

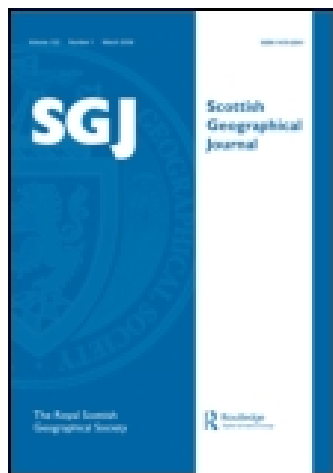
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### Guernsey

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GUERNSEY.<sup>1</sup>

BY GEORGE G. CHISHOLM, M.A., B.Sc.

THIS is the tiniest of all the independent members of Her Majesty's dominions. Without its dependencies of Sark and Herm and the more distant and semi-independent Alderney, its area is 25 square miles (16,005 acres)—hardly one-eightieth of the size of Prince Edward Island, less than the smallest of the independent members of the West Indies, little more than one-fifth of the area of metropolitan London. But, notwithstanding its diminutive size, it possesses no little interest for us, geographical as well as historical. The historical interest does not concern us here; but we may just allude to the fact (which the Guernsey people are proud to remember), that the legislative independence enjoyed by it along with the rest of the Channel Islands, is not a thing of yesterday, but an ancient inheritance, dating back from a period long before England became the mother of nations; and that the connection of these Norman islands with England began with the event which gave to England a Norman king.

The geographical interest belonging to the island becomes manifest even on the most cursory survey. On entering St. Peter's Port, one cannot but be struck on seeing so considerable a town situated on so small an island; and on quitting the town for the country, one is still struck by the numerous signs of advanced culture, the cottages and substantial houses scattered everywhere, and frequently clustering into hamlets and villages; the numerous farms, and the intricate network of roads. Figures confirm this impression. Guernsey is, in fact, one of the most densely-peopled parts of all the eight millions of square miles that acknowledge the sway of Queen Victoria. Apart from the smaller dependencies, it had at the census of 1881 a population of 32,600, which divided by 25 gives a population of upwards of 1300 to the square mile—a density which, though exceeded by that of Malta, was considerably greater than that of Barbadoes, greater than that of any Scottish county, and any English county, except those of Middlesex, Surrey, and Lancashire at the same date.

One naturally asks how the existence of this dense population is to be explained. It need hardly be stated that there are no great manufacturing industries to account for this high density, as in Lancashire; but neither is it to be forgotten that the whole of this population is not maintained out of the resources of the island itself. In the first place, there is a considerable body of troops (upwards of 600), forming the British garrison. Then secondly, it must be remembered that the island

<sup>1</sup> For much of the information relating to the agriculture of the island, the writer has to express his thanks to M. de Moulpied, one of the Secretaries of the Royal Society of Agriculture and Horticulture of Guernsey, who was also kind enough to read the proof of the present article.

is still a favourite place of retirement to people of moderate means, who spend in the island a considerable proportion of what they have accumulated elsewhere. But the very existence of this class of residents implies an exceptional abundance of native resources; and, even if both troops and residents with independent means be left out of account, a relatively large population remains. Moreover, the existence of a dense population is not a recent fact in the history of the island. A census taken in 1615 shows that at that date the number of inhabited houses on the island of Guernsey alone was 1355, which, if we assume that there was the same average number of inhabitants to each house in 1615 as there was in 1881 (about six), represents a population of 8200, and accordingly a density of about 330 to the square mile—that is to say, a considerably greater density than that of the British Isles at the last census.

