

**COMMISSION AMICALE: REPORT FOR THE
PERIOD ENDING 31st DECEMBER 1998**

**Presented to the States on 30th March 1999
by the Jersey Delegation to the Commission
Amicale**



STATES OF JERSEY

STATES GREFFE

140

1999

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REPORT

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The States established the Commission Amicale in 1995 following the closure of the French Consulate in Jersey in the early 1990's, with the aim of reinforcing cultural and commercial links between Jersey and France.
- 1.2 The Conseil Régional de Basse Normandie and the Conseil Général de la Manche opened an office, the Maison de Normandie et de la Manche, in Halkett Place, St. Helier, in 1996 with a view to increasing the possibilities of trade with the Channel Islands. Jersey responded initially by seconding an officer to Caen with a view to establishing whether a similar presence in Normandy would be successful.
- 1.3 The secondment led to a number of activities being progressed in accordance with the aims of the Commission Amicale, and the conclusion being drawn that a Jersey office in France would indeed be beneficial.

2. Objectives in 1998

- 2.1 The Jersey Delegation had the following objectives in 1998, to be achieved in partnership with its French counterparts, other States' Committees, and the private sector -
 - (a) to open a Jersey office in Caen in order to provide advice and information about the Island, and to encourage the development of commercial and cultural links between Jersey and Basse Normandie;
 - (b) to support the teaching of French at primary school level;
 - (c) to support sporting and cultural events; and
 - (d) to strengthen links at a political level to help smooth relationships in less visible areas of diplomacy.

3. Activities in 1998

- 3.1. Jersey Office in Caen "Maison de Jersey"
 - 3.1.1 The Jersey Delegation opened the Jersey Office in Caen, the Maison de Jersey, in partnership with the Jersey Electricity Company Limited, in July 1998, in a ceremony designed to raise the awareness of the office to enable business contacts to begin. The opening was widely reported in the French media, and received coverage locally in the Jersey Evening Post.
 - 3.1.2 The Jersey Office is ideally situated in the Boulevard Maréchal-Leclerc on a pleasant road opposite the theatre and shopping centre, and on a busy bus route just off the main pedestrian precinct. The premises comprise a shop-front at street level, with meeting room available for small meetings, and a storage area.
 - 3.1.3 The business of the Jersey Office, (or the Maison de Jersey: the term which describes the premises) is directed by the board of the 'Bureau de Jersey Limited', a company registered in Jersey, made up of members of the Commission Amicale, the Jersey Electricity Company Limited and the Chairman of the Trade and Industry Subcommittee.
 - 3.1.4 Initially a part-time officer, a "Chargé de Mission" was appointed, however it was decided to extend this to a full-time post in October 1998, and the current postholder holds dual nationality and is bilingual. The Chargé de Mission is the employee of the Bureau de Jersey Limited, and also presents reports to the Commission Amicale on the projects it wishes to pursue.
 - 3.1.5 The Chargé de Mission has made contact with many organisations within the Island and their counterparts in Normandy with regard to businesses seeking markets in Jersey/Normandy, educational and arts establishments, and government bodies. The office has also made contact with the Paris Office of COGEMA, the Institut de Protection et de Sécurité Nucléaire (IPSN), other agencies involved in nuclear monitoring and analysis, and with management at the Cap de la Hague reprocessing plant to assist talks with the Island on nuclear matters.
 - 3.1.6 The Chargé de Mission also attends events which are relevant, and attended the 'Forum pour L'Emploi' held in Dinard on 4th December 1998, also attended by officers of the Employment and Social Security Department. A number of issues arose from that forum, and, following an initiative by the Jersey Office, links have now been

established between the Jersey Hospitality Association and the Lycée Hôtelier at Douvre La Délivrante just outside Caen. The Head Teacher is also an English teacher and is very keen to develop links such as these.

