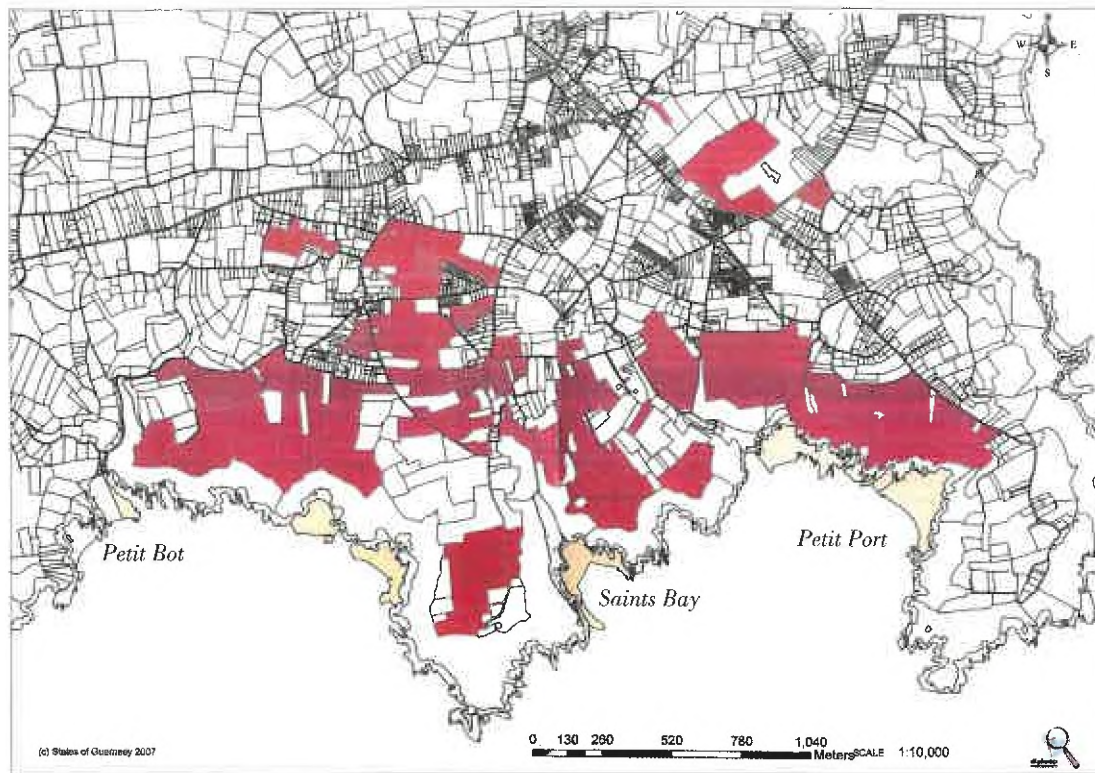


Fief de Blanchelande in the digital age



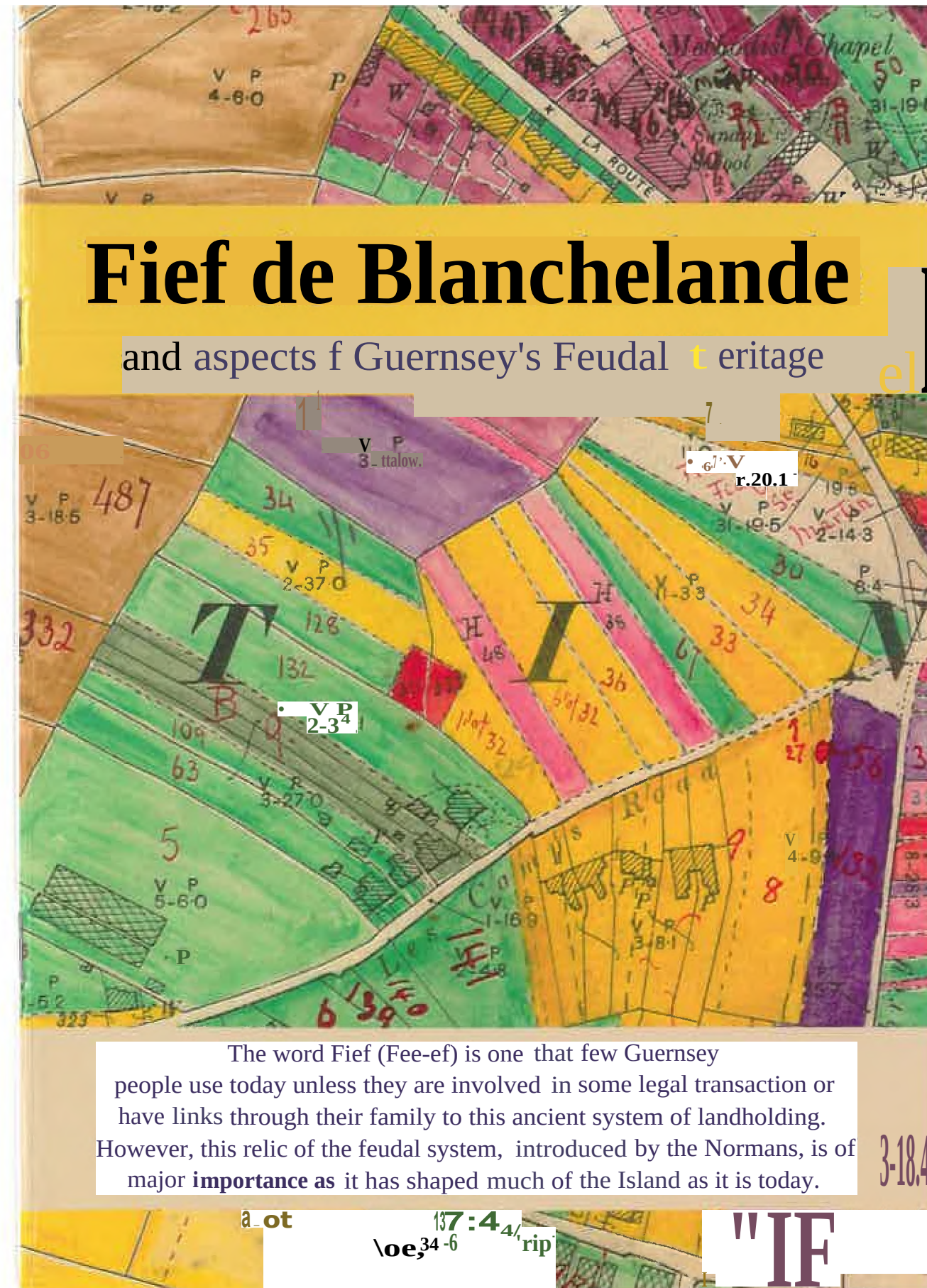
The landholdings of Guernsey's Fief de Blanchelande today.

**GUERNSEY
POST**

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pleased to support
this publication.

Fief de Blanchelande

and aspects of Guernsey's Feudal heritage



The word Fief (Fee-ef) is one that few Guernsey people use today unless they are involved in some legal transaction or have links through their family to this ancient system of landholding. However, this relic of the feudal system, introduced by the Normans, is of major **importance** as it has shaped much of the Island as it is today.

Foreword

Most islanders know that Guernsey's constitution has evolved over the centuries from its roots in nearby Normandy but their knowledge is very limited.

It is hoped that the Story of Fief de Blanchelande will be used by teachers in our schools to instill in our young students some knowledge of the way our ancestors lived and some key dates and characters in our history. After all it is part of our cultural heritage.

The contributors, led ably by Roger Berry OBE refer unsurprisingly to Rollo, William the Conqueror, King Harold and King John and highlight the influence of the Kings and Dukes, monasteries, the feudal system and the importance of charters, grants and record keeping.

The focus on Fief de Blanchelande provides an invaluable insight into one of the last Fiefs to maintain its feudal court, customs, traditions and practices, adapting as necessary to changing times. It is important that the way Fief de Blanchelande operates should be recorded and published.

It is not an easy task to distill such a complex subject into its basic elements in a style that is both informative and interesting to young students but the author has achieved that without undue oversimplification.

It is appropriate for me to record the grateful thanks of the Seigneur and the Court of the Fief de Blanchelande to Guernsey Post for its handsome financial contribution without which I suspect that this most interesting story would not have been published.

Do read, enjoy and have pride in a publication quintessentially Guernsey.

