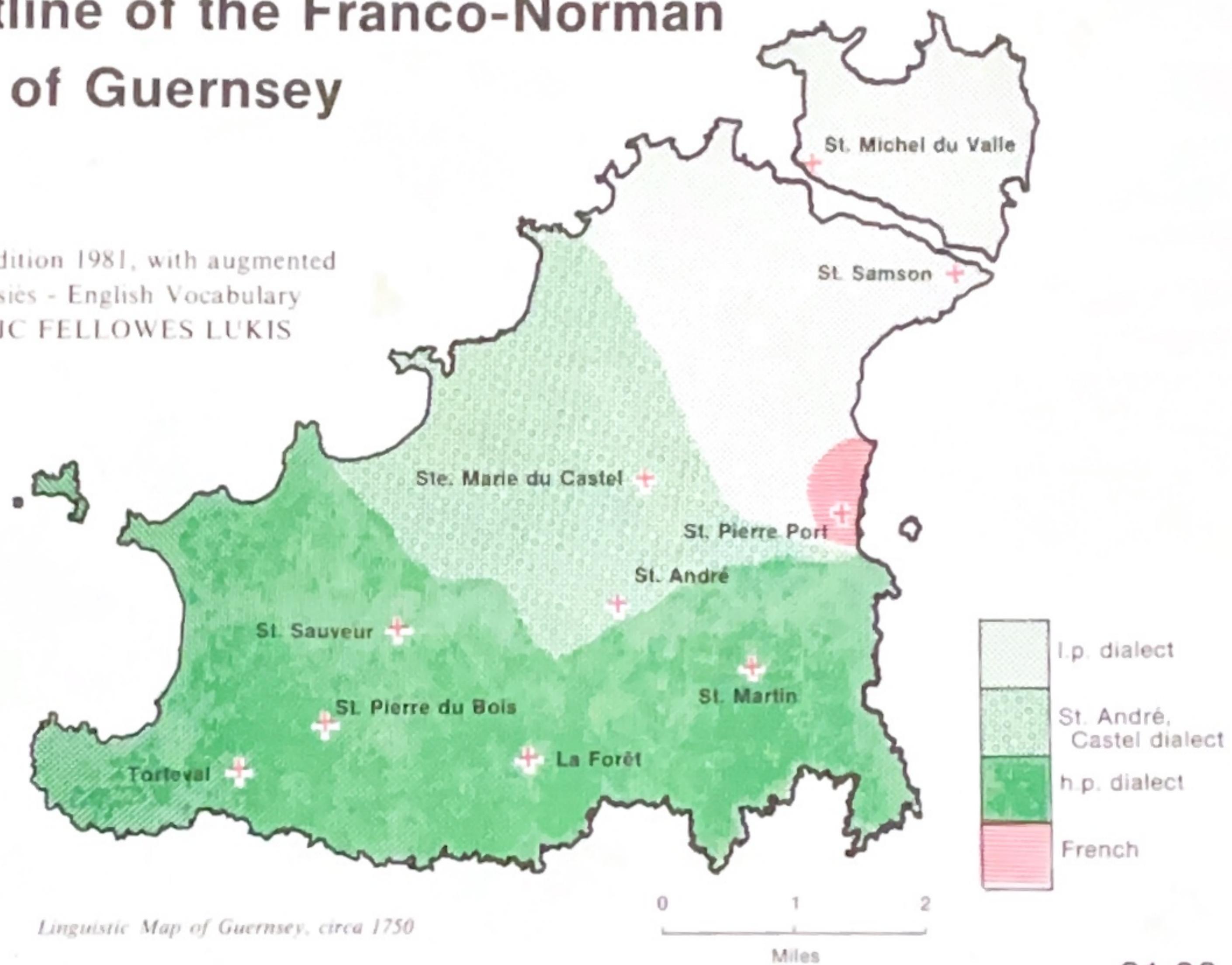


# An Outline of the Franco-Norman dialect of Guernsey

Revised Edition 1981, with augmented  
Guernesies - English Vocabulary  
by ERIC FELLOWES LUKIS



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## **Foreword**

There would be no need for this work if Guernesìes were merely a mutilated form of French, as it might well appear to be. The fact is that below the surface there lies a fascinating stratum of the old Norman language which deserves to be brought to light and recorded before it is completely overlaid. Since the publication of "An Outline" in 1978, a great deal of further research has been carried out, as a result of which it has been largely rewritten, and I hope that many errors and omissions have been rectified.

## **Acknowledgements**

I take this opportunity to thank all those who have helped me with this edition. Mr Raymond Falla, O.B.E., Mr Lawrie Ozanne, and especially Mr Peter Girard, who gave so much of his time in checking the exercises and vocabulary. I am also beholden to Mrs R. Le B. Heaume, Mrs A. Norman, Mrs Blogowski, Mrs L.O. Collas, Mr and Mrs A. Mahy and Mr and Mrs H. Martel who kindly allowed me to tape-record their speech for analysis.

## A short history of the language.

Guernsey, the remotest of the Anglo-Norman islands from France, has probably preserved more traces of the Norman branch of the ancient Langue d'Oïl (OLD FRENCH) than any other place in the world, and the object of this work is to point out and record these disappearing vestiges so different from modern French. It is almost a miracle that a language existing only as a spoken dialect for nearly a thousand years and continually exposed to French influence, could have retained so much of its ancient heritage.