3.1.7 Putting people in touch with one another is an important part of the work of the office, and politicians, key administrators, and private sector organisations and agencies have been guided towards one another. This is a two-way process, and lines of communication are being opened between Jersey organisations and French ones, and vice-versa.

3.1.8 The simple fact of having a physical presence in France both makes that communication more practicable, and shows a level of commitment and intent which underlines Jersey's increasingly positive attitude towards doing business with France.

3.1.9 The opening of the office is a most welcome development and will help the Delegation to make real progress in developing its work. However, the Jersey Delegation has only a small budget, currently standing at £25,000 a year, and these finite resources will inevitably impose limitations on what can be achieved.

3.2 Development of commerce

3.2.1 The Jersey office is particularly concerned with improving commerce between the two regions. Jersey's commercial links with its French neighbour are relatively minor, despite the fact that the Island is only 15 miles from the French coast. Nonetheless, Jersey benefits from good trading and transport links with France, and there is potential to develop these links still further.

3.2.2 *Import/Export:* There are many goods made in Jersey which could find a ready market in France, and the greatest potential would appear to be with those goods that are not readily available. For example, C.I. Bakery Limited has been promoting "English Bread" in the area around St. Malo for some time, and the Jersey office has agreed to identify potential for distribution within local constraints in that sector.

3.2.3 Many Jersey companies have expressed interest in exporting to France, but have been reluctant to target this area of the market because of concerns about export formalities and the perceived language barrier. The Jersey Office in Caen helps to overcome these barriers by providing advice and information to Jersey companies about employment and commercial opportunities in Normandy. In return, the Jersey Office advises French companies about potential markets in Jersey, and about the Island's employment and housing regulations.

3.2.4 The Trade and Industry Sub-Committee has drawn attention to the commercial opportunities that are available in Brittany, and this is also an area of the market that the Jersey Delegation intends to develop. The Jersey Office will also promote trade with this region, and with France in general, for it does not believe that its efforts should be directed exclusively towards Lower Normandy.

3.2.5 Accordingly, the Jersey delegation sent representatives to the St. Malo Trades' Exhibition in April 1998 as it was recognised that St. Malo provides a particularly strong transport link with France. The Jersey delegation has decided to broaden the area covered by the Bureau de Jersey, to include links with Brittany, and specifically with the Chambers of Commerce of St. Malo and Rennes, as required by a condition of a contribution made by the Trade and Industry Sub-Committee towards the cost of the Jersey Office in 1998.

3.2.6 *Finance:* It has been suggested that financial institutions in Jersey could be encouraged to establish branches in Lower Normandy to supply 'back office' services. This would provide additional job opportunities in Normandy, while at the same time easing pressure on the local market.

3.2.7 There are no technical objections to this proposal, and the French regional authorities are very supportive. The Jersey Office in Caen maintains contact with the Policy and Resources Department, CEBANOR, the regional commercial development agency for Lower Normandy, and other agencies in order that support can be given to any Jersey companies wishing to explore this option.

3.2.8 On a more general level, the Jersey Office is endeavouring to maintain and develop interest in Jersey as a commercial market.

3.2.9 *Tourism:* Tourism is presently the most important single area of commerce between Jersey and Lower Normandy, and is likely to remain so for the foreseeable future. Many of the contacts made with the Jersey office in Caen have been tourism-related, and the office continues to provide information to potential travellers between the two regions.

3.2.10 The Jersey Delegation intends to work with the Conseil Régional de Basse-Normandie, the Chambres de Commerce, and other regional authorities, to maintain and develop the transport links between Jersey and France. This is an important part of the work of the Jersey Office, for without good transport links it will be impossible to further develop the commercial and cultural relations between Jersey and France.

3.2.11 The Jersey Office in Caen makes a valuable contribution in this respect, by informing private companies, tour operators, and others about the transport services that are available, and by offering advice about customs procedures and other formalities.