Sir Geoffrey Rowland
Bailiff March 2012

The Story of the Fief of the Abbot of itlanchelande 1154 - 2011

Guernsey is a small island with a total area of only 27 square miles (52 square km) but it has a long, proud and complicated history.

The Bailiwick of Guernsey, consisting of Guernsey and the smaller islands of Alderney, Herm and Sark, delights in its 'offshore' status. This has been carried down from Roman times, through the Norman and medieval periods and right up to the present day. Although Guernsey is one of the 'British Isles' it is not part of the United Kingdom. Guernsey, 20 miles (32 km) west of France and 80 miles (108 km) south of England, may listen to the decisions of the UK Parliament but it is not bound by them.

In 1066 when William, Duke of Normandy, took the crown of England and became King William 'the Conqueror', Guernsey was within the Duchy of Normandy so this small Island can claim to have taken part in the invasion of England!

The -present connection to the English Crown dates from 1204 when the English took hostages and occupied the Island after King John of England lost his Normandy territories to Philip of France.

Even though by the 1500s the Duchy of Normandy was just part of France and King Henry III gave up calling himself Duke of Normandy in 1259, Guernsey still holds true to the King or Queen of England through the historical link with Normandy.

Even today in the Island the loyal toast may be heard: 'The Queen, our Duke!'

Presently the Queen is represented in Guernsey by her Lieutenant-Governor. The historical connection between Guernsey and Normandy can still be traced in the local language (Guernesiais) and aspects of the legal system. Guernsey lawyers are required to spend some time training in Caen in Normandy. This is to enable them to learn the ancient Norman law which still forms the basis of law in Guernsey. The Island also continues to have a system of land holding originally based on the traditional 'fief'.

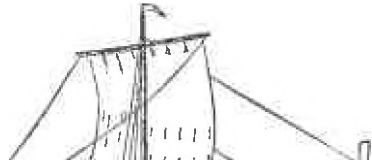
Our fiefs go right back to the 12th century. A fief was a grant of land made by a King or a Duke to one of his subjects. In return the subject promised to be faithful to the King or Duke, to collect his taxes, keep order and to provide knights and soldiers in time of war.

A whole system of land-owning and loyalty developed and was known as the Feudal System. This developed in different forms in different parts of Northern Europe: in Guernsey it became a complicated form of land holding.

It is the purpose of this book to try and explain how fiefs developed in Guernsey and how they still have relevance today.

This then is the story of the Fief of the Abbot of Blanchelande.

Vikin Explor tion



The Vikings came from Scandinavia, from the countries we know today as Norway, Denmark and Sweden. As these are in Northern Europe the Vikings were known as the 'Northmen, or 'Norsemen' as they went south. In France and Guernsey this evolved into 'Norman' and 'Normandy.'

The story of Fief de Blanchelande in Guernsey and France goes back to the Viking raiders who travelled the seas in their longboats. Although today much is rightly made of the Vikings' great skill as navigators, explorers, traders and craftsmen, in their own times they were regarded as murderous raiders and robbers. The monks of Britain, whose rich, unguarded churches and abbeys were an easy target for the Vikings prayed: 'From the fury of the Northmen, Good Lord deliver us!'

From AD800 the Viking raids intensified and soon the raiders were attacking not just on the coasts of Britain but further inland. A similar chain of events took place across the Channel, on the north coast of France as they followed the River Seine inland, past the city of Rouen. By 885 they had laid siege to Paris. The King of France, Charles III (who had the unfortunate nickname of 'The Simple') was forced to come to an agreement with the Viking raiders. In 911 he granted them a large area of land around Rouen.

Charles laid down several conditions in this grant to the Viking leader, Rollo. The Vikings should end their pagan ways and become Christians and Rollo had to agree to kiss the king's foot to show that he accepted that he had received his land from Charles. This was called doing homage. Rollo refused but asked one of his warriors to do so on his behalf. The warrior is reported to have said: 'no Norseman bends the knee to anyone' and jerked the royal foot so high in the air that the king and his seat went toppling over backwards!



Charles III of France.

Vikin Norm ndy in the 10th Century

Tighe Vikings in their new lands around Rouen kept their promises. They became Christians and were soon calling their land Normandy, and Rollo and his successors became Dukes of Normandy.