The Merovingian Latin formerly spoken in Gaul had, by the Xth century, become a kind of French. It was divided into two forms, the Langue d'Oc of the south and the Langue d'Oïl of the north. Oc and Oïl being the respective words for 'yes'. The current word in Guernesîes, pronounced 'weh', is spelt ouél.

The Langue d'Oïl, now generally known as Old French, was spoken in Normandy, Picardy, Belgium, Burgundy and the Isle de France around Paris.

In the course of 500 years Old French developed separately in each of the above regions and by 1515 they were sufficiently unlike for Francis I<sup>st</sup> to decree that his Paris dialect should be the official French of the whole country. This relegated Norman, by this time widely spoken, and the others, to the status of provincial dialects.

After the loss of mainland Normandy by King John in the XIII<sup>th</sup> century, the ports of St Samson and St Pierre Port continued their trade links with France while the Priories and Parish Churches remained under the jurisdiction of the Bishop of Coutances until the XVI<sup>th</sup> century. About this time too began the influx of Huguenot refugees, and later an even more powerful French influence caused by the imposition on the Parish Churches of the Anglican Rite with its Holy Bible, Hymnal and Prayer-Book, translated into the standard French of the period, requiring French-speaking pastors, usually Calvinist, to conduct services.

The total population of the island was then only about 7,000 souls of whom roughly half lived in French-speaking St Pierre Port, leaving the sparse Norman-speaking islanders scattered thinly around the nine country Parish Churches.

St Pierre Port itself was the seat of Government and there lived the lawyers, merchants and Huguenot settlers. The official language of government was French and remained so until recently when it was changed to English.

During the Middle Ages the gap between the French of Paris and the Norman dialect of the island widened steadily, each developing in different ways, Guernesîes in some cases following a path closer to the development of Italian than of French. Had it been left in isolation to produce its own literature it would no doubt have been as different from French today as Portuguese is from Spanish.

The sound of Guernesìes is completely different from that of French and is almost unintelligible even to fluent French speakers. Nevertheless a form of French spelling was naturally adopted in the XIXth century as many people in country parishes could speak some French as it was taught in their local schools. Legal documents emanating from St Pierre Port were also in French and as that language became increasingly known, and was also considered socially superior to the local dialect, more and more words were borrowed from it, replacing the native equivalents. The French words were usually "patoisé". A few examples will explain this:—

The French 'peut-être', patoisé p'tête', has superseded 'ofuche'. Chemin, patoisé ch'min, is almost always used in place of 'camin' and 'cuire', patoisé tchuire, usually replaces 'coucer'.

Until modern times there was little communication between parishes, and St Samson and Le Valle in the north would have seemed a remote foreign country to the inhabitants of Torteval in the south-west. This isolation led to wide variations of dialect between the so-called low parishes of the north and the high parishes of the south and west, while the south-east parish of St Martin had special differences from the rest of the high parishes. To this day certain words used in some areas are quite unknown in others, while general pronunciation varies from parish to parish. There is, however, a general sound-shift between the Low Parishes (l.p.) and the High Parishes (h.p.) which can be summarised as follows:—

au (o)	to âu (ow)	e.g. caud-câud, haut-hâut, iaue-iâue, biau-biâu, etc.
o, on, om	to ao, aon, aom	e.g. bito-bitao, conter-caontor, pompe-paompe, etc.
oe, eu	to ào, àe	e.g. oere-àore, veue-vàoe, leu-làe, etc.
é	to âe	e.g. déstre-dâestre, finéstre-finâestre, ouél-ouâel, etc.
nasal ên	to nasal ên	e.g. bién-biên, viénra-viênra, etc.
è	to à	e.g. drëtte-drâtte, mëttre-mâttre, sëns-sàns, etc. but occasionally the direction is reversed in sound though not necessarily in spelling, e.g. L'Àncresse, lâtte, grànd, etc. pronounced Lèncresse, lètte, grènd, etc. in the l.p.

There are exceptions and some common words are universal in the island, e.g. the word for house, the French maison, should in theory be méson in the l.p. and mâesaon in the h.p., but the compromise word mésaon is general. The word for fish should be pésson in the l.p. and pâessaon in the h.p., but the latter is used in both areas.

The same diphthongation of the vowels o and e occurs in other languages including Portuguese and English, e.g. in the Cockney dialect, 'no' sounds 'now' (no-nâo), 'make, day' sound 'Mike, die' (méke, déy-mâeke, dâey).

The shift from è to à also occurs in English, e.g. 'help' and 'left' sound 'hâlp' and 'lâft' in some dialects.

Prior to the XIXth century, St Pierre Port was probably the only parish where English was spoken by the native population. St James' church was built in 1818 to provide services in English for the growing English community.

Since then the impact of English on the native dialect has not been great, though a number of idioms have been directly translated, for instance, “se mettre hors” for “to put oneself out”, and English words for modern appliances are always adopted rather than their French equivalents, e.g. waterheater rather than câuf-bâgn (chauffe-bain).

## French Sound Shifts

While Guernsey was evolving its own peculiar sounds, France was doing likewise. The following examples show how words change over the centuries, causing variations in adjacent areas.

