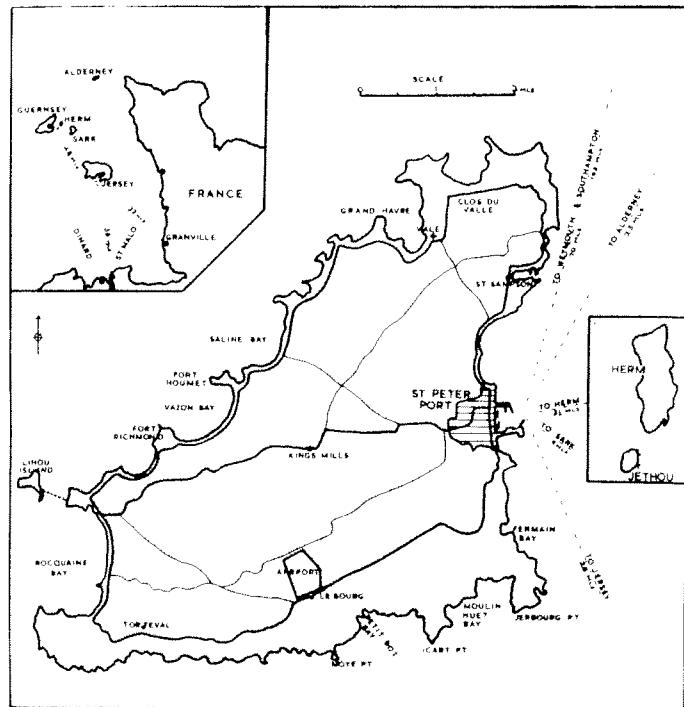


The Glasshouse Industry on Guernsey

It was my pleasure to visit the island of Guernsey, which is situated in the English Channel off the northwest coast of France. I was guest of J. Martin Bichard, who visited America during the summer of 1959 with the delegation from the British Flower Industry Association. Guernsey is at a latitude of 49° , the same as the northern line of Montana. Because of the Gulf Stream, its summers are cool and its winters are mild. The plant materials which grow there are not unlike those of Seattle or Vancouver, with an occasional palm tree in evidence.

The growing of tomatoes under glass, begun late in the nineteenth century, is now the principal industry of the island. Some 2900 growers with 1150 acres of glass produced about 20 million dollars worth of tomatoes in 1959. The average glasshouse is only $1/3$ of an acre so this industry is



made up mostly of small family businesses. Tomatoes are graded, packed and shipped cooperatively. Compulsory grades are policed by the Tomato Marketing Board with inspection being done at the shipping point. Fines of up to \$500 have been assessed where grades were not rigidly followed. The tomatoes are shipped mainly to the British Isles.

Some bulb crops are being grown for both flowers and bulbs. Fruit crops are also a part of their agriculture. The rearing of Guernsey cattle known the world over, plays a considerable role in the economic life of the island.

Rather recently there have been sizeable plantings of carnations. The climate is ideally suited to this crop since it is probably the lightest spot in Northern Europe during the winter, and quite cool in the summer. Yields, quality of flowers, and timing of crops are similar to Colorado. They differ from Colorado in that they can produce high quality flowers in summer without air conditioning.

How fast the carnation culture will expand on Guernsey seems to depend on several economic factors. Tomatoes have been a profitable crop and yields are high. If the returns remain good for Guernsey tomatoes, growers will be hesitant to switch to the uncertainties of another crop. The people who work in glasshouses do not like to work on weekends, even for overtime pay. Carnations must be cut Saturday and Sunday, and packed for shipment Sunday. The workers want the weekend off as their friends are free at that time. Tomatoes adapt themselves well to this way of life. The better tomato growers are probably making more from tomatoes with less labor than they could by changing to carnations. My best estimate is that the increase in carnation plantings on Guernsey will develop slowly.

Your editor,

W. D. Holley



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