Jersey’s national anthem

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Introduction

On 21 March 2025 the States Assembly designated "Beautiful Jersey" as Jersey's national anthem. This paper describes the anthem and the tortuous process that preceded that decision.

Background

Until the March 2025 decision, Jersey had no agreed national anthem and the issue of whether there should be one and, if so, what it should be had proved to be politically controversial, reflecting wider issues in the Island.

Wikipedia has a good definition of a national anthem –

> Most nation states have an anthem defined as "a song, as of praise, devotion, or patriotism". Most anthems are either marches or hymns in style. A song or hymn can become a national anthem under the state's constitution, by a law enacted by its legislature, or simply by tradition.

Jersey counts as a nation even though it is a British Crown dependency. Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland are integral parts of the United Kingdom but each is a nation with its own "unofficial" anthem or anthems – "Land of My Fathers" for Wales, "Flower of Scotland" and "Scotland the Brave" for Scotland and "Danny Boy" for Northern Ireland. The anthems are used primarily at sporting events and then become more widely adopted. It is worth noting that in a number of sports Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland compete as a single team and use a special anthem - "Ireland's Call". Both Guernsey ("Dear Guernsey") and the Isle of Man ("Arrane Ashoonagh dy Vannin") have their own anthems.

Jersey's position has been odd. Until recently, the Government's website recorded "Island Home" as the national anthem but this was unknown to most of the population and very few people would be able to sing the anthem. "Beautiful Jersey" has traditionally had the status of an unofficial anthem while to some people the only anthem was "God Save the King".

Beautiful Jersey

"Beautiful Jersey" was composed by an Englishman, Lindsay Lennox, who died in 1906 but who had no known connection with Jersey. The song became popular during the Occupation, and today it is performed on Liberation Day and as Jersey's anthem at some sporting events, for example the Island Games. It was Jersey's anthem at the Island Games held in the Island in 2015. In a 2015 poll by the *Jersey Evening Post* over a third of islanders questioned wanted "Beautiful Jersey" to be recognised as the national anthem, compared to under 20% for "Island Home".

The words are -

There's a spot that I love that I ne'er can forget,
Tho' far I may roam 'twill be dear.
For its beauty will linger in memory yet,
Where'er o'er the world I may steer.
Dear Jersey, fair Isle, of the ocean the queen,
Thy charms are so many and rare;
For love finds a home 'mid each beauteous scene,
My heart ever longs to be there.

Beautiful Jersey, gem of the sea,
Ever my heart turns in longing to thee;
Bright are the mem'ries you waken for me,
Beautiful Jersey, gem of the sea.

On thy shores I have wandered in glad days of yore,
With one who is dear to my heart.
And the love-links will bind us as one evermore,
Although for a while we must part.
And oft in my dreams do I see the dear place
The dear little Isle of the sea,
And in fancy I gaze on a sweet loving face,
The face that is dearest to me.

Beautiful Jersey, gem of the sea,
Ever my heart turns in longing to thee;
Bright are the mem'ries you waken for me,
Beautiful Jersey, gem of the sea.

In Jèrriais the word are -

Y'a un coin d'tèrre qué j'aime, qué j'n'oubliéthai janmais -
Dans mes pensées tréjous preunmyi -
Car jé n'vai rein à compather à ses bieautés
Dans touos mes viages à l'êtrangi.
Jèrri, man paradis, pus belle taque souos l'solé -

Qué j'aime la paix dé chu Jèrri!
L'amour lé veurt, j'ai si envie dé m'en r'aller
Èrvaie man chièr pétit pays,

Man bieau p'tit Jèrri, la reine des îles -
Lieu dé ma naissance, tu m'pâsses bein près du tchoeu;
Ô, tchi doux souv'nîn du bouôn temps qu' j'ai ieu
Quand j'pense à Jèrri, la reine des îles!

Jé connais touos tes charmes; et combein qu' j'en ai joui
Auve eun-é chiéthe anmie, aut' fais!
Quand même qué pouor a ch't heu jé n' sais pon tout près d'lyi,
N' y'a rein qu' Jèrri dans mes pensées.
Et pis, comme tout bouôn Jèrriais, dans l'fond d'man tchoeu
J'ai grand envie dé m'en r'aller
Dans l'île tchi m'a donné tant d'amour et d'bonheu,
Èrvaie ma chiéthe et man siez-mé.