In France, the Latin verb *debere* to owe, became *debire* by the VIIth century and in Xth century *Langue d’Oïl*, (Old French), *devéir*. At this stage the spelling and pronunciation remained unchanged in Norman giving the present day Guernsey word, but continued to alter in French, where by the XIth century it had become *devóir*. Though the latter spelling has been unchanged to this day, the sound was to change three times more. First the stress slipped to the last syllable and in the XIIIth century the word sounded ‘*devoèr*’ and in the XVth ‘*devouèr*’, becoming ‘*devouâr*’ by the XIXth.

At the Court of Louis XIV and Louis XV, the diphthong ‘*oi*’ was pronounced ‘*ouè*’, but by this time the common people of Paris were saying ‘*ouâ*’ and towards the end of the century the latter sound was accepted at court though the Stage continued to use ‘*ouè*’ into the XIXth century.

Words ending in ‘ois’ such as \**anglois*, *françois*, *estois*, and *avois* were pronounced *anglès*, *francès*, *estès* and *avès* and were sometimes so spelt, though in Norman it was *esteie* and *aveie* for the Imperfect Indicative. When there was a revision of French spelling in the XVIIIth century, Voltaire favoured the spelling *anglais*, *français*, *étais* and *avais*, which seems misguided as the pure diphthong ‘*ai*’ was already in use in words like *canaille*.

The XVth century French word for King was *Rouè* and this is the current word in Guernsey though the Xth century form *Re* survives in old place names such as *La Ville au Re*, *Le Camp du Re* and *Le Camin le Re*. Unfortunately these names are today shown on signboards in French and are so pronounced by most people, though a few will still say ‘*vil-o-rei*’, ‘*cadu-rei*’, ‘*kmaïn-le-rei*’.

\*Note: In Guernsey the name *Langlois* is correctly pronounced *Lànglès* or *Làngiès*.

## Parallel development from Latin.

In several ways development in Italy and Guernsey followed a similar path, different from that of France, e.g.:—

1. The consonant 'l' combined with 'b', 'c', 'f' and 'g' became a liquid 'y' sound which can be represented by 'i' except after 'c' and 'g' which would be softened by it. After 'g', an 'h' is inserted to keep the 'g' hard in Italy and in Guernsey. After 'c', an 'h' is inserted in Italy, but in Guernsey 'll' is used. 'Cll' is then pronounced 'ky' and 'gh' like the hard 'g' in go. In words ending in -ble in other languages, such as 'table' and 'possible', 'll' is preferable to 'i' or 'y'.

Lat. sablum	It. sabbia	Gu. sabbian	Fr. sable
clavis	chiave	clliae	clef
flamma	fiamma	fiambe	flamme
glacies	ghiaccio	ghiache	glace
pluit	piove	pioe	pleut

2. The 'ct' of Latin changed to 'tt' in Italy and Guernsey but 'it' in France. In most cases, however, a French word has superseded, but there are a few survivors, e.g.:—

Lat. lactis	It. latte	Gu. latte	Fr. lait
lectus	letto	llette	lit
lactuca	lattuga	lettuche	laitue
noctis	notte	niette	nuit
directo	diretto	drette	droit
vectura	vettura	vetture	voiture
facto	fatto	fatte	fait

3. Late Latin nouns in '-ello' changed to '-eau' in France but remained '-ello' in Italy and shortened to '-el' in Guernsey. The latter now tend to shorten further to '-e' or be spelt with a mute 'l', e.g.:—

It. pello	Gu. pel	Fr. peau
batello	batel, baté	bateau
agnello	agnel, agné	agneau
martello	Martel, marté	marteau
coltello	coutél, couté	couteau

4. The Xth century O.F. vowel 'e', when stressed, is retained in Guernsey and Italy but in France is changed to 'oi', e.g.:—

It. nera	Gu. nere	Fr. noire
bere	bere	boire
mese	mes	mois
destra	destre	droite
debere	deveir	devoir
tre	tre	trois
re	re	roi

Paradoxically, France has retained the Xth century spelling and sound of Reine (queen) and peine (pain), while Guernsey has the ~~X~~th century Róine and póine.

## XI

5. A few words have developed like Spanish, e.g.:—

Lat. pila	Gu. pelote	Sp. pelota
cadere	caier	caer
videre	veer	ver
credere	creer	creer
pectus	piecho	pecho

6. The Guernsey nasal 'aon' is somewhat similar to its counterpart in Portugal, e.g.:—

Gu. They have	il aon	Port. They have	ão
They are	i saon	They are	são
They do	i faon	They do	fão
They go	i vaon	They go	vão

7. The Personal Pronoun (subject)

Lat. : ego, It. : io, Span. : yo, O.F. : jo, Fr. : je, Gu. : ju, S.R. : jéu, éu, Port. : éu.

In Argentina yo is pronounced jo.

## The need for a revised spelling of Guernesìes.

The French spelling adopted in the XIXth century cannot represent accurately enough the strange un-French sound of Guernesìes and on the other hand the International Phonetic alphabet would distort the appearance of words completely, making them difficult to recognise or recall for those who learn a language by sight, e.g. *témps* from the Latin *tempus* would appear as *tó*. The careful study and use of the accents used in this revised spelling can give a fair approximation of the High Parish sound in the dialogues. The description passages are in a new literary style somewhat closer to the Low Parish dialect.

In order to emphasise the separate identity of Guernesìes, spelling similar to modern French is avoided where possible.