They continued to expand their territory westwards, eventually reaching the Channel Islands. Guernsey was largely taken over by Vikings from what we now call Denmark. The first Duke of Normandy to hold Guernsey was William Longsword in 933.

At the same time teaching monasteries were being developed and the Vikings apparently evolved from rough, illiterate sea-borne pillagers into literate, educated Normans who were a well and strongly-governed people.

The first two Dukes of Normandy were probably poorly schooled so they used the educated men produced by the church schools and monasteries to administer an efficient system of Government. The Duke granted lands to his supporters in return for fighting knights, soldiers, money or goods developing what we now know as the Feudal System.



Archaeologists haven't found any evidence of Viking settlements in Guernsey — yet!

There is a legend that in 890 Godefroy Haraldsson, a son of the king of Norway, set up a 'castle' where the Castel church now stands. It would make a sensible look-out point — but no evidence has been found.

Several of the place-names found in the Bailiwick however do go back to this time.

The name-ending 'eye' is Norse for a large island — Guernsey and Alderney.

'hou' is a smaller island — Lihou, Jethou and Burhou.

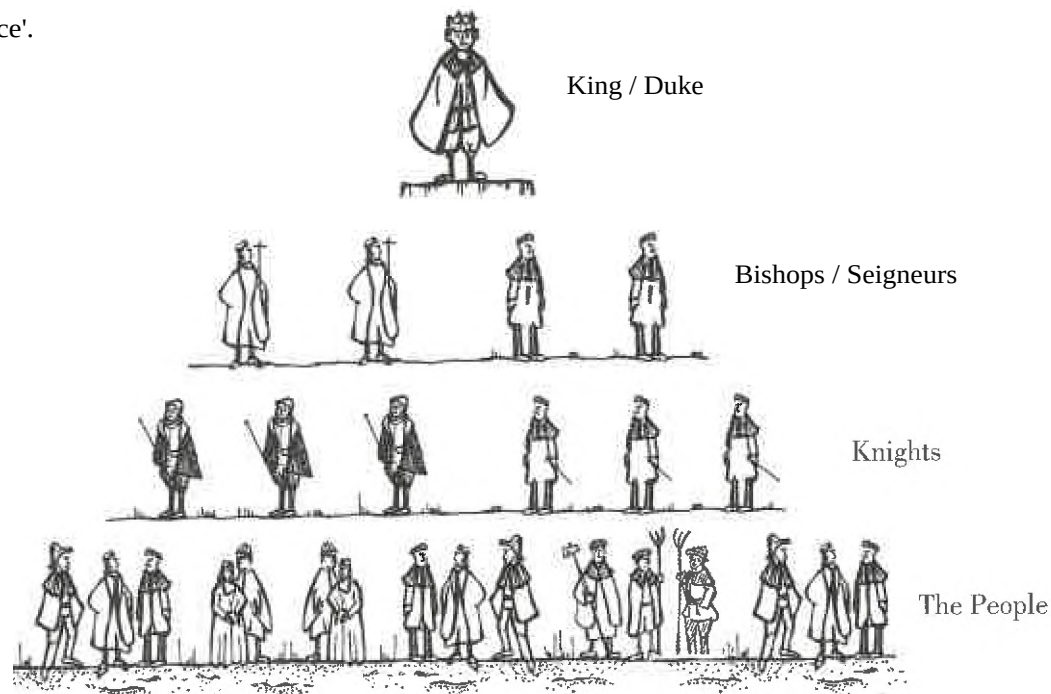
Some of the names for the natural features of the land and sea come from the time when the Vikings were settling down to become Normans: 'etac' is a large rock or stack on the coast, 'raz', a swift tidal stream — like the 'Race' off Alderney, 'hougue' is a mound and 'varde' a steep cliff.

Some well known Guernsey family names may also be of Viking origin, such as Torode from Thorvaldor (the Norse god).



The Feud .l System

In theory the feudal system in England and Normandy was like a giant pyramid with the most important and influential people at the top and the poorest and least important people at the bottom. People were dependant on each other and expected to show support and loyalty to those above and below them. This system, which was originally designed to ensure that enough wealth and food was produced to enable the King or Duke to have men and resources to fight his enemies, also created a class system where everyone 'knew their place'.



