

**At the States of the Island of Jersey**  
**In the Year 1876, the 25th of February.**

A certain Petition, emanating from a great number of merchants of the Town of St. Helier, praying the current States to abolish the Copper Coinage, now having been submitted to the consideration of this Assembly, having been lodged at the States Greffe on the 22nd of January 1873.

Whereas it would be beneficial to assimilate the copper coinage currently in circulation in the Island to that which is current in England, and whereas experience has demonstrated that the division of the Sterling Shilling into thirteen and twenty-six parts causes great inconveniences and is of no practical utility.

Considering moreover that the copper coinage has in large part disappeared and that the needs of commerce require a new issue.

The States have decided, subject to the Sanction of His Most Excellent Majesty in Council, to issue copper coinage of the same value as that which is current in England, such that there shall be coins representing the twelfth part of a shilling, others the twenty-fourth, and others the forty-eighth part thereof; and this to an amount not exceeding Two Thousand Pounds Sterling.

And the States have further resolved to order the withdrawal, within the space of one year following the confirmation of the present Act, of the copper coinage currently in circulation and issued by virtue of the Acts of the States of the 8th of December 1864 and the 20th of January 1869, so that it may be sent to the Mint and assimilated to that which shall be issued in conformity with the provisions of the present Act.

And the States have appointed a Committee composed of **Edouard Mourant, Esquire, Sworn Justice**, the **Rector of St. Mary**, the **Constable of St. Clement**, and **Deputy Durell of St. Helier**, which Committee is charged with taking the necessary measures to bring the present Act into execution once it shall have received the Royal Sanction.

And the Treasurer of the States is hereby authorised to advance the necessary funds, under the directions of the said Committee.

And the Greffier is charged with transmitting the present Act to the Clerk in Attendance of His Majesty's Privy Council and with soliciting its confirmation by His Most Excellent Majesty in Council.

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**Aux Etats de l'île de Jersey**  
**L' An 1876, le 25 Février.**

Certaine Petition, emanant d'un grand nombre des commercants de la Ville de St. Helier priant les Etats courante, logée au Greffe des Etats, le 22 Janvier 1873, de supprimer la Monnaie de Cuivre, maintenant ayant été soumise a la consideration de cette Assemblée. Attendu qu'il serait utile d'assimiler la monnaie de cuivre, aujourd'hui en circulation, en l'île, a celle qui a cours en Angleterre et, que l'experience a demontre que la division du chelin Sterling en treize et en vingt six parties, cause de grands inconvenients et n'est d'aucune utilité pratique. Considerant d'ailleurs que la monnaie de cuivre a en grande partie disparu et que les besoins du commerce demandent, une nouvelle emission. Les Etats ont décide, moyennant la Santion de Sa Très Excellente Majesté en Conseil, d'emettre de la monnaie en cuivre, de la meme valeur que celle qui est en Cours en Angleterre, de maniere qu'il y ait des pièces qui representent la douzième partie d'un chelin, d'autres la vingt quatrieme et d'autres la quarante huitième partie d'ici lui: et ce a un montant n'excedant pas Deux mille livres Sterling. En les Etats ont de plus resolu d'ordonner la rentrée dans le couvant d'une année apres la confirmation du present Acte de la monnaie de cuivre aujourd'hui en circulation et emise en vertu des Actes des Etats du 8 Decembre 1864 et du 20 Janvier 1869. Afin qu'elel soit envoyée a l'Hotel des monnaies et assimilée a celle qui sera émise en conformité aux prescription du present acte. Et les Etats ont nommé un Comité composé de Edouard Mourant, Ecuier Juré Justicier, du Recteur de St Marie, du Connétable de St Clement, et du Député Durell de St Helier lequle Comité est chargé de prendre les méasures neccaires pour mettre le present acte a Execution' lorsqu'il aura recu la Sanction Royale. Et est le Trésorier des

Etats autorise a avancer les fonds necessaires, sous les directions dudit Comité Et le Greffier est charge de transmettre le present acte au "Clerk in Attendance" du Conseil Prive de Sa Majesté et dén solliciter la confirmation par Sa Très Excellente Majesté en Conseil.

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## Historical and Monetary Context

### Jersey's Unique Coinage System

Jersey had long maintained a distinctive monetary system that set it apart from mainland Britain. The island divided the sterling shilling into **13 parts** (called *sous*) and **26 parts**, rather than the standard English 12 pennies to the shilling. This unusual system had deep roots in Jersey's Franco-Norman culture and its historical ties to France, where the *sou* was a familiar unit of account. In practice, this meant Jersey copper coins had no direct equivalence to English pennies, creating persistent confusion for merchants and travelers alike.