The following revisions are suggested:—

1. Substitute S for the French X in plurals.
2. Substitute -ciaon for -tiaon, e.g. educaciaon, naciaon. (Old French : nacion.)
3. Substitute single consonants for double where this is so in Italian or Spanish, e.g. diferent (Span. : diferente).
4. Substitute U for OU when immediately before another vowel and pronounced W, e.g.:—  
for bouon, touors write buon, tuors, etc. Also use Û for OU in the pronoun nû' (one) to distinguish it from the pronoun 'nous' (us).
5. Where the pronunciation permits, reverse OU to UO. Write puor, cuorraer for pour, courraer, etc.
6. Substitute OE for EU where the root of the word should contain an O, e.g.:—  
Write fioere, oere for fieur, heure (It. : fiore, ora), etc.
7. Avoid apostrophes which break up a word, as in the case of mute vowels. Write dmande or demande for d'mande, cmenche, or comênche for c'ménche, etc.
8. Adverbs, followed by the Subjunctive, such as 'bien que' could be written 'bienq'. See page 20
9. Simplify verbs by removing surplus mute consonants in verbal terminations: acate for acatent, vire for virent.
10. Introduce the consonant Č for 'tch' where initial, e.g. čán for tchen, (Lat. : canis).
11. Retain the mute S of Old French : isle, éster, finéstre for île, être, fenêtre, etc.
12. The apostrophes serve little purpose in the French style of abbreviation : j' t' m' s' l' d' etc., and may be dispensed with according to individual preference.
13. Modify the 1967 Dictionary ending 'aeux' for a human agent such as a driver 'cacheux' or a vendor 'vendaeux' to '-àor', to conform with other Latin languages. Example:—  
Gu.: vendàor, Span.: vendor, C.: venedor, It.: venditore, Lat.: venditor.

## Remarks on Pronunciation

1. To assist students and visitors the following diacritic marks or accents have been adopted to give a general guide to pronunciation, but they cannot be made mandatory as they would not be agreed upon by many speakers, owing to numerous regional and personal variations. Variations in the sound of 'a' affect the diphthongs accordingly.

à = a in at	â = a in far	a = a in what	á = a in all
e = e in let	é = e in fey	è = e in aero	ê = a in all

The above ê must not be confused with the French ê.

2. Guernesìes speakers pronounce 'gu' as soft 'dj' although in all other Latin languages it is hard, e.g. guide and barguin are pronounced djide and bardjaïn, while Guernési is djernési. In Jersey, the latter is *spelt* Dgernési.

3. Many words with 'an', as 'l'Ancresse' and 'grand' rhyme with hand. This is not, as many people think, anglicisation but a normal sound in all Latin languages except French, but including the Norman dialects of the Mainland. This sound could be indicated by a grave accent on the letter 'a', e.g. grànd. In the Vale, however, '-an' sounds -èn, so the grave accent is only required to indicate high parish pronunciation.

4. As mentioned in the Introduction, 'au' is pronounced as a diphthong in the higher parishes (h.p.) but as in French in the low parishes (l.p.). It could be given a grave or circumflex accent on the 'a' to indicate the diphthong sound, e.g. iàue càude (hot water). The French pronunciation of 'au' is used in the parishes of St. Andrew and Castel, although these are actually high parishes.

5. The letter 'i' in words like 'viâu' (calf), iâue (water) and biâu (fine) etc. goes back to Old French and still occurs in all Norman dialects.

6. The letter 'c' often softens to 'ch' as it does in French though many words retain the hard Latin 'c' lost in French, e.g. acataer (to buy), cat (cat), camp (field), etc.

7. As in Italian, 'c' before the soft vowels 'e' and 'i' softens to 'tch' and in Guernsey it frequently occurs before hard vowels as well. The use of the 'tch' sound depends on individual speakers as well as on regional variations. The 1967 Dictionary spells the sound 'tch' but the introduced letter 'č' is preferable as it looks less clumsy and does not disguise the root of the word, e.g. tcherbaon and tchan show their Latin roots when spelt čerbaon and čan. When not initial, however, the sound can equally well be spelt 'tch', e.g. ántché (until), chitchet (a jerk).