Narman Nicknames

It seems that, if you were the Duke of Normandy; you had to have a nickname. Rollo, whose Viking name was Hrolf Gangr, was known as the Ganger'. To 'gang' or to 'on' meant to walk. Rollo was a fat man who found it difficult to get on a horse, so he walked!

Duke William I was known as 'longsword' — he was a soldier who made Guernsey part of Normandy.

Duke Richard I was known as 'the Fearless'. It is claimed that he introduced into the Bailiwick the cows which developed into today's Guernseys,

Duke Richard II was known as 'the Good'

Duke Robert I was known as 'the Magnificent' or 'the Devil' — presumably this depended upon whether you were his friend or his enemy!

Duke William II was known as 'the Bastard' as he was illegitimate, but is better known as 'the Conqueror'. He was the one whose deeds linked together Normandy; Guernsey and England!



Photo: Mils& de Normandie

The First Guernsey Fiefs

Guernsey soon became part of the 'land for support' feudal system and by 1020 the Island had been divided down the middle into two Fiefs. These were shared between two of the Duke's men. The northwest parishes were granted to the Vicomte de Bessin and the south eastern parishes to the Vicomte du Cotentin to avoid the Island being used as a power base by either one of them.

The northern part of the Vale parish, which was separated from Guernsey by the Braye du Valle, had been held by the Abbot of St Michel from the 10th century. These two Vicomtes were the first Seigneurs or holders of fiefs in Guernsey.



Land holdings in Guernsey circa 1020

These new Seigneurs of Guernsey probably set up their Fief Courts in proper Norman style. Their officers collected the renter (rent) fees and taxes from the population below them and passed their dues to the Seigneurs above them. The ordinary people who lived on the fief had to pay the Seigneur a fee to grind their corn into flour at his mill, a fee to dry their fish on his eperquerie as well as paying rent for their land!



© Bodleian Library
MS Rawl.liurge.e.14

1066 - Guernsey inv des En land!

In 1066 Duke William of Normandy (which now included Guernsey of course), invaded England. The Pope gave his blessing to William's attempted conquest and provided him with a banner to carry into battle. This banner is shown in the Bayeux Tapestry and the gold cross on it forms the centre of the Guernsey flag today.

Duke William's victory at the Battle of Hastings was assured when, as recorded by Wace and in the Bayeux Tapestry, King Harold of England was struck down by an arrow fired into his eye by one of the Norman bowmen.



Detail Bayeux Tapestry showing the banner
© Reading Museum Service



The modern Guernsey flag

How we know about Normandy at this time.

Wace, who lived between the years 1135-1183, was educated at one of the Norman monasteries. He was born in the Channel Islands and wrote a very long historical poem, the 'Roman de Rou' which is thousands of lines long and describes the lives of the Norman dukes and their subjects. His father is recorded as having witnessed the 1066 invasion fleet setting sail. There is a memorial to Wace in the Royal Square in St. Helier in Jersey which proclaims in Norman French: 'Jo di e he jo sui, Wace de l'isle de Gersui' which translated means :

say- and I will say that I am, Wace from the Island of Jersey'

Other documents and records still survive with the best known being the Bayeux Tapestry, which is a contemporary embroidered representation of the Norman Conquest of England.