Man bieau p'tit Jèrri, la reine des îles -
Lieu dé ma naissance, tu m'pâsses bein près du tchoeu;
Ô, tchi doux souv'nîn du bouôn temps qu' j'ai ieu
Quand j'pense à Jèrri, la reine des îles!

It has also been customary for the first verse to be sung in Jèrriais and the second verse in English. This version is sung by Sadie Rennard, accompanied by the Band of the Island of Jersey and the La Moye School choir.

History

Traditionally, Jersey used the British national anthem "God Save the Queen" or “God Save the King”. When Jersey needed something different, for example at sporting occasions, two unofficial anthems were used. “Ma Normandie“ reflects Jersey historic position as part of the Duchy of Normandy. It was first used in the 1958 British Empire and Commonwealth Games and was used at subsequent Commonwealth Games. “Beautiful Jersey” was written some time before 1906 but became popular during the Occupation and has been performed annually at Liberation Day celebrations.

In 2007 the States Assembly undertook to find a new, official anthem by means of an open competition. The final judging of the competition took place on 30 April 2008 with a public performance of the short-listed pieces. “Island Home” was declared the winner, although the way that the competition was managed was controversial. Appendix 1 describes the competition in detail. The States Assembly never ratified “Island Home” as the Island’s official national anthem.

However, the Government of Jersey website had a page entitled Anthem for Jersey which recorded “Island Home” as Jersey’s anthem. The websites CIA Worldfactbook and nationalanthems.info listed “Island Home” as the national anthem.

In 2019 the then Chief Minister appointed an Island Policy Development Board charged with developing an action plan to build a stronger, more inclusive sense of Island identity. The issue of an anthem was covered in its interim report -

> Research has shown how music holds a unique potential to provide collective experiences of identity that can unite, enrich, and inspire communities, shaping the way they see themselves.
>
> Research into music, language and identity in Jersey is revealing that singing in Jèrriais can bring people from all kinds of backgrounds together and offer them a way of engaging with 'Jerseyness' that is welcoming, accessible, inclusive and socially positive. This could, in turn, contribute to longer-term social outcomes like community cohesion and sense of belonging.
>
> After a competition in 2008 an anthem was chosen for Jersey entitled *Island Home*, composed by Gerard Le Feuvre. Despite the result of this competition the States Assembly have never debated and approved *Island Home* as our Anthem. It is therefore not considered an official anthem. At official occasions, Jersey has in the past used *Island Home*, as well as the unofficial anthem of the Normandy region *Ma Normandie*, and *Beautiful Jersey*. The Board acknowledges that Island Home has not yet become sufficiently lodged in the consciousness of the people of Jersey to legitimate its official adoption. To find an anthem that can engage Islanders, this process needs to be revisited.

The Board’s summary report identified as one of the opportunities and ideas determination of an anthem for Jersey.

On 15 November 2024 the Government announced a consultation on whether Beautiful Jersey should be adopted as Jersey’s national anthem and also whether Liberation Day, 9 May, should be adopted as Jersey's national day.

The consultation was not accompanied by any analysis, only by a short statement –

> **Jersey's anthem**
> While God Save the King is our national anthem, the Island itself does not have an officially recognised anthem of its own. This has led

to confusion about which piece of music should be played at certain events.

An anthem symbolises national identity and fosters pride and unity. The Jersey Anthem would be played at sporting events and cultural ceremonies, locally and internationally.

Beautiful Jersey has been suggested as it is already played at sporting events and taught in some schools.

The results of the consultation were published in a Proposition by the Council of Ministers to the States Assembly A National Day for Jersey on 3 February 2025.

There were 2,466 responses to the consultation, of which 50% were in favour of Island Home being the National Anthem, 35% were against and 15% were unsure.

The Proposition sets out the position of the Council of Ministers –

> While 50% of respondents were in favour of "Beautiful Jersey" being formalised as the Jersey Anthem, this did not represent a convincing body of support. The Council of Ministers has instead decided to issue interim guidance to sports clubs and other relevant bodies as to what should be played during official events where Jersey represents itself in its own capacity, such as the Commonwealth Games and Island Games, where there is currently no conclusion on what should be played. This guidance will include recommending that the chorus of "Beautiful Jersey" (in either English or Jèrriais) is played at such events until a formal anthem is selected. This decision aims to address concerns raised by members of the public about the lack of a consistent piece of music to be used and confusion at official events.

However, an amendment was moved to the Proposition that “Beautiful Jersey” should be designated as the National Anthem. This Amendment was agreed and a resolution designating “Beautiful Jersey” as the National Anthem was approved.