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## The Political and Legislative Process

### The Petition of 1873

The document reveals an interesting three-year gap between the original merchant petition (22 January 1873) and the States' eventual decision (25 February 1876). This delay is telling. It suggests:

- **Significant resistance** within the States to abandoning a centuries-old local tradition
- The need for extensive deliberation and consensus-building among Jersey's governing bodies
- Possibly competing commercial and cultural interests — practical merchants on one side, traditionalists on the other

The fact that the petition came from *a great number of merchants* of St. Helier is significant. St. Helier was the commercial heart of the island, and

its trading community had the most direct daily experience of the inconveniences caused by the incompatible coinage system.

### **The Role of Royal Sanction**

A striking feature of the document is how frequently it defers to **His Majesty in Council** — the Privy Council acting on behalf of the Crown. The Act cannot take effect until confirmed by London. This reflects Jersey's constitutional status as a Crown Dependency: self-governing in many respects, but ultimately subject to Royal sanction for significant legislative acts. The Greffier (Clerk of the States) is specifically instructed to transmit the Act to the *Clerk in Attendance* of the Privy Council — a reminder that Jersey, though not part of the United Kingdom, operated within the British constitutional orbit.

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### **The Substance of the Reform**

#### **The New Coinage Structure**

The States resolved to issue coins representing:

<b>New Coin</b>	<b>Fraction of Shilling</b>	<b>English Equivalent</b>
Large copper	1/12	One penny
Medium copper	1/24	Halfpenny
Small copper	1/48	Farthing

This brought Jersey into alignment with standard English coinage, making trade and daily transactions far more straightforward for merchants dealing with both local and British customers.

#### **The Financial Ceiling**

The cap of **£2,000 Sterling** on the new issue was a prudent constraint. It was enough to meet practical circulation needs on a small island without risking monetary instability, and it signaled fiscal conservatism on the part of the States.

## The Recall of Old Coinage

The one-year window for withdrawing the old coinage (issued under the Acts of 8 December 1864 and 20 January 1869) was a practical transitional measure. Sending the recalled coins to **the Mint** for reprocessing was both economically rational — recovering the copper value — and symbolically clean, erasing the old system entirely rather than allowing the two coinages to circulate in parallel indefinitely.

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## The Governance Structure Revealed

The composition of the **Committee appointed to implement the Act** is a fascinating snapshot of Jersey's governing class in the 1870s:

- **Edouard Mourant, Sworn Justice** — representing the judiciary
- **The Rector of St. Mary** — the Church still held a formal role in civil governance
- **The Constable of St. Clement** — representing parochial administration
- **Deputy Durell of St. Helier** — representing the commercial capital

This mixture of ecclesiastical, judicial, parochial, and representative figures reflects Jersey's ancient constitutional structure, in which the Church, the parishes, and elected deputies all played interlocking roles in government — a system with medieval roots still very much alive in the nineteenth century.

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## Linguistic Observations

The document is written in **French**, which was still the official language of the States of Jersey in 1876. This is itself historically significant — English would not fully displace French as the working language of Jersey's legislature until the twentieth century. The French used is formal and

legalistic, characteristic of Jersey's Norman-influenced legal tradition (*droit coutumier*), which differed in important respects from both English common law and metropolitan French law.

Several terms deserve note:

- **"Juré Justicier"** — a Sworn Justice, a specifically Jersey judicial office with no precise English equivalent
- **"Connétable"** — the Constable, head of the parish, an office unique to the Channel Islands
- **"Greffé des Etats"** — the official registry of the States, a Norman administrative term
- **"Hotel des monnaies"** — the Mint, literally the "House of Monies"

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## Broader Significance

This document captures a small but meaningful moment in the long process of **British standardization and administrative integration** during the Victorian era. Across the empire and in its dependencies, the nineteenth century saw repeated efforts to rationalize weights, measures, currencies, and legal codes. Jersey's 1876 coinage reform is a local instance of this broader trend — the island voluntarily, if after some deliberation, choosing alignment with English practice over the preservation of a local peculiarity.

Yet the document also shows the limits of that integration. Jersey retained its own legislature, its own legal system, its own language of government, and its own constitutional relationship with the Crown. The reform was an act of pragmatic convergence, not absorption.