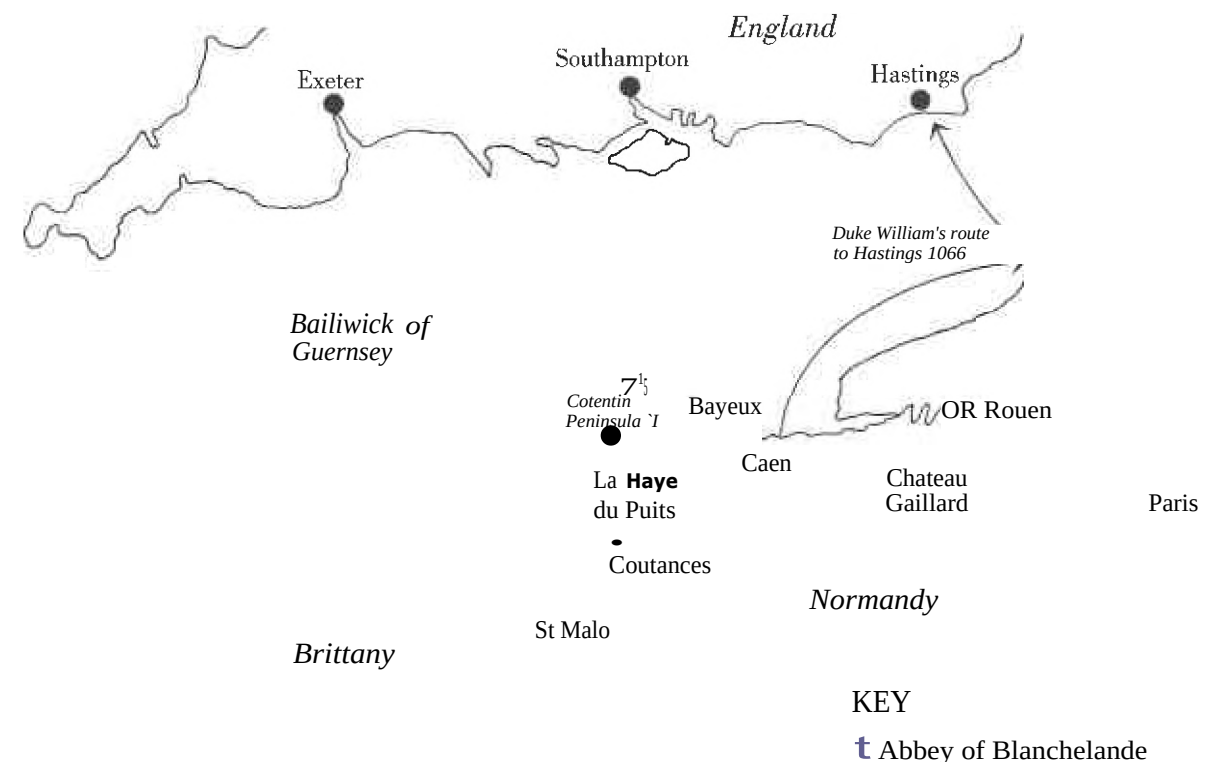


Illustration from Wace's Roman de Rou

Guernsey L aids Norman Fiefs

With Guernsey part of Normandy, further grants of land in the Island were made. In the early 1150s the holdings of the Vicomtes Bessin and Cotentin were united and redistributed to supporters of Geoffrey of Anjou. One of these new fiefs was an area of about 350 verges above Saint's Bay in St Martins, which was granted to the Priory of Martinvast, to give them extra income from the renter. This land was returned to the Duke in 1196 but he re-granted it to the Abbey of Blanchelande in 1199.

The Norman Dukes made use of the noble families as well as the church to run the new expanded Normandy. They used land grants, donation of control of churches, strips of farm land to be ploughed, flour mills and fishery rights to ensure loyalty and support.



Normandy in the 11th Century with the original Abbey of the Abbots of Blanchelande and William I's route in 1066

Fief of the Abbot of lancheLnde

During the middle of the 12th century one of the Seigneurs of the Cotentin (the area of France visible from Guernsey) was a very religious man called Richard de la Haye. In 1154 he and his wife Matilde gave land to churchmen of the Premonstratensian order. This enabled the monks to build a monastery at Blanche Lande near La Haye du Puits on the Cotentin peninsula. (See the map on page 7). The monks of the order of Premontre always worked in their local communities and their new monastery soon took shape.

The origin of the name Blanchelande is uncertain. The French historian Jean Fournee suggests three possibilities:-

- that the name describes the white robes that the monks wore
- that the land on which the new monastery was built was hard and stony and had a white appearance
- that the land was covered with Poplar trees (in Latin 'Blanchia') or with lots of bushes (Latin 'Blanda').

However, using the Guernesiaise of the time it is possible that the name, taken from the 'Letters Patent', states that the abbey was to be based at 'Blanche Lande'. Blanche means white (or of the family of Blanche) and Lande in this period meant land that had been waste land but was now cleared and used for farming. Blanchelande could therefore mean 'the cleared waste land' or simply 'the white cleared land'.

The Abbey of Blanchelande grew aggressively into a huge estate having at least 27 churches and fiefs in Normandy, England and the Channel Islands.