We cannot therefore but conclude that the island possesses in itself exceptional advantages for the maintenance of a dense population, and it is worth while to inquire what these are. One advantage will at once suggest itself to a summer visitor from the aspect of the vegetation. The signs of a climate more favourable to vegetation than that of England are very marked. Not only are vines and fig-trees, oranges and myrtles, to be seen flourishing in the open air—as they may be seen in all the southern counties of England—but there are also in many a garden, aloes and agaves in full bloom. The bright waxen blossoms of the *escallonia* are to be seen in almost every hedgerow. Plants that are familiar in English gardens here attain an unusual size. *Calceolarias* and scarlet *pelargoniums* (garden geraniums) form large bushes, and the latter sometimes climb to the roofs of the cottages. *Camellias* growing in the open air attain the dimensions of trees; and what are perhaps more striking than anything else are the huge bushes of *marguerites*, which sometimes form hemispheres six or eight feet in diameter, and present to view an almost unbroken surface of the well-known white-rayed yellow-eyed blossoms. No less indicative of the vigour of the plant-life is the manner in which it takes possession of every available spot on old walls and rock faces. In such situations you will see not merely the mosses and unpretending forms which most people are content to classify as weeds; but even garden geraniums, *antirrhinums*, *echeverias*, and several other plants that in England one expects to see only under cultivation. In such situations, too, you will find long bushy rows of red *valerian*; and from almost every crevice in every wall, and every joint and cranny on every rock face, may be seen ascending the greenish-white spikes of the wall-pennywort (*Cotyledon umbilicus*).

So much for the evidence which the vegetation bears with respect to the climate. It is instructive to compare that of the meteorological record. The mean results of observation taken twice a day during a period of forty years showed that the mean temperature of February (the coldest month) is 43° Fahr., that of July (the hottest month) 60·6 Fahr. The former is about four degrees higher than the temperature of

the coldest month in London (January), though about two degrees lower than that of the corresponding month at Land's End. The latter is about  $3\frac{1}{2}$  degrees lower than the mean temperature of the corresponding month in London, and one or two degrees lower than at Land's End. As regards temperature, therefore, the climate of Guernsey is, as might be expected, remarkable for its mild and equable character. Notwithstanding the fact that the island lies in a latitude equivalent to that of the Rhine Valley in the neighbourhood of Mannheim,<sup>1</sup> there are no hot summers; and it is the absence of winter cold, not the excess of summer heat, that favours the growth of the plants already mentioned characteristic of a warmer climate than is to be found in most parts of England. The chief defect of the climate as regards temperature is a liability to late frosts, to which the island is all the more exposed from the fact that its surface slopes upwards from the north to the south, thus laying it open to the north-east winds of spring. The elevation is everywhere too moderate to have much effect on temperature—the highest point being only 350 feet above sea-level. The mean annual rainfall is about  $37\frac{1}{2}$  inches,—similar, therefore, to that of the low-lying parts of the west of England.

With a heavy soil, a rainfall of that amount would be unfavourable to the cultivation of some of the most profitable crops; but the soil of Guernsey is another of the peculiar advantages which the island enjoys, and more particularly because it is so well suited to its climate. The rock from which the soil is derived, consists mainly of syenite or hornblendic granite and syenitic gneiss. It varies considerably in its rate of weathering, but for the most part it weathers very readily. At many places on the road-sides there are interesting illustrations of the process of decomposition. Above, you may see a thick layer of a light earthy soil; below, another layer of broken subsoil; and at the bottom, what seems to be solid rock, with a few irregular joints with rounded lips, but is found by experiment to be capable of being crumbled into powder by means of a very moderate pounding.

The soil thus derived is not naturally very fertile. As in the case of other soils due mainly to the decomposition of hornblendic granite, there is a deficiency of the important constituents, potash and soda, and the indispensable phosphates are absent. But, on the other hand, the soil, though light and sandy in the north, is deep and loamy in the upper parishes, in the south and south-east. Everywhere it is easily worked. The other requisites for fertility are obtained from another source, and the abundance of the supply is another consequence of the structure of the island.

