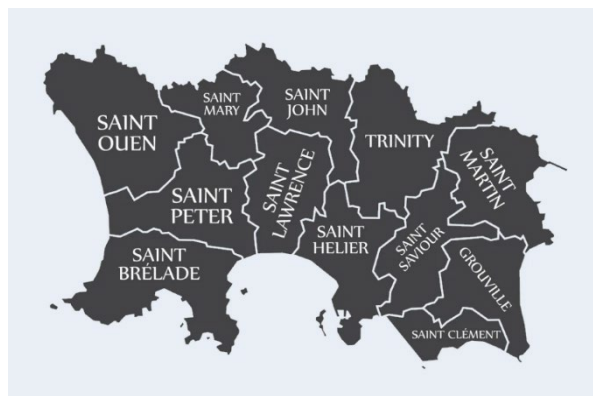




Connétables

Overview

An introduction to the role and history of the Connétable and their position in the parishes and in the States Assembly, along with some notable Connétables.



Introduction

A Connétable (in English: Constable and in Jèrriais: Connétabl'ye), is the head, or principal officer, of a Parish and by virtue of their office holds a seat in the States Assembly. As Jersey is made up of 12 parishes, there are 12 sitting Connétables.

The Connétables are the oldest element of the Assembly in its current makeup, having survived the removal of both the Jurats and the Rectors, leaving Connétables as the remaining role of those that historically made up the States. They were originally elected with no time limit to their term (some served a life-term), and in some cases the role was hereditary. They were appointed to act as advisors to the Jurats to ensure the Parish voice was heard when legislation was being made. It was not uncommon for Connétables to also be Jurats, as they often became a Jurat following their service of Connétable. They would continue to serve in both roles until a replacement was found.¹

Since 2011 Connétables are elected every 4 years on the same day as Deputies and Senators, in a general election.

History

Connétables have been Members of the States from the earliest recorded Minutes of the States in 1524.

The exact origin of the Connétables, however, is not entirely clear. There is some belief that their role was military in origin, with a mention in 1462. The Connétable may have been modelled after an English mayor, with power over all parish matters except for the church.

The 12 parishes have been long established in Jersey, again with no exact origin. In the Jersey Law Review entitled [Le Connétable Et Sa Paroisse](#) it is mentioned that some parishes date back

¹ https://www.jerripedia.org/wiki/The_role_of_the_Constables



to 475AD. It is unlikely that the role of Connétable dates this far back though, as one hypothesis is that the role takes after the role of High Constable, created in England in the 13th century.

Other research has suggested that due to the Parish being an organised secular, in that its administration as separate from the church, for thousands of years it is entirely possible that the role of Connétable has existed for just as long but with no documentation.

Wherever their origin may be found, their importance in the early parliament (where power had not yet been separated from the Royal Court) stemmed from being the “true voice of the Parish” and therefore the “true voice of the Island.”²

The Connétable previously held the responsibility for the arms and ammunition of the Militia, and they were often an officer of the Militia themselves. The Connétables had to keep candles ready within their parish church to be lit in times of emergency. This would signal to the Militiamen within their Parish to muster there, ready to be sent to rendezvous with other members of the wider Militia. If this alarm lasted longer than a day, the Connétable was responsible for feeding their Militiamen.³

Today a Connétable is regarded as “The Father of the Parish” or, more aptly in the 21st Century, the Head of the Parish, and in this capacity is called upon to make themselves available to all parishioners on any matter of collective or individual concern to them.⁴

Interestingly, and as far as can be ascertained from public records, there is only one instance whereby two Connétables were sworn in for one Parish at the same time – this occurred in St Helier in 1541.⁵

What does the role entail?

Connétables are the heads of each Parish Assembly, where matters from the States can be brought before parishioners if considered something that would affect them. Alongside this, the Parish Assembly enables disputes to be settled.

The main duties of the Parish Assembly are to –

- Set the annual domestic rate according to the budget proposed by the Connétable;
- Elect members of the municipality, including the Roads Committee, Roads Inspectors, Vingteniers, Connétable's Officers;
- Recommend liquor licences to the licensing bench;
- Adopt road names;
- Authorise the Procureurs du Bien Public to enter into contracts in the name of the parish; and
- Discuss other matters as proposed by the Connétable, or at the written request of a number of members of the assembly.