12th century Abbey of Blanchelande, main entrance gates and Court building in Normandy



18th century Chateau on the Blanchelande Estate

Fief de lanchelande in Guernsey

On May 5th 1199 the Duke of Normandy, then King John of England, put his seal to a charter which transferred the land and revenues held by the Prior of the Abbey of Martinvast in Guernsey to the new Abbey of Blanchelande in Normandy. This is the first date that Fief de Blanchelande had a direct connection to the parish of St. Martin in Guernsey. The Abbot, however, remained in the Abbey in Normandy.

Other small fiefs were added to the Fief de Blanchelande making it up to an area of about 587 verges — nearly twice its original size. In 1217 the Le Boutillier family donated their mill at Petit Bot and in 1267, the rights of one third of the income from St Martin's Church were given to the new fief by the Abbot of Marmoutier.



19th century mill which replaced the original Petit Bat Mill



Blanchelande Abbey Church in ruins after the 1789 revolution

The Abbot of Blanchelande sent two or three monks across to Guernsey to administer the fief. They lived in a small 'cell' situated at the top of Saints Bay Hill, which joined the area originally known as Ville es Sayves or Saynes. La Barbaric Hotel now stands on this site.

The agricultural land of the fief was mostly spread along parts of the southern coastline of the parish of St Martin.



St Martin's Church

Managing the Fief

The life of the Fief was a busy one and all fiefs, including Blanchelande, had a court to make sure things ran smoothly. The court dealt with matters relating to land transfers. However, if the tenant didn't like the decision of the feudal court he could (in theory) take his case to appeal to the Royal Court in St Peter Port.



The members of the court included:

The **seneschal** or steward who ran the court on behalf of the seigneur of the fief. He ensured that a tax called conge was paid on every property on the fief.

The **prevot** who dealt with the day to day running of the fief. He collected what was due in chefrete (rents) from the tenants and oversaw the collection of the various dues by a rota of tenants. These included the poulage, which was a house tax of two hens a year as well as the fees for, using the seigneur's epequerie and mill.

The **grenetier** (sometimes called the grangier) who had to ensure that land tax, in the form of correct measures of corn, had been received from tenants. In addition one in twelve sheaves of corn grown on a tenant's land had to be paid as **champart**.

The **greffier** kept the court records and the **vavasseurs** were the jurymen.

Many fiefs (although not Blanchelande) had **hordiers** who enforced the court's decision if necessary and collected feudal dues in their area. Bordiers were permitted to hold small amounts of land at the edge of the main fief hence The Bordage at La Bellieuse, St Martins on the Fief le Rol.

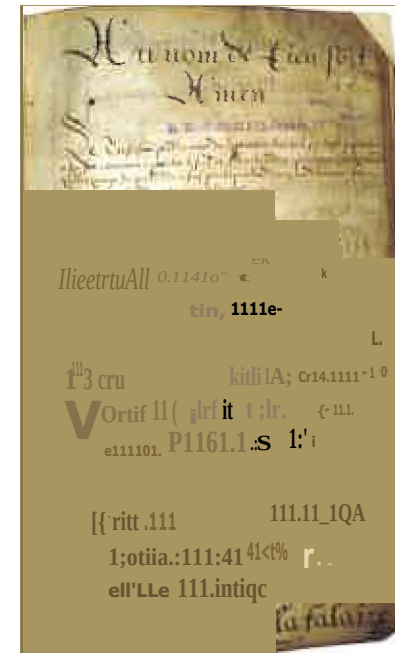
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1310-1320. © British Library
Board Royal 2 B. VII, f.165v

Keinn the records

In order to keep up to date information on the land and tenants all fiefs, including Fief de Blanchelande, held a regular census of property holdings called a livre de perchage. Twelve men on the Fief were called to compare the previous census with all the existing tenants and their holdings so that the correct charges could be made. These livres de perchage have been made once a generation since early times and provide a fascinating record of house and land occupancy in St Martins.



Copy of the Livre de Perchage of
1666 from the Fief de Blanchelande
archives

The earliest surviving livre de perchage for Fief de Blanchelande is dated 1488 and describes the properties making up the fief bouvee by bouvee. A bouvee is the area that an ox 'could plough within a season' (about 20 vergées).

It also makes mention of escheats (where land had returned to the Duke after some default of the tenant, or death without heirs). The dependencies of Fief Durant, Fief Richard de Camps and Fief Lesant could have come into Blanchelande's holdings in this way.