3.3 Educational exchanges

3.3.1 Jersey schoolchildren gain practice in using French by working in their schools with French assistants, or student teachers. For many years the University of Caen has provided two students a year to work in secondary schools, and this scheme has been working very successfully.

3.3.2 In partnership with the Education Committee, two primary school French assistants were appointed for the period October 1998 to May 1999 to coincide with the Caen University's academic year. The assistants are working in a total of 19 primary schools during this period, spending six weeks at each group of approximately six schools.

3.3.3 The Jersey Delegation is pleased to support this initiative, and will review the success of the initiative during the first year. If the scheme is successful, the Jersey Delegation hopes that the Education Committee will be minded to take the initiative forward.

3.3.4 The Jersey Office in Caen also serves as a useful resource for Jersey teachers who are organising educational visits to France, providing information about places to stay, together with details of sites to visit and other activities.

3.3.5 The Département of La Manche is interested in developing exchange programmes between Jersey and La Manche, both at primary and secondary school level. The Département provided details of three primary and seven secondary schools that are interested in developing links with Jersey schools, and these proposals were considered by the Education Department during the course of 1998. The Jersey Delegation welcomes these proposals, and would be pleased to provide support in developing exchange programmes. It has been agreed that the Jersey Office should identify French schools with which Hautlieu School and Jersey College for Girls may establish video conferencing and electronic mail links.

3.3.6 For those wishing to study French after leaving school, an excellent range of courses is available at the University of Caen's international study centre (the "Centre d'Enseignement Universitaire Internationale pour Etrangers en Normandie"). There are also programmes available at undergraduate level that can be integrated with degree courses at United Kingdom universities. In addition, there are opportunities for business and finance studies at both graduate and postgraduate levels. For example, the Banque Nationale de Paris has offered to sponsor a locally-based student to study at the 'Salle de Marchés-Ecole' at the University of Caen, and this offer has been under consideration by the Education Department. The Jersey Delegation is looking forward to an agreement being concluded in this important area.

3.4 Health, Planning and other public services

3.4.1 In addition to education, there are other areas of public services in which greater co-operation could be to the mutual benefit of both Jersey and Lower Normandy. The Jersey Office has promoted contacts between government bodies, and for example in 1998, the possibility of greater co-operation in health care was raised. The Health and Social Services Department considered a suggestion from the health authorities in La Manche (the "Département des Affaires Sanitaires et Sociales") that it should use some of the hospital facilities in the region.

3.4.2 The Jersey Delegation is pleased to have been involved in discussions on these initiatives, and will continue to lend its support. It will also support co-operation in other areas of the public sector if it can be demonstrated that there will be a positive gain.

3.4.3 On a slightly less official level, in the field of Biological Science, the Jersey Office was able to assist local specialists obtain scientific papers on the management of urban seagull populations in Normandy, which will be useful in discussions of the same problem in Jersey.