The diversity in the hardness of the constituent rock has caused the coast-line to be eaten out by the action of waves and weather into a large

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<sup>1</sup> Mean temperature of Mannheim in January, according to Hann,  $0.4^{\circ}$  C. =  $32.7^{\circ}$  F.; in July,  $20^{\circ}$  C.  $68^{\circ}$  F.

number of small bays, in which there is a large surface of rock alternately covered and laid bare by the tide. On these rocks grows an unlimited quantity of sea-weed, known in the Channel Islands as *varech* or *vraic*, which has from time immemorial served as a manure, and originally supplied the third condition required for raising food in large abundance directly or indirectly from the soil, and hence for maintaining a thick population. It is precisely the same on the similar coasts of Brittany, where the maritime tracts, which have access to this kind of manure, always presented a marked contrast to the comparatively barren tracts of the interior, until in quite recent times the introduction of railways brought to these also the means of enriching the soil. In Guernsey and the Channel Islands generally, the sea-weed is still largely used for manure, according to the traditional mode of agriculture, and the times for cutting the sea-weed are fixed by acts of the local Legislatures. There are three cuttings in the year, one in spring, one in summer, and one in autumn. The spring and autumn cuttings are for the most part used directly for manure, that of summer for fuel, the ashes being reserved for use as manure. The use of this kind of manure is now, however, confined to the growth of root-crops and barley sown after wheat, it being found more profitable in the case of other crops to use the special manures artificially prepared for the purpose.

The three conditions of a favourable climate, a good soil, and an abundant supply of manure, being thus furnished by nature, there was needed only industry on the part of the inhabitants to make the island bring forth abundant stores of food. And this industry has never been wanting, and probably was never more conspicuous than at the present day. The conditions just indicated are those most suitable for small holdings and hand cultivation, which generally prevail in the island. The farms are seldom above eight or ten acres in extent, but they are cultivated with an amount of care that would be impracticable in the larger farms of England and Scotland. Though weeds are apt to spring up in profusion, the easily-worked soil is so constantly and rapidly turned over by means of hand-weeders that the fields are kept "clean" to a degree that a farmer at home could not dream of.

To enable one to understand the precise mode in which a limited amount of surface is turned to account so as to yield a large quantity of produce, it will now be interesting to compare the agricultural returns of Guernsey with those of an English county. For this purpose Monmouth is perhaps the most suitable county to select, as being one of the smaller counties, and having a climate and productions as nearly similar to those of Guernsey as any English county can show. To facilitate the comparison, a column is added to the following table to show what the acreage under the several crops, etc., would be in Guernsey, supposing that the same proportion were maintained between the different crops as at present subsists, but that the total acreage under crops, orchards, etc., were the same as in Monmouth. The total acreage in the island of Guernsey under

crops, or grass, or in fallow, and under orchards, market gardens, and nursery grounds in 1885, was 9860 acres, the corresponding acreage for Monmouth 248,378 acres, so that to find the figures representing the proportion of crops, and the number of live stock for Guernsey in a county having an acreage under crop equal to that of Monmouth, the returns for Guernsey had to be multiplied by 25·2.

## ACREAGE IN 1885.

Under	Guernsey.	In a county having the same area under crops, etc., as Monmouth.	Monmouth.
Corn crops, . . . . .	1243 =	31,324	28,721
Green crops, . . . . .	2554 =	64,361	11,713
Grass and clover, . . . . .	997 =	25,124	19,561
Permanent pasture, . . . . .	4408 =	111,082	180,438
Fallow, . . . . .	7 =	176	3,348

## NUMBER IN 1885.

Horses used solely for agriculture and by market gardeners, . . . . .	1257 =	31,676	6,255
Cows and heifers in milk or calf, . . . . .	3029 =	76,330	18,572
Other cattle, two years old and above, . . . . .	802 =	20,210	10,861
Other cattle, under two years, . . . . .	2767 =	69,728	21,121
Sheep and lambs, . . . . .	504 =	12,700	184,955
Pigs, . . . . .	3413 =	86,007	17,126

## ACRES IN 1885.

Orchards, . . . . .	461 =	11,617	3,996
Market gardens, . . . . .	171 =	4,309	530
Nursery grounds, . . . . .	19 =	479	20

The most obvious features of Guernsey agriculture that come out on an examination of the preceding tables are these :—The relatively large acreage in Guernsey under green crops, and the relatively small acreage in permanent pasture ; and, secondly, the relatively large number of large animals that are kept in Guernsey, and the relatively small number of sheep. These features are of course related to one another. Only a comparatively small area in Guernsey, as compared with Monmouth, is fit for no better use than sheep pastures. The green crops of Guernsey, and the luxuriant clovers and cultivated grasses supply an unusual amount of cattle pasture on a relatively small area ; and further, the vegetative year in Guernsey lasts long enough to allow, in many cases, of two crops being taken in succession from the same piece of ground. White turnips always form a second crop, and mangold frequently does so likewise.

