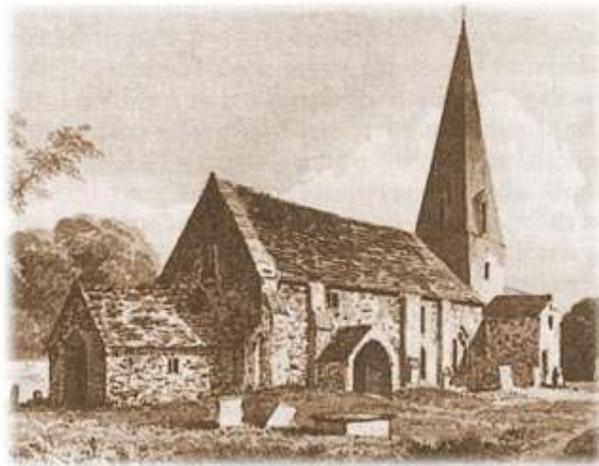


A SHORT HISTORY OF THE PARISH CHURCH OF ST CLEMENT, JERSEY

ORIGIN AND FOUNDATION

In ancient documents the church is referred to as *Ecclesia Sancti Clementis de Petravilla in Gersuis*, which is Latin for "the church of St. Clement on the estate of Peter in Jersey". There are several place-names in Jersey ending in the word *ville*, for example, Grouville and Longueville. These date back to pre-Norman times when the native population continued to live in so-called Roman villas, even after the fall of the Roman Empire. The villa did not necessarily mean simply the residence, or house, but the entire estate, or farm. One such an estate was known as *Pierreville*, the estate of Peter. The owner became a Christian, and in due course built a wooden chapel for himself and his employees. One of the men from his estate may well have been ordained priest to minister in the chapel. This wooden chapel would probably have been burnt down during the Norman raids, but when they ended in the year 911, work would have begun on the building of a stone chapel dedicated to St. Clement, the fourth Bishop of Rome. He was a popular saint, having been killed



around the year 100 by being thrown into the sea with an anchor round his neck.

There is evidence that William the Conqueror granted half the tithes of the Church of St. Clement to the Abbey of Montvilliers (near Le Havre in Normandy) no later than the year 1067. St. Clement would by then have been a parish church since only parish churches, and not private chapels, received tithes. Another charter shows that the church had passed into the ownership of the Abbey of St. Sauveur-le-Vicomte in Normandy by the year 1090, where it remained until the Reformation.

The Early Building - The oldest part of the church is the nave, which formed the original chapel. It was originally a tiny Norman building, with a low thatched roof and narrow windows, two of which can still be seen in the north wall. A further chapel was added a few

metres away to the north-east, where the organ chamber now stands. This had no connection with St. Clement for some five hundred years, but stood as a separate chapel, just as the Fishermen's Chapel stands close to St. Brelade's Parish Church today.

The church was greatly enlarged in the 15th century by the addition of a chancel and transepts, giving it the usual cruciform shape of most Christian churches. It is possible to give an approximate date for these works because of the Payn coat of arms (the three trefoils) in the chancel, for the Payns were the Seigneurs of Samarès during that century. The gargoyle on the



outside of the east wall and the wall paintings date from this same period. When the church was enlarged, the roof was raised and built in stone (the line of which may

still be seen on the tower arch) and buttresses were constructed to support the additional weight.

THE REFORMATION AND AFTER

The Reformation reached Jersey in severely Calvinistic form in around 1550. As was the case with all the Jersey churches, virtually all traces of the ancient worship were swept aside. The Jersey historian Revd. G. R. Balleine gives a graphic account of what happened in the case of St. Clement:

Altars, images, stained glass, all were smashed to pieces. Endowments for masses and lamps were confiscated to the Crown. Only one bell was left. Soler, the first Protestant Rector, a fiery Spaniard, who had been a Dominican Friar, did his work so thoroughly that nothing remains today but one empty bracket (on which once stood the statue of a saint), the piscina in the chancel (at which the Priest used to cleanse his hands before Mass), and in the North Chapel a much more primitive piscina together with an ambry (the cupboard which contained the altar vessels, the consecrated oil for anointing the sick, and the reserved sacrament).