8. Certain words such as that for kitchen 'čuisâene', are given the 'tch' sound by some speakers and not by others. If written with č, the reader can include or ignore the diacritic mark according to his individual preference, whereas tchuisâene would look quite wrong to anyone who normally pronounces the word cuisâene.
9. Many words formerly beginning with 'car' have softened to 'čer', e.g. čerpentier, čerrier (carry) etc.
10. The letter 'h' is often sounded. This is an old Norman practice and still prevalent in the Cap de la Hague area of the Mainland.
11. Ae is preferable to aī as it is easier to write and sounds approximately similar. Aī is, however, retained to distinguish the Past Participle, e.g. acataer (to buy) instead of the 1967 Dictionary acataīr, but acataī (bought).
12. The final 'r' of Verbal Infinitives is always mute, e.g aver = avé, éster = éte.
13. Final 't' is sometimes sounded, e.g. quat (4) = kot, Le Bouet = bwet.
14. Final 'l' can be sounded or not, e.g. courtil or courti. Names like Queripel used to be pronounced Queripé or even Čeripé, but now the 'l' is sounded again.
15. Unlike French, Guernesies usually stresses the first syllable. In exceptions the stressed syllable can be indicated by an accent, e.g. la dimôere (abode), la finéstre (window), comêñchier (to begin), which are pronounced dmoere, fnéte and cmenchier.
16. After a 'u' representing the sound of 'w' (see previous chapter, No. 4), the following vowel always takes the stress, e.g. fuáele (bracken), pronounced fwoyle, bués (wood) pronounced bwé.
17. The letter 's' is always mute in the combination 'st' unless it begins a syllable, e.g. finéstre (window) = fnéte, déstre (right) = déte, téste (head) = téte, but histuere (history) = hi-stuere.
18. A single 'l' is sounded as in English but a 'll' is like a liquid 'y', e.g. file (girl), fámile, (family) but illàos (them) = iyà-o, llèf (roof) = yef, llon (far) = yawn. The exceptions are a few well established spellings, e.g. Ville (the Town), La Pèrelle, belle (beautiful), belle (m) (farmyard). Final ll is mute, e.g. coll (neck) = cō.
19. In medieval Norman, the letters z, t and n were inserted for euphony to avoid a hiatus between two vowels. These are used in this work, e.g. vou-z-este (you are), a-t-âl? (has she?), sa-n-orloge (his clock), à-n-àen (to a...).
20. Some speakers who have difficulty in pronouncing their 'r' say 'f' in lieu, e.g. le postas for portas (the hall). It is interesting to note that in the St. Ouen district of Jersey the 'r' is usually replaced in spelling and pronunciation by

'th', e.g. fraire (brother) is written frèthe, diferent (different) is diffethent, serae (evening) is sethée.

21. Norman dialects tend to reverse 're' to 'er', e.g. ervenir for revenir, persent for present, etc. In the case of berbis (sheep) however, it was the French who reversed the Latin order (berbix) to brebis, while the Normans retained berbis.

22. The original letter 'n' in enfant 'efant' (child) and 'acore' (again) was lost centuries ago in Normandy and there is still a tendency to lose the 'n' sound in modern Guernesìes nasals, e.g. entier, bièn, buon, àmbulance, piêntae being pronounced often as otcher or otcha, biê, buo, àmbulos and piôrtae.

23. In some parts the nasals emp, emb, amp, amb, lose their p and b sounds so that words like caombi  n (how much), C  mptrehard (a district) and St. Andri (a parish) are pronounced c  mion, c  tr  hard and   dri.

24. Noteworthy is the subtle nasal sound 'in'; it is unlike the French '-in' but more like a nasal '-ain' and comparable with the Portuguese '-em'.

25. In reading aloud spoken dialect where me, le, de, ne etc. are written m, l, d, n, etc., it is much easier if the consonant be joined mentally to the preceding word, e.g. "vnae m veer" = vnaem veer, "j n v   pa l cat" = jn v   p  l cat. When there are four consonants they can be paired, e.g. 'I'n'm'l'd'mand'pas (old spelling), "I n m l dem  nde pa" (revised spelling) = In ml dm  nde pa.

26. For those not brought up to speak Guernesìes the two great obstacles to the comprehension of the spoken word must be the loss of the n, b and p sounds mentioned in paragraphs 22 and 23 and the dropping of the e shown in paragraph 25.

## Pronunciation of Vowels

### The four main sounds of A

The sound varies from a in at, through a in far and a in what, to a in all.

1.    = a in at. gr  nd (big),   en (a, an), d  e (2), v  on (go).

2.    = a in far. qu  rt (quarter), m  rri (angry), i  ue (water), l  ssae (tired).

3. a = a in what. quat (4), vacque (cow), sac (hessian), pronounced cot, vock, sock.

4.    = a in all. f  m  le (family), s  mbdie (Saturday), m  ene (hand).

No. 3 is the typical sound of the island speech and imparts a slight South African accent to the English spoken by the older generation.

## The four main sounds of E

1. e = e in let. le (the). In the 1967 Dictionary this sound is written é.
2. é = e in fey. déstre (right).
3. è = ae in aero. niètte (night).
4. ê = a in all. fémne (woman) bién (well). Quite unlike the French ê.

## Other Vowels

i, y, II = i in machine. Initially II = i as in Spanish. llette (bed) pronounced yet.

o varies from <sup>in</sup> o more to o in hope.

u = u in tune (lips in whistling position), but û = u in prudent.

u when immediately followed by another vowel is pronounced w. In the 1967 Dictionary this sound is written as ou, e.g.:— bouonne, souaille, revised spelling: buone (good f.), fuáele (bracken), pronounced approximately bwawn and swoyle.

## Diphthongs

With the exception of 'au' in the low parishes and 'ai' in general, the sound of diphthongs depends on the sound of the initial vowel. The sound of the diphthong au in the h.p. varies from àu to âu.

au = o in no. Câtel, St Andrew and I.p. iaue caude (yo code)

âu = ow in how. h.p. iâue câude (yow cowd).

ai = ey in fey. caiér (to fall) (kei-eh).

ái = a in all combined with i in machine. dráin (last) (droyne).

âi = a in far combined with i in machine. Estâi (Summer)

aï = a in what combined with i in machine. Used to indicate Past Participles. amarraï (moored).

The latter three sounds of 'ai' are interchangeable and depend on regional and personal pronunciation.

âe = a in far combined with e in let. ciâel (heaven).

ae = a in what combined with e in let. acataer (to buy), vou-z-acatae (you buy). The 'e' is almost mute.