The predominance of cattle-rearing in Guernsey farming is sure to strike an early summer visitor at once, from the mode in which the cattle are pastured. The cattle are allowed to graze the tall pasture grasses as they stand in the field, or to feed on green oats mingled with vetches ;

and, to prevent them from destroying more than they consume, they are all tethered, and each cow thus allowed to graze only a semicircle within range of her tether. From this mode of pasturing being adopted, it results that as many as twenty cows may be seen feeding at once in a single field less than an acre in extent. The large number of cattle in the island explains the relatively large number of pigs shown in the preceding table, these being fed to a large extent on the refuse of the dairy.

Among the minor peculiarities of Guernsey farming not brought out by the table, the most noteworthy is the large area devoted to the cultivation of parsnips, a crop well adapted to the soil of the island, and hence largely grown for feeding purposes. In 1885 the number of acres under this crop was 630, nearly one-fourth of the total acreage under green crops of all kinds. The use of oilcake for feeding is little practised on the island.

To return to the table, its figures also show a relatively large area in Guernsey laid out as orchards, market gardens, and nursery grounds; but, so far, there are no figures to show the extent of the area under glass. An attempt was made by the Lieutenant-Governor, Major-General Elkington, in the present year, to obtain a return under this head, but the attempt turned out a failure, chiefly in consequence of the groundless apprehensions of those who were asked to supply the information. Anyhow, the fact is certain that the greenhouses of Guernsey are to be reckoned among the chief sources of its wealth. Almost every person who is fortunate enough to own half an acre of land in the island has one or more greenhouses, and the cultivation of greenhouse fruits, and, above all, grapes and tomatoes, is still regarded, notwithstanding the fall in prices within the last few years, as one of the most lucrative occupations in which a Guernsey man can engage. It is curious, too, to observe that this may be regarded as a specialty of Guernsey, even as compared with the larger sister island of Jersey; and it may be surmised that the prevalence of the use of glass in the former island is one of the consequences of the sole defect of the Guernsey climate above mentioned—the liability to late frosts. The slope of Jersey being in the opposite direction to that of Guernsey—namely, from high grounds in the north to lower grounds in the south—that island is not so exposed to the north-east winds which sometimes blast the early potatoes in Guernsey. Hence in Jersey there is less attention devoted to greenhouse cultivation, and there the farmer applies almost all his energies to the raising of early potatoes for the London market.

It is the produce of orchards and market gardens that appears most largely among the exports of Guernsey to the United Kingdom.<sup>1</sup> In 1885 vegetables formed the largest of all individual items in value, amounting to £45,414 out of a total of £305,240, and fruit came next at £42,136.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> No returns are kept of the trade of Guernsey with France, but it is very small compared with that which it carries on with the home country.

<sup>2</sup> The returns do not enable us to state the amount which falls to the two Guernsey specialties under this head—grapes and tomatoes.

Another notable item under the head of garden produce is that of flowers, the export of which, in 1885, amounted to upwards of £8000; and this item also indicates a specialty of Guernsey cultivation. Of commodities that come more strictly under the head of farm produce, the two chief items among the exports of 1885 were potatoes, £23,946,<sup>1</sup> and cattle, £20,152. The Guernsey farmers being proud of their dairy produce, and, above all, of their butter, it is somewhat surprising to find that no commodity under this head enters largely into the exports of the island. The total value of the export of butter to the United Kingdom, in 1885, was only £21, and the export of eggs was less than one-seventh of the amount of the import. The cheapness and excellence of the native dairy produce are no doubt among the attractions which induce so many people with moderate means to settle in the island, and thus to provide a home market for almost all the articles of this sort.

