost any challenge against the authority of government was liable to be classed as “sedition”.

The Lieut-Bailiff claimed that any petitions should be sent through him and not directly to King George III and it did not take much imagination to realise that they would be valuable source of names for prosecution or persecution in Jersey.

Thomas de Gruchy

On 26 January 1770, Thomas James Gruchy was seized and imprisoned for having read out a pamphlet before a meeting in the Parish of Trinity.

Philip Alexandre, Philip Luce, Clement Gallichan, Francis Le Boutillier, Jean Coutanche, Amice Le Vasseur dit Durell, and Jean De Ste Croix were also arrested for their previous “seditious behaviour” on 28 September 1769 and they were all sent to prison by Deputy Procureur Ricard. Edward De Ste Croix was deemed too old for prison.

Denunciator Durell had tried to seize Nicholas Arthur, of St. Mary, but he was in hiding and so an order was issued for his arrest and all commanders of ships were to be warned not to carry him away.

Gruchy's address at Trinity was a remarkably sensible and democratic proposition, yet he was labelled as the most criminal of them all. There was no limit to his sedition and it was probably no coincidence that if convicted and transported or worse, his property would revert to Seigneurs like Charles Lempriere.

Gruchy's proposals included:

“To suppress all revolts and to establish a union in the Island; that the Jurats, Constables, Centeniers and all other elective officers be annually chosen by ballot. This being done, the people at the end of the year may refuse to re-elect those who have not been agreeable to them, and re-elect those who have served them agreeably. The lives and the effects of peaceful subjects would not then be exposed as they have been and are at present; and the people would have no grounds to murmur ... there is not a place in all the King's dominions where persons are elected for life, except in this Island.

In Old England, they are chosen once in seven years. In New England they are annually elected; and wherefore shall we be the sole subjects of the King of England exempted from such privileges? The constitution is sustained by the people; and the people by those whom they elect. One sustains the other, and renders their fabric strong, and not to be shaken, without the necessity of having recourse to the military force.”

“When a constitution cannot support itself without a military power, it is of no value. Things being so, the people are under a government more arbitrary than the French. The French have written laws, but in this isle there are none. Persons elected for life have all the power, and can impose upon the people whatever they may think convenient.”

Man before his time

Gruchy was a man before his time and he grappled with reforms that Thomas Paine, the internationally famous Human Rights campaigner, would be describing in a few years, and the Chartists would be promoting in the next century. Gruchy's modest sounding observations were nevertheless disturbing to governments, and in Britain similar calls for reform of the electoral process and of notorious “Rotten Boroughs” would be an excuse for the transportation of many campaigners during the next 25 years.

Thomas Gruchy was bailed by the Jersey Court on 6 February in the sum of £100 sterling. Others were bailed for 100 livres (about £7). Over the next few months he was brought back to Court on many occasions and witnesses were produced to ensure his and others' convictions. No sentences were to be pronounced until Gruchy's punishment was declared, and Lempriere desperately wanted to hang or transport some as examples to others.

But Lempriere was restrained by the Privy Council and on 6 June 1770 the Royal body ordered that no proceedings should be taken against the Jersey dissenters and a full pardon for all was issued in December.

Lieut-Governor Ball died in June and Colonel Bentinck took over as Commander-in-Chief on 15 June.

Philip Lempriere resigned as Attorney-General and moved to Southampton. His nephew Thomas Pipon took over and James Pipon became Receiver of the Revenues.

Code of 1771

Guided by the Lemprieres, Bentinck collected together a rag-bag collection of Island Regulations, Ordinances and Laws which were endorsed as a Code of Laws in 1771. The Code laid down some rules for the conduct of the States Assembly, the election of Officers and the government of the Island and curtailed the powers of the Royal Court, but did little to explain the obscure and ancient laws of the Island which remain largely unwritten or clarified to this day.

The Code did confirm, however, that neither the States nor the Royal Court could enact legislation (excepting certain temporary ordinances and regulations) or change existing laws without obtaining prior Privy Council approval or “that no political ordinances should be passed except by the whole Assembly of the States”.

Moses Corbet, the Lieut-Bailiff’s father-in-law, petitioned Governor Lord Albermarle, taking complaints to him against the Lempriere excesses, and was appointed as Lieut-Governor.

Thomas Gruchy carried on collecting the Greenwich sixpences and the Chamber of Commerce supported an action against him before the Privy Council in 1775 following his arrest of the ship “George”. He died in 1780.

Charles Lempriere carried on manipulating the wheat rentes. In October 1771 Charles Le Geyt wrote to Dr. Shebbeare: “We are now almost starving, now that the exportation of corn is stopt. The Lieut-Bailiff, nor his brother, nor Josué Pipon, father to the Procureur, will not plough a bit more than will serve their families. The Lieut-Bailiff’s brother has not ploughed at all. The rest of the farmers will plough no more. Can anybody be at a loss how these Lemprieres get such influence over these honest judges?”

John Shebbeare published several books on the Tyrannical behaviour of the Lemprieres and the injustices of Jersey government in 1772.

John Dumaresq

In 1773 John Dumaresq, a young Advocate, emerged from St. Peter. He had hoped to marry the Lieut-Bailiff’s daughter, but she ran off with a Guernsey brewer and he wed the wealthy daughter of John Le Mesurier, the notorious smuggling Governor of Alderney, instead.

Dumaresq, like the young Charles Lempriere, was fired up with progressive political views at first, but as Lempriere became the despot when appointed as Lieut-Bailiff, so Dumaresq gradually lost his reforming zeal after he was elected as Constable of St. Peter in 1776 and became a champion of smugglers’ rights.

Political parties

Nevertheless, he is most remembered as the founder of the Jeannots Political Party, which was more usually referred to as the Magots or cheese mites, which was bitterly opposed to the Charlots faction of Charles Lempriere.

Much of the bitterness derived from personal and petty family feuds but the Magots became powerful in the States and Charles Lempriere resigned as Lieut-Bailiff in 1781, the same year that the French invaded and briefly captured the Island. Lempriere's son took over as Lieut-Bailiff in a weakened Royal Court.

The Magots were also responsible for the appearance of *Le Magazin* monthly newspaper in 1784 and *La Gazette De L'Ile de Jersey* in 1786.

Le Magazin survived for less than a year because it published some particularly critical attacks on Charles Lempriere and the editor [Mathieu Alexandre](#) was prosecuted for criminal libel.

Later the Magots became known as the Rose Party and the Charlots the Laurel Party.

Personal and family feuds were such that whole communities were divided along party lines. The Parishes of St. Ouen, Trinity, Grouville and St. Clement were predominantly Laurel in 1846 and of the remainder only St. Brelade was neutral.

During the mid-19th century, [Abraham Le Cras](#) emerged as a dedicated political reformer, campaigner and publisher of books and newspapers.

The need for change and reform in Jersey has not been diminished by time.