àe = a in at combined with e in let. làe, h.p. (their), almost like the English 'lie'.

áe\* = a in all combined with e in let. páen (bread), máene (hand); 'áe' is similar to 'óí'.

\* The acute accent is essential on the 'a' indicating the 'aw' sound. The other forms of diphthong 'ae' are usually left unmarked as their pronunciation varies with individual speakers.

ao = ow in how. bitao, h.p. (soon).

ào = the long a in mad combined with an almost silent o. nevào (nephew).

oe, eu = u in uín (lips in whistling position). fieur (flour), fioere (flower), meune (leads).

ói = oy in boy. pióin (full).

ou = oo in boot. coup (a blow), coutél (knife). In these and many other words the 'u' is a mutation of 'i', e.g. Italian colpo (blow), coltello (knife).

ie frequently carries an acute accent, whereas in French it would be a grave accent, e.g. derrière (behind), piére (worse).

## The Articles

Definite. (the) le, l (before a vowel or mute h), la, les.

Indefinite. (a, an) àen, enn (before a vowel or mute h), enne, des.

## Plural of Nouns

Unless ending in 's' or 'z' the plural is formed by adding 's'. Some nouns descended from the late Latin nouns in '-ello' and which now end in -el or -é form the plural by replacing the ending with 'iaos' from the XIIth century plural '-ias', e.g. baté - batiaos, couté - coutiaos.

A few have been modernised to take 's' as an alternative, e.g. pél - péls - piaos, macrél - macréls - macriaos, etc.

There are a few completely irregular plurals, e.g. ieil (eye) - ialls (pron. yà-r) (eyes).

## Examples

Mas.: le cat (cat), l efànt (child), l hom (man) : pl. les cats, les efànts, les homs.

Fem.: la vacqe (cow), l aisse (bee), l orloge (clock) : pl. les vacques, les aisses, etc.

... un efènt, un hom, àen fills (son) : pl. des cats, des efànts, des fills.

Mas.: àen cat, enn efànt, enn hom, aen lliis (son) : pl. des chats, etc.

Fem.: enne vacqe, enne aisse, enne achie : pl. des vacqes, des aisses, etc.

## The Partitive Article

Some, any, of it : du, del, dla, des (del. is Old French spelling)

mas.	fem.	pl.			
du burre	= some butter	dla gâche	= some cake	des oes	= some eggs
del ouil	= some oil	del iâue	= some water	des fills	= some sons
or indefinite quantity use de or d.					
have no house	Ju n ai pa de mésaon	or “j n ai pa d mésaon!”	(direct speech)		
so many dogs	Trop de čáns	or “trop d čáns!”	(direct speech)		
ough butter	Assâi de burre	or “assâi d burre!”	(direct speech)		
little money	Àen pti de sous	or “àen pti d sous”	(direct speech)		

## Personal Pronouns. Subject

I = ju. (j in speech, ju in the interrogative).

Thou= tu (often t in speech).

He = i (il before a vowel).

She = â (âl before a vowel).

One = *nû* (used in place of we, it is ‘on’ in French and ‘no’ in some mainland Norman dialects).

You = you.

They = i (il before a vowel, usually but not always).

For centuries, Norman dialects and those of Anjou and Vendée have used the pronoun 'jo' with the 1st person plural. In Wace's "Roman de Rou" is the example "k'en dirons-jo?" (what shall we say about it?) and in much later times Francis I used "j'avons" twice in the same letter. This curious locution, formerly common in Guernsey, is being superseded by the impersonal form using the pronoun 'one' with the third person singular, e.g. nû-z-a (one has) for j'avaons. The pronoun 'nous' is only used for the direct object (us).

In all Norman dialects it is the custom to drop the inflexion of the 2nd person plural as well as the 'v' of 'vous' in the interrogative and Imperative, e.g. av-ous? for avez-vous? This form was used by the Queen of Navarre in the XVIth century. In Guernesies, avae-vou? becomes av-ou?.

### Personal Pronouns. Object

Direct	me	te	le	la	nous	vous	les	
Indirect	me	te	li	lie	nàons	vous	illàos	(pron. iyào)
With prep.	me	te	li	ièle	nàons	vous	illàos	(Lat. illos)
Reflexive	me	te	se	se	nàons	vous	se	

In speech the reflexive pronouns are m, t, s, nous, vous, s, e.g. j m lave (I wash), tu t en va (thou goest), i s tais (he keeps silent), à s pióyn (she complains), nû s encie (one objects), i s asiéve (they sit down).

### Possessive Pronouns.

Mine = le mion, la miáne, les mions.

His = le sion, la siáne, les sions.

Ours = le naote, la naote, les naos.

Theirs = le loer, la loere, les loers (h.p.)

or le làor, la làore, les làors (h.p.), also à illàos.

Thine = le tion, la tiáne, les tions. (pron. le čion, etc.)

Hers = le sion, la siáne, les sions.

Yours = le vaote, la vaote, les vaos.

### Possession and Position.

Expressed by de (of), à, ès, (to the), dêñ, en (in), cis (at the house of).

Farmer Trehard's farm = la ferme de (or 'à') Mess Tréhard.

The Fairies' Grotto = Le Creux ès Fâes.

Luce's farmyard = le bëlle (or bësle) à Luce. (bëlle is old Norse).

There is a well known hotel called Bella Luce corrupted from Bëlle à Luce.