Besides its soil, Guernsey has considerable resources in its waters and its minerals, or rather in one mineral. The fisheries of the island are very varied and productive, but in this case again it is the home market that is chiefly supplied. The total value of the export of fish to the United Kingdom, in 1885, was only £329; but, on the other hand, the huge whittings (often two or three feet in length), the mackerel still shimmering, invitingly fresh, in all their rainbow colours, the conger-eels, garfish, bass, and other fish, laid out on a Saturday morning on the black marble slabs of the fine market of St. Peter's Port, present a sight well worth seeing.

The sole important mineral product of the island is its granite, which, in the neighbourhood of St. Sampson's, near the north of the island on the east side, is found in an extremely hard, compact, and weather-resisting form, so as to be almost unrivalled for paving. The value of this export in 1885 was not far short of £29,000.

This is almost the only article of export of the little port of St. Sampson's. The rest of the export trade of the island is carried on at St. Peter's Port, where there is a well-built harbour of native granite, capacious enough, one would think, for an island a hundred times as big. St. Peter's Port, which contains half the population of the island, is also, it need not be said, the centre of the local trade. There are no railways for the carriage of produce in the island, but on Wednesday mornings, and still more on Saturday mornings, a long continued succession of vehicles<sup>2</sup> is to be seen driving in from all parts to the market above referred to, where, from six or seven to about eleven in the morning, the market women sit in long rows with their baskets of butter, eggs, and curds, peas, beans, potatoes, and other produce of the week, patiently, pleasantly, and unso-

<sup>1</sup> Seeing that the total value of the import of potatoes into the United Kingdom from the Channel Islands in 1885 was £419,783, the figure here given for Guernsey enables us to see what a large proportion of the total must fall to Jersey—a fact by no means surprising to any one who has visited St. Heliers during the potato season.

<sup>2</sup> Hence the relatively large number of horses indicated in the preceding table.



licitously waiting for custom. On such mornings the roads of Guernsey afford a sufficiently lively impression of the density of population on the little island; but in this respect they are hardly less significant in the dullest period of the day. They remind one, to some extent, of Devonshire lanes, by the mounds of fern and ivy-covered earth, frequently surmounted by trees, which form their sides, and by the way in which they wind out and in without appearing to be aiming for anywhere in particular; but between them and the lanes of Devon there is this striking difference, that whereas in the latter you may follow their windings for miles together without seeing a turning either to the right hand or the left, you can scarcely anywhere do so in Guernsey for 500 yards.

Of the old connection of Guernsey (along with the other Channel Islands) with Normandy, there are still a few interesting evidences. The local dialect is a form of Norman-French, known as Guernsey French or Guernsey, and still pretty generally understood, though now giving way to English, which already is the prevailing language. French proper is still used along with English in the services of the Church (which has an Anglican ritual), the courts of law, and the local newspapers. The local law is based on the old Norman law, and is studied in the colleges of Normandy, not in English Inns. But the oddest illustration of the double relations of Guernsey (Jersey differs in this respect) to England and France is to be found in the monetary circulation. The coinage in general use is that of the Latin Convention, but the denominations used in speaking of money are those of the English system. You see French, Belgian, Italian, Greek, and other francs, and multiples of the franc, but what you hear spoken of is pounds, shillings, and pence. You are charged for an article you wish to buy one shilling and sixpence. You give a two-franc piece in payment, and receive as change the equivalent of twenty centimes, which is called twopence; and this twopence you may receive either in foreign coins or in the local copper coinage, which is the sole coinage of the island itself. A "pound" in Guernsey is twenty-four francs, but for an English sovereign you receive, of course, twenty-five francs.

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## PROPOSED NEW ROUTE *VIA* HUDSON'S BAY AND STRAIT TO THE GREAT PRAIRIE-LANDS OF CANADA.

BY JOHN RAE, M.D., LL.D., F.R.S., F.R.G.S., Etc.

FOR some years past, a few energetic and enterprising Canadian gentlemen, influenced by the praiseworthy motive of organising a shorter route to the wheat-growing prairie-lands of North-West Canada, and thereby cheapening the transport of produce and the passenger fares of emigrants, have been using their best efforts to carry out this scheme, by setting on foot the construction of a railway from Manitoba to one of two stations