Some of the lands recorded in the Livre were possibly added to the Fief by way of a 'pious gift'. Donations to religious houses were made to fund regular prayers for the donor and his family in life and in death.

Even today some of the measurements used by Guernsey's feudal courts remain based on those used by the Normans.

Area: An ordinary vergee = 40 perches

A 'small' vergc'T = 36 perches (this is probably the older measurement).

20 ordinary vergées = a bouvee.

21/4 to 21/2 ordinary vergées = an English acre and about 2 1/2 acres = a hectare (about 2 1/2 football pitches).

Volume: Seigneurs could insist on their dues being paid in wheat — and then only wheat grown in Guernsey. These varied by fief but roughly the measures were:

5 quints = 1 denerel, 1 denerel = 14 pounds (lbs) 6 denerels = 1 bushel,

4 bushels = 1 quarter (in today's measurements 1 quarter = 290 litres)

Money: Livres (pounds) Tournois were usually used for money payments.

The money of Tours was popular in north west France, and though, it was no longer used after the French Revolution (1789) the term livre or pound remained the unit of currency.

1 livre = 20 sots, 1 sol = 12 deniers. This is where the pre-decimal s. d. comes from.

Guernsey breaks with Normandy

from 1066 onwards Guernsey, Normandy and England had a prosperous time. Then in 1202 the French King, Philip II, attacked Normandy and laid siege to the Duke's castles. The Duke of Normandy at this time was King John of England. The most important castle defending King John's Norman lands was at Les Andelys on the Seine. It was called 'Chateau Gaillard' and had been built by John's warlike brother King Richard 'the Lionheart'. (He commented when it was completed within a year: 'How beautiful she is, my one year old daughter'). To begin with the castle held out successfully against the French attackers but eventually fell after French soldiers climbed up through the toilet waste chute! Once this strategic castle was captured King Philip quickly took control. By 1204 he had seized the whole of Normandy from King John.



Chateau Gaillard

An Alien Fief

The loss of Normandy in 1204 left those Guernsey fiefs held by noblemen and French religious houses isolated. The Kings of England eventually seized these 'alien' establishments — so called because now their 'head offices' were in France - an enemy country - and took the income for themselves.

***Blanchelande Abbey in Normandy continued
to exist but not without many problems.***

In the 1300s the Black Death plague ravaged Normandy and between 1337 and 1453 the raids and skirmishes of the Hundred Years War between England and France caused much damage to the Abbey and its lands. Eventually, (luring the French Revolution of the 1790s much of the Abbey was demolished and its silver seized and sold by the revolutionaries. The monks had to run for their lives and at least one found sanctuary in the Channel Islands.

Although England and Normandy were politically separated in 1204 there was not such a clean break for the Guernsey churches. These remained within the diocese of Coutances in Normandy until 1568 when they were transferred to the diocese of Winchester by Queen Elizabeth 1 of England.

Resolving the Problems

***Life was not always calm on the Island's fiefs and disputes
often arose over payments of dues.***

By 1309 the Fief de Robert Mauvoisin had been added to Blanchelande's lands. Straightaway the officers of the King asked the monks if they had any right to claim money from the fishermen of Saints harbour, now within the fief, for the drying of fish. Nothing seems to have come of this dispute but tensions between the King's men and the monks remained.

In 1365 Robert Levesque raised the 'Clameur d'Haro' against Brother Robert Toulissac of Blanchelande. This concerned Brother Robert's seizure of two cows in respect of money owing to the Fief de Robert Mauvoisin. This is the earliest record of the use of the Clameur d'Haro in Guernsey.

Levesque repeated the earlier arguments about some of the dues claimed by the Fief de Blanchelande being due to the King. Brother Robert gathered together the oldest and wisest men in St. Martin's and they confirmed that he was correct and that the Fief de Robert Mauvoisin was rightly held by Blanchelande.



© Bodleian Library
MS. Bodi. 764, fol. 47v

Clameur d'Haro

The Clameur d'Haro is an ancient way of bringing a physical wrong against property to court within 24 hours. This law is still valid today.

If a person in Guernsey, Alderney, Herm or Sark feels that he or she is having a wrong done to their property then they can kneel down before witnesses and shout 'Haro, Haro, Haro! A l'aide