Appendix 1 – the 2007-8 competition

On 30 January 2007 the then Chief Minister announced a competition to determine an official national anthem for Jersey. His statement in the States Assembly set out the rationale for the initiative -

> .....a competition is to be held to seek an anthem for Jersey. Members will know that the number of occasions on which the Island wishes to celebrate its own distinct identity is increasing. Many of these relate to sporting occasions when Islanders receive a medal or other recognition as events involving other islands and, indeed, sometimes other countries. The Island Games and the Commonwealth Games are well-known examples. It has rightly been pointed out by some of those participating that there is at present uncertainty as to the anthem which should be played. Ma Normandie is often relied upon because of its association with our past but, of course, it is a piece of music which has itself no connection with Jersey. Indeed, it has quite different associations for many. .....it is intended to mount a competition to seek a specific Island anthem which might be suitable for such occasions. On the assumption that the competition produces something of appropriate quality, I intend then to bring to the Assembly a proposition seeking its formal adoption as Jersey's anthem. I should make it quite clear that this is not to be a replacement for the National Anthem, which will continue to be played in recognition of our constitutional position and of our loyalty and affection for the Crown. I hope, however, that the opportunity for the Assembly to endorse an anthem to be used to reinforce our sense of identity in the circumstances I have mentioned will be widely welcomed.

The Jersey Festival Choir website describes the nature of the competition –

> The rules of the competition required the entries to be compositions suitable for performance on formal occasions when it might be expected that an anthem would be required; for example, at sporting medal presentations or at other ceremonies. They had to be musically convincing in a short version lasting between 30 seconds and a minute but they also had to be available with two or three verses.
>
> No words were provided for setting by the composers; instead, entrants were given the opportunity to provide their own text appropriate for an anthem intended to celebrate Jersey's identity. Members of the public were also allowed to nominate existing works and the inclusion of "Beautiful Jersey, which is performed on Liberation Day, reflects its nomination alongside the works of the composers who responded to the challenge.

The short list of anthems was -

> My Jersey, My Home by Derek Lawrence
> Island Home by Gerard Le Feuvre
> Arise, Arise by Kevin Porée and Matheson Bayley
> Beautiful Jersey (nominated as an existing piece)
> Jersey Island Home by James Taberner.

The judging panel which shortlisted the pieces comprised: the Bailiff of Jersey, Sir Philip Bailhache, (Chairman), Chief Minister Senator Frank Walker, Senator Mike Vibert, Minister for Education, Sport and Culture, Mr Neil Courtney, Head of the Jersey Instrumental Music Service, and Mr Chris George, concert pianist and teacher. In addition to the five votes of the judges, a sixth judge was cast a vote in the form of the audience of the evening of the competition.

There is no record of the voting – other than that "Island Home" was declared the winner. The *Jersey Evening Post* commented: "The panel did rather ask for discontent to rumble on endlessly over the final decision by not announcing what the audience vote had been". It is understood that the audience vote was for "Beautiful Jersey". In the event "Island Home" was not enthusiastically adopted. On 8 June 2010, in answer to a question in the States Assembly, the new Chief Minister said –

> When the anthem competition was launched in 2007 the former Chief Minister undertook to bring the chosen Jersey anthem back to the States for approval. It was agreed that this would take place once organisations had been given the opportunity to use it, and the music has been published on the States website.
>
> Although it has been used on a number of formal occasions both within and outside the Island, and the music circulated to all groups who might have occasion to use an anthem specific to the Island, promotion of the anthem has been poor. Furthermore, I do not believe that the general public has yet had the opportunity to get to know the anthem properly.
>
> I shall, therefore, be taking steps to encourage its further use and awareness by schools and all other sporting and cultural organisations prior to its being brought to the States for consideration.

However, little was done to encourage its use and what was done was not successful. Island.