In Guernsey = en Guernési.

In St Andrew = à St Andri.

At Mary's = cis-Marie

At our place = cis-naons

It's mine = ché à me.

On the = sul, sula, sules

On the bed = sul llette.

On the table = sula táblle

Of the, to the = au, al, ala, aus, ès The latter is Old French but still used.

At the gate = al hechet.

In the (written dialogue) = dêl, dêla, dêles (pronounced dawl, etc.)

In the field = dêl courtil

Note the distinguishing accents on the following similar words:

â = she      a = has

à = to

âl = she (before a vowel)

al = to the      del = of the      dêl = in the

To the bedrooms = ès chàmbres

In the house = dêla mésaon

In the gardens = dêles gardins

At the wedding = ès noeches

## The Demonstrative Pronoun and Adjective.

this one (m)

this one (f)

these ones

that one (m)

that one (f)

those ones

he who . . .

those who . . .

those who . . .

who, whom

which, what

what?

what, that which

this

that

this or that

such

which, what

this, that, those

= chtin, chtes-chin

= chutte-chin

= ches-chins

= chuna, chena, chtena

= chutla

= chesla, chaeus

= le cian ki

= les ciangs ki (sub.)

= chaeus (obj.)

= čiq, či, ki (sub./obj.)

= čiq, či, ke (sub./obj.)

= cae? čiq?

= chuq, čiq, le cae, la caele,  
les caes

= chenchin

= chuna, chena

= tae ou taele

= ditaе, itae, itaele

= cae (m, f)

= chu, chutte\*, ches, čes (rare)

(ki, ke are Old French spellings)

## Examples

What is left is yours	= čiq é la, ché à te
The man who is speaking	= l hom ki parle
The man she loves	= l haom k âl áeme (haom h.p.)
The cows of which he was speaking	= les vacqes de čiq i parleie
The girl with whom I was swimming	= la garcé ove čiq ju noueie
The knife I am cutting with is blunt	= le coutél dove čiq ju cope é ecachi
What are you doing there?	= čiq tu fai ilo?
What is the time?	= cae oere k il é?
How old are you?	= cae age ke vou-z-avae?
You believe what you want to believe	= Tu cré chuq t áeme à créer
Those who are here may stay for supper	= les ciáns ki saon ichin poeve restaer à soupaer
“...as we forgive those who trespass against us.”	= “...coum nû pardaone chàeus ki nous aon-t-ofênsai”.

## Possessive Adjectives

mas.	fem.	plr. m. & f.	sing. m. & f.	plr. m. & f.
men	ma	mes = my	noste (mute s) = our	nos = our
ten	ta	tes = thy	voste (mute s) = your	vos = your
sen	sa	ses = his, her	loer, leu = their (l.p.) làer, làe = their (h.p.)	loers, leus = their (l.p.) làors, làes = their (h.p.)

Before feminine nouns beginning with a vowel or mute h insert 'n' for euphony.

thine idea = tan idé    my friend (f.) = man amie                                  his or her clock = san orloge

their sons = loers fills    her brother and sister = sen fraire et sa soere

our niece and your nephew = neste nieche et voste nevào

their children = làes efânts (h.p.)                                  their nephew = làe nevào (h.p.)

## En and Ya.

En = some, of it, of them, is placed before the verb to avoid repeating the noun already mentioned. In Imperatives it is placed last, except for 'pa'.

Ya = there is or there are, also yavé (past), yera (future) and yati (interrogative). Nya pa, nyavé pa and nyera pa, in the negative.

### Examples

Is there any bread?  
No! there is not  
Have you any flowers?  
Yes, I have  
Give me some please!

= Yati du páen?  
= Nénin! ny ên a pa  
= Av-ou des fioeres?  
= Ouéj ên ai  
= Bâill-me-n-ên, si i vous piais! (n for euphony)

OUEJ

### Adjectives

Form plurals by adding S except when they already end in S.  
Form feminine by adding E except when they end in C or G, then HE is added.

m.  
buon  
mauvès  
àurâes  
mârri  
vert  
ner  
breun  
biànc\*  
fresc\*  
sec

f.  
buone  
mauvèse  
àurâese  
mârrie  
verte  
nere  
breune  
biàanche  
fresche  
seche

m.p.  
buons  
mauvès  
àurâes  
mârris  
verts  
ners  
breuns  
biàncs  
frescs\*  
secs

f.p.  
buones  
mauvèses  
àurâeses  
mârries  
vertes  
neres  
breunes  
biàanches  
fresches  
seches

good  
bad  
happy, lucky  
angry  
green  
black  
brown  
white  
cool  
dry

A few double the consonant in the feminine.

bas	basse	bas	basses	low
gros	grosse	gros	grosses	big
fred*	freddie	freds	freddes	cold

\*mute D

A few are similar in both genders

grànd	grànd*	grànds	grànds	large
jone	jone	jones	jones	young
jâune	jâune	jâunes	jâunes	yellow
ruoge	ruoge	ruoges	ruoges	red
poure	poure	poures	poures	poor
âuter	âuter	âuters	âuters	other

\*The modern French form 'grande' is now usual except for place names.

### Irregular Adjectives

fiàr	fière	fiàrs	fières	glad
viàr	vièle	viàrs	vièles	old
biâu	belle	biaus	belles	beautiful, fine
bel	belle	bels	belles	beautiful, fine

bàl is used in the expressions 'ché bàl!', 'i fai bàl!' It's fine! (h.p.)