² [Jersey Law Review | Le Connétable et sa paroisse](#)

³ https://www.jerriopedia.org/wiki/The_role_of_the_Constables

⁴ <https://comite.je/wp-content/uploads/sites/13/2025/02/The-Parish-Assembly-2025.pdf>

⁵ A chronology of Jersey – Ralph Mollet – Société Jersiaise



Whilst the Connétables core roles have remained largely unchanged, there are certain elements of their office they no longer have responsibility for. For example, they used to hold the position of the Head of the Honorary Police of the Parish. This is now the responsibility of the Centenier, who is another elected official within the Parish⁶.

Previously, the senior Centenier (who was normally the Chef de Police) would take the place of the Connétable in the States Assembly if they were unable to attend a States Meeting. This was enshrined in Article 17(1) of the States of Jersey Law 1966, but that Article was repealed in 1974⁷.

When sworn in, the Connétables take the following oath in the Royal Court –

“You swear and promise, by the faith and oath that you owe to God, that you will well and faithfully discharge the duties and office of Connétable of the Parish of.....; you will cause to be kept the King's Peace; you will protect and uphold to the best of your ability the rights appertaining to the said Parish, and as touching the public welfare thereof, you will be guided by the advice and counsel of the Principals and other officers of the said Parish; which officers you will convene, or will cause to be convened through your Centeniers, regularly to advise on the affairs of the Parish; you will execute the lawful orders of the Lieutenant Governor, of the Bailiff, of his Deputy and of the Judges and Jurats of the Royal Court, as pertaining to their respective offices, attending meetings of the States whenever you are called upon to do so; and all this and your bounden duty you promise upon your conscience to perform.”

This oath can be found in the [Code of 1771 \(Translated\)](#). The 1771 code also states that the Connétables must convene a meeting once per month with their officers to identify “wrongdoers” and bring forward any complaints from their Parish.

All Connétables are members of the Comité des Connétable (the “Comité”), which brings together the Connétables of the 12 Parishes in Jersey on a regular basis to discuss matters that affect all Parishes such as rates, policing or refuse collection.

The Comité agrees its own set of [rules](#) and meets in public (though some items may be taken in private if they are exempt under the Freedom of Information (Jersey) Law 2011). Minutes from meetings of the Comité can be found [here](#).

⁶ Information about other Parish roles can be found on the website of the Comité des Connétables <https://comite.je/parish-officers/>

⁷ The Working Party on Parish Assemblies: Report – 2001 <https://statesassembly.je/getmedia/44087599-e5d9-4e35-878f-1cd672b4a8a4/20964-36802.pdf?ext=.pdf#:~:text=2.1.3%20The%20Conn%C3%A9tables%20sit,before%20the%20date%20on%20which>



Notable Connétables

Pierre Le Sueur

Pierre Le Sueur was one of the most important political figures in the development of St Helier as the Island's main town. He was first elected in 1839 and served 5 consecutive terms until he died in office in 1851.

Le Sueur is most famed for the introduction of a network of underground sewers in St Helier. This aided the Parish in handling the rapid population boom it was facing, turning it from slums into a modern town. He also widened the town's streets, inaugurated a fire service for the town, and brought prosecutions against landlords who had allowed their properties to become slums.



To honour his work, a monument was constructed for Le Sueur following his death. The obelisk and fountain stand in Broad Street.



Sir John Le Couteur

A former soldier, who served in the War of 1812 before returning to Jersey and becoming involved in local politics. He was involved with the introduction of the tarmac on Parish roads and was subsequently put in charge of building the road between St Helier and St Aubin. He also notably purchased the first lifeboat for Jersey. He was also responsible for various areas of reform including the removal of militia cannons from churches, and the abolition of Sunday elections.

Iris Le Feuvre

Jersey's first female Connétable elected as the Connétable of St Lawrence 1984 and served until 1999. During this time, she served as President of the Education Committee where she campaigned successfully for compulsory education to continue to age 16 and oversaw the building of Haute Valle School. Following her career as Connétable, she received an M.B.E in



2002 for her services to the Jersey Community and, in 2005, was nominated by the people of Jersey to be a subject of Jersey Heritage's portraits of Jersey Citizens.