The rather tortuous process inspired a detailed academic study Anthem for Jersey: Music, Media and Politics in an Island Setting, by Henry Johnson, a Jerseyman, Professor of Music at the University of Otago in New Zealand. The article puts the issue in a wide context of how the Island is represented. Key extracts from the paper are reproduced below –

> By studying the process of finding its own anthem, the politics of local identity construction are highlighted and provide examples that help explain why a unique anthem is needed in the present-day, and how the island is represented and has responded through song and discourse as a result of the competition and local cultural politics regarding the winning anthem.
>
> The winning anthem had [...] become an object of intense political, media and social debate. The song was highly contested in divergent spheres of island life.
>
> As a judging panel, a small group of key government and administrative figures represented an elite segment of island society, and, along with a broad audience vote at the venue, offered just a small part of Jersey society in determining the winner and losers. As this was intended to be an anthem for Jersey, the voting system did little either to reflect Jersey's nearly 100,000 population, or its diverse mix of people (about 50% of the population was not born on the island).
>
> Indeed, island sports teams and organizers of other celebratory events were left free to choose which song as the most suitable to represent the island. In this context, it seems that the anthem competition had actually generated renewed support for other songs to be used as anthems, and sections of Jersey society were indeed using those songs. What was perhaps intended to create a sense of unified island nationalism had in fact resulted in disparate island nationalisms.
>
> About one year after the competition, the anthem was discussed by politicians in the parliamentary chamber of the States of Jersey, when it was noted by the Minister for Education, Sport and Culture at the time that all Jersey schools had been informed of the winning anthem and encouraged to use it .....It was also noted by the Minister that in his opinion the island should 'have a number of national songs and anthems . . . and the Jersey anthem is but one' Further, in 2010, and soon after the Liberation Day service, the Chief Minister at the time was questioned in parliament as to why 'Island Home', which had been sung at the commemoration, was introduced as the 'Jersey anthem', and requested to offer an assurance that this would not again occur until the States of Jersey

had formally approved this or any other anthem. Further performances of the anthem have been made in subsequent years on Liberation Day, although in 2015 the song was not listed in the programme, whereas ‘God Save the Queen’ and ‘Beautiful Jersey’ were, and each on several occasions.

In the present era, Jersey has gone through a process of trying to select an official anthem that is distinct for the island. However, this process, which has been guided by top-down political influence and a competition exercise in a context of aiming to frame the process as democratic and representative of island life, has not been as straightforward as might have originally been conceived. The process itself has met with opposition in media, political and public spheres, and within this small island setting has actually generated not only critical musical discourse but also new musical culture.

Appendix 2 – Island Home and Ma Normandie

"Island Home" was composed by Gerard le Feuvre in 2002 and has been the semi-official anthem of Jersey since 2008. The words are -

Ours is an island home
Firm on rock and strong by sea
Loyal and proud in history,
Our thankful hearts are
Raised to God for Jersey

The beauty of our land
Long inspires both eye and mind
Ours the privilege to guard it shore
So help me God that
Jersey might by grace endure

The Government website included a choral version and listed nine points that inspired the anthem –

1. the melody was in part inspired by the sounds of Jersey wildlife
2. the first three notes if played two octaves lower are the lowing of a Jersey cow
3. often in the melody there are two tied notes descending, imitating various island sea birds
4. the musical genre was inspired from the Peter Kennedy (internationally renowned folk music collector) collection of Jèrriais folk song recordings made in Jersey in the 1950s
5. Island Home was not written for the competition but written in 2002 in St Ouen's bay
6. Island Home formed the backbone of Gerard's enormous symphonic work about 800 years of Jersey history entitled 'The Rock'. The work was written specifically to unify the island in thanksgiving
7. Gerard's vision for a unified island came in part from JJ Le Marquand's remarkable poem 'La Vie' written as a song of hope during the occupation
8. In 2008, the local antiques dealer Steven Cohu uncovered a 19th century Jersey song set to traditional English music called 'Hurrah for Jersey'. The song declares 'the English, French and Jersey men form a joyous band' - a fore-runner of Gerard's dream of unity that today includes the Portuguese and Polish communities among others
9. further inspiration for Island Home was found in the writing of Victor Hugo

“Ma Normandie” is a patriotic song of Normandy. It was composed in 1836 by Frédéric Bérat (1801–55), a French (Norman) gas company worker who was also a composer, and since that time it has been a patriotic song of Normandy. At first sight it is an odd anthem for Jersey as it is clearly about Normandy as the first verse of the English version illustrates –

> When everything is reborn in hope
> And winter flees far from us,
> Under the beautiful sky of our France,
> When the sun returns gentler,
> When nature has turned green again,
> When the swallow has returned,
> I like to see again my Normandy,
> It's the country where I was born.

This instrumental version is taken from the Société Jersiaise website. The anthem sung in Jèrriais can be accessed, with some difficulty, from the Office Du Jèrriais website.

The song did not make the short list for the competition for an anthem for Jersey in 2007/08 and indeed it was hoped that the formal adoption of an anthem would reduce the use of an anthem which has nothing to do with Jersey.