Past Participles in -aï used as adjectives can equally well be spelt -ae and be similar in both genders

The boats moored at Cobo	= Les batiaos amarraes à Cobo
He moored his boats at Cobo	= Il a amarraï ses batiaos à Cobo
He has given his house to his son	= Il a bâillaï sa mésaon à sen fills
The house given to his son	= La mésaon baillae à sen fills

### Comparative and Superlative of Adjectives

For the Comparative use piu, pius (more), or muén, muêns (less).

For the Superlative use le piu, le pius or le muén, le muêns.

A bigger garden  
A bigger house  
The most intelligent dog  
The most intelligent cow  
The least intelligent child  
The least difficult book  
The better flowers

buon                    = good  
mauvès                = bad  
ptit                    = small

hardly  
ever  
meanwhile  
since, from  
already  
while  
before  
after  
when  
then  
now  
again  
soon  
later  
always  
never  
sometimes

apóine  
jámai  
enterfeis  
dênpí  
deja  
tàndiq, en  
dvàn  
aloprè, óprè  
acànd, cànd  
enprè  
achtàore  
acore, dercer, derchier  
bito, bitao  
piu tard  
terrou, terjou  
ne...jámai  
čiqfeis, parfeis

## Examples

= àen piu grànd gardin (m.)  
= enne piu grànd mésaon (f.)  
= le čán le pius intelligent (m.)  
= la vacqe la pius intelligente (f.)  
= L efànt le muêns intelligent  
= Le livre le muén dificil.  
= Les meyàres fioeres

## Irregular

meyàr  
pière  
piu ptit

= better  
= worse  
= smaller

le meyàr            = best  
le pière              = worst  
le piu ptit           = smallest

## Adverbs and Prepositions

well  
badly  
better  
worse  
much, very  
more  
less  
also  
too  
up  
down  
down-along  
along  
above, upstairs  
below, downstairs  
on  
under

bién, bié, biên, biê  
mal  
mus  
pière  
hardi, rede, adret, verei (O.F.)  
piu, pius  
muén, muêns  
etou  
trop  
ênamaont  
aval, ênava  
avâu  
lelong  
ahaut  
abas  
sus  
soub

usually	damors, damorsaon	in	dén, ên
only	rioq	out	hors
beforehand	ênavanche	inside	dedén
afterwards	ênoprè	outside	tuors
until	jusq, dántchè	beside	acôtae, au-ras de
early (time)	dupartêmps	overhead	êndsu
early (crops)	têmpreun	near, against	conter, caontre
about	viàers	close	prèd, apoerči de
with	*ove, dove	far	llon
without	sèns, sàns	as far as	áncé
then, if so	daunq	around, concerning	entuor
as for	tànq à	in front of	endvân de
after, following	sûvânte	behind	derière
somewhere	à čiqbord	here	ichin
everywhere	partout	there	ilo, la
anywhere	aučunbord	hence	dichin
where	oueq, eiouq	thence	dedla
whence	doueq	towards	enviàers
as, since	depiq	through	atravàers
upon	desu	instead	aurun
besides	decaute	neither	nitou
because	čière	so much, as many	tàn
almost	câsi		

\*Ove is correct but 'd' is commonly prefixed for euphony. Daove is used in the h.p.

## Adverbs.

Normally they form the Comparative and Superlative in a similar way to adjectives.

	Irregular			
well	= bién, biên	better	= mus	best
badly	= mal	worse	= pière	worst
much	= hardi	more	= piu	most
little	= pti	less	= muêñ	least
				= le mus
				= le pière
				= le pius
				= le muêns

## Conjunctions. Followed by the Subjunctive

although, though	biénq, biêñq	unless, except	sinàñq
in order that	afinq	before	avàñq
without	sènq, sàñq	lest	depâurq...ne
until	dánçéq...ne	unless	amuêñq...ne
when	ameq		

## Ché, chté and échq?

These are useful abbreviations of chu é = this is, chu éteie = this was and é-chu-que? Rare variations are čé, čté and ečq?

It (this) is Andros	= ché Andros
It is they	= ché illàos (at their home is cis-illàos)
It was he	= chté li
It is (water) hot	= ché câud m. adj. after ché
The water is hot	= l iâue é câude

Is it (water) cold?	= échq é fred? m. adj. after échq é
Is the water cold?	= échq l iaue é fredde?
They are big houses	= ché de grànds mésaons
It's fine! (weather)	= ché bàl!

### The seasons      Les sesàons

Spring = Rnoûvé, Ernoûvé

Summer = Estâi

Autumn = Ercayànt

Winter = Ivàer

In the h.p. Autumn is Erçeyànt but the French word Automne is widely used everywhere. An adjective 'ivernae' = wintry. There is also a saying:— 'Le temps s'astembri!' meaning 'The weather has got colder.'

### The months of the year      Les més del ánnae.

Jenvié    Fevrié    Mar    Avril    Mai    Juin    Juillé    Aoust    Settêmbre    Ottobre    Novêmbre    Decêmbre

### The days of the week      Les jors dla semáene.

Diémenche    Lundie    Mardie    Mecquerdie    Joedie    Venderdie    Sámbdie

Settêmbre and Sámbdie are pronounced 'stómb' and 'sómdy'.