During the hundred years following the Reformation, the Church became a "Huguenot Temple", that is to say it adopted the French

Protestant form of worship (except for five years under Queen Mary, when the Catholic ritual was restored, and for a short period during which Dean David Bandinel secured a reluctant use of the Prayer Book). During this time, the men entered by the west door, and the women by a door (now walled up) at the end of the north transept. The south door did not exist at that time. A large gallery was erected at the west end of the church in the days of the Commonwealth (1649-1660) and the stone altar was removed from the east end. Instead, a long oak table was set in front of the pulpit and Holy Communion would have been celebrated four times a year (Christmas, Maundy Thursday, Easter and Whit Sunday) from the north side of this table. It is now situated in the vestry.



THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

The Act Book of the *Assemblée Ecclésiastique* gives some

information as to what took place in the 19th century. In 1823, the *Assemblée* forbade the schoolmaster from continuing to hold his school in the vestry, as the children had been breaking seats and windows in the Church. The Militia cannon were kept in the Church as late as 1824, for in that year a special meeting was held to take steps to make it easier to get them in and out.

The Rev. Philippe Aubin, B.D. was appointed Rector in 1826. He was a young and vigorous man, and made many improvements to the fabric of the church. In 1828, the old cracked bell was disposed of to Pierre Le Lièvre, a French bell founder, and was replaced by the present one, cast by Marquet of Villedieu-les-Poêles in Normandy. It was hung on 1st September in that year, and bears the inscription:

Saint Clément, Ile de Jersey, 1828
Messrs Jean Touzel, et Gédéon Ahier,
Surveillants.

An organ, lent by the Seigneur of Samarès, was placed in the gallery. A large annexe was added to the west end to house the cannon and to act as a vestry and Sunday School. A new entrance was also made, since the annexe now blocked the west door. In 1833,

the north door was walled up to prevent draughts. In 1837, the stone from which the parish notices had once been given out was removed from the churchyard to make room for a grave.

The Restoration of 1880 - This was undertaken during the tenure of Rev. Matthieu Lemprière but was in fact initiated by his predecessor Rev. Charles Marett M.A., Rector from 1842-1876. In 1874, Charles Marett appointed a committee to draw up plans for a complete restoration. The annexe, which had been built at the instigation of Philippe Aubin, was entirely removed, allowing for the re-opening of the west door and for the unblocking of the west window. The nearby door was turned into a tiny vestry. A new entrance to the church was made in the south transept. The gallery was pulled down and the walls stripped of their plaster, so revealing the wall paintings. The high box-pews and the great square manor-pew in front of the pulpit were removed and replaced by the present seating. The chancel was restored to its ancient use with altar and altar-rails. A reredos was presented by Edward Maurant (Seigneur of Samarès Manor) and three new stained-glass windows were also presented (the window at

the east end behind the altar, the Le Maistre window in the chancel and the Seale window in the nave). The two small windows in the north wall of the nave were given by Mr Philip Henry de Gruchy (owner of the shop which became the department store A. de Gruchy & Co. Ltd).



The font, which had been ejected from the church during the Reformation and unceremoniously buried to the north side of the churchyard, was rescued at this time. It is carved from Chausey granite and is a very fine example of late-15th century design.

The restoration work took three years to complete at a cost of £1,535. The Church was re-opened for public worship on 29th March 1882, when the service was conducted not in French but in English - a sign of the changing times.

THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

In the first half of the century it appears that little was done to the fabric of the church. However, a new organ (by the London-based organ builder Alfred Oldknow) was installed in 1901, the cost of £351 having been met by holding a bazaar in the grounds of Samarès Manor. A new west window was donated in 1905 by John Le Brocq depicting St Augustine of Hippo, an unusual subject for a window. A clock was given by Jurat George Crill in 1919 in memory of his great-grandfather Rev. David Hocquard (Rector from 1804-1822). A proposal was put forward in 1917 to replace the existing white Caen stone pulpit, which was felt by many not to fit in with the rest of the church. The new one, in carved oak and with a granite base, was dedicated on 4th September 1922 to the Glory of God, in thanks for victory and peace, and in memory of those who died in the Great War (1914-1918). The Dean of Jersey,

Rev. Samuel Falle, preached the first sermon (on John 10:23).

In the Summer of 1930, the old oil lamps were removed and electricity finally came to St Clement's Church, but the round holes for the old lamp stands can still be seen in the music desks of the choir stalls!



In 1936, Lady Knott of Samarès Manor offered a carillon of bells, but so many difficulties arose that the project was abandoned. In 1953, however, a further offer of a gift by the Lady of Samarès in memory of her second husband (Commander Edward Owen Obbard D.S.C., G.M., R.N., Jurat of the Royal Court, who died on 10th March 1951), was accepted

gratefully. This took the form of an oak screen, separating the north side of the sanctuary from the ancient north chapel, so making a large clergy vestry.