3.5 Cultural events

- 3.5.1 *The Arts:* The “Peintres Contemporaines de Jersey” exhibited their work with the support of both the French and Jersey delegations to the Commission Amicale in St. Lô in February and the Abbaye-aux-Dames in Caen in May 1998, having exhibited in Cherbourg at the end of 1997. The exhibitions were very well received and attracted large audiences in all three venues.
- 3.5.2 The Jersey Delegation intends to promote co-operation in the arts by initiating at least one exhibition a year during the period 1998-2001, and at least one other cultural event such as a concert or theatre production. In helping to organise these events, the Jersey Delegation will be able to draw on the extensive network of contacts that has developed through the organisation of the exhibition “Peintres Contemporaines de Jersey”, and through the earlier exhibition “Peindre en Normandie”, held in Jersey in 1995.
- 3.5.3 The Jersey delegation made a grant to enable ‘Le Congrès des Parles Normandes et Jèrriais’ to perform at the Howard Davis Farm/Jersey Evening Post Country Show - Le Foire dé Jèrri.
- 3.5.4 *Sports:* There are already many sporting links between Jersey, Basse-Normandie, and Brittany, and the Jersey Delegation will give every encouragement to the development of these links. The Jersey Office in Caen responds to inquiries from both Jersey and French sports associations regarding potential competitions and exchange visits.
- 3.5.5 *Twinnings:* Six Jersey parishes are already twinned with communes in Lower Normandy, and a further twinning is under discussion. The Jersey Delegation believe that twinnings are an effective way of promoting exchanges at the grass-roots level, and that they should be actively progressed. Its objective is to encourage all parishes to twin with towns in France. The Commission Amicale continues to support the efforts of the parishes in twinning with towns in France, and notably the region of Lower Normandy, and the sporting and educational exchanges taking place.
- 3.6 Political links
- 3.6.1 Jersey’s links with Lower Normandy have already proved to be of benefit on a more general political level. For example, there is now a much greater degree of information exchange on nuclear issues, especially with regard to the nuclear installations at Flamanville and Cap de la Hague. Insular representatives regularly attend the meetings of the information committees (i.e. the “Commissions d’Information”) that oversee the activities of these installations.
- 3.6.2 The increased level of contact has also helped in fisheries management, and Jersey is now a member of a Consultative Committee which discusses issues relating to the fishing in the Bay of Granville. Membership is drawn from Jersey, Normandy and Brittany, and the Committee has been able to resolve several difficult issues relating to fisheries management (e.g. pair trawling, the catching of juvenile lobsters etc.).
- 3.6.3 The Jersey delegation notes that fisheries management is not the only issue on which there would be a benefit in including Brittany in discussions. Indeed, there are many areas in which there would be an advantage in including Brittany in the discussions with Lower Normandy, e.g. tourism, transport and commerce. The Jersey delegation is pleased to note that consideration is being given to the establishment of a working party which would bring together Brittany, Normandy and Jersey to discuss matters of mutual interest.
- 3.6.4 *Meeting with Conseil Général de la Manche:* States’ members visited the Conseil Général de la Manche on 23rd October 1998 in response to an invitation extended by the Conseil. Nineteen States members, accompanied by the Bailiff, the Greffier of the States and the French Honorary Consul, attended, and an opportunity was taken to learn about the system of government in France, and the place occupied by the Conseil Général within that structure.
- 3.6.5 As a direct result of the visit, a meeting was arranged between French politicians and their Jersey counterparts in Jersey in February 1999 to discuss the establishment of closer links between the Islands, and to discuss the economic infrastructure necessary to open new commercial and trade links between the two regions. These discussions included an investigation of outsourcing, and the legal and fiscal issues which could arise.

4. Projects planned for 1999

- 4.1 The Jersey delegation has agreed the following programme to date -
- (a) the Jersey Office in Caen will be maintained, and the Chargé de Mission will develop his rôle in opening and strengthening links between the two regions, and provide written reports to the Jersey delegation on the progress of work of the office to monitor its contribution and effectiveness;
 - (b) there will be meetings as discussed in the previous section on discrete areas of mutual interest between the

two authorities;

- (c) the Jersey delegation has invited members of the Conseil Régional de la Manche to Jersey on 18th June 1999;
- (d) the Jersey delegation will continue to support the primary school assistants programme until May 1999;
- (e) the Jersey delegation will endeavour to support cultural initiatives between the two regions.

5. Conclusion

- 5.1 The Commission Amicale was appointed in January 1995, and the Jersey Delegation believes that a great deal has been done since that time to further the good relationship that exists between Jersey and Lower Normandy.
- 5.2 In 1998, for the first time the Jersey Delegation had an annual budget. It also now has an Office in Basse-Normandie, together with a Chargé de Mission who will have the time and some resources to carry projects forward. The next three years should be an interesting time, and will set the pattern for increased co-operation between Jersey, Lower Normandy and Brittany in the longer term.