Three new windows were installed in the nave in the 1950s: the St. Clement and St. Nicholas windows in memory of Rev. C.W. Balleine, and the Norman window depicting Sir Galahad. These were supplied and fitted by H. A. Anderson of St. Helier.

New altar-rails were added in 1955 and in 1959, the 1880 altar and reredos were replaced by the present-day altar, reredos, riddel posts and curtains. However, the new reredos did not meet with universal approval, so in 1963 the harsh colour scheme was toned down and the St Clement coat-of-arms, together with the "three leopards" of Jersey, were removed.



A treasury was built into the wall of the north transept in 1962 to house the church silver. Among the ancient and modern plate the Dumaresq baptismal dish is worthy of note. It was presented by a former Connétable, Hélier Dumaresq, to mark the baptism of his daughter, Ester, on 10th April 1702. He now lies buried close to his memorial on the east wall of the south transept. In 1975 a board displaying details of the Rectors going back to 1302 was given by Brigadier W. A. and Mrs Anderton. A lectern, designed in light oak by Richard Stevens of Norwich, was given in 1983, replacing the Marett lectern of 1880.

In the year 2000 a number of pews were removed from the west end of the nave to create a welcome area and wall space, where aspects of the church's life and mission are displayed.

THE WALL PAINTINGS

St. Clement's church is well known for wall paintings, which were discovered in 1879 by workmen employed in the extensive 19th century restoration.

South Transept - In the south transept, on the west wall, there survive from the original painting the hind legs of a horse, followed

by the fore legs of another. Between the two is the hand of a cavalier, stretching down to a dog, whose head is raised towards his master, who in turn is mounted on the leading horse. The inscription below the painting reads:

Helas sainte Marie et quelle
ces trois mors qui sot cy hideulx
mont fait meplre en gnt tristesse
de les vois ainxi piteulx.

(Alas, St. Mary! Who are these
three corpses, that are so
hideous?
It breaks my heart
to see them thus piteous.)

The legend which this illustrates is known as The Three Living and the Three Dead. An old French poem tells how three young princes, while out hunting, see three horrible corpses who give them a lecture on the perils of worldly success. Many churches in Normandy and Brittany have paintings of *les Trois Morts et les Trois Vifs* on their walls, such as Honfleur, and Plouha (Côtes-d'Armor).

North Transept - In the north transept, a large mural has been cut in two by the arch which leads into the eastern part of the church. This shows that this was a solid wall at the time the mural was executed (about the second half of the 15th century) and that the

chapel behind was entirely separate from the Church. All that left is St. Barbara standing by her tower to the left, and a wing of the



dragon that was slain by St. Margaret to the right (Barbara and Margaret were often depicted together in this way). According to legend, Barbara, the hermit saint of Heliopolis (Egypt), was beheaded for her faith in the year 235 after having been shut up in a tower by her father Dioscorus. She became the patron saint of those in danger of sudden death by lightning, as her father was killed by a lightning bolt.

St. Margaret of Antioch was imprisoned by Olybrius, governor of

Antioch, and there tortured and finally eaten by a dragon. She made the sign of the Cross on its breast, which split in two, allowing her to burst out and escape safely. Her cult became very popular in France in the later Middle Ages, particularly among pregnant women, who prayed to her for safe delivery from the dangers of childbirth.



North Wall of Nave - On the north wall of the nave is a representation of St. Michael slaying the dragon. The Archangel is in complete armour except for his helmet. He is holding a broken hilt, the blade of which is near the Dragon, which he is stamping under his feet.

The subject of this wall painting is said to have been due to a prioress who had connections with Le Mont St. Michel. It is possible that when the Norman Louis de Brézé obtained possession of this part of the island by treachery for a short

time in the 15th century, he had the work executed as a sign of victory. Judging by the lettering, these frescoes date from the second half of the 15th century, although some may be earlier, as the head-dresses and the armour of St. Michael seem to belong to the 14th century.

CONCLUSION

Our church building is a very ancient one - there has been a place of worship on this site for over 1,000 years. And yet the Christian faith that sustains it is no historical curiosity - it is very much alive and active in the way it serves this parish community. Do take a moment to look at the displays at the back of the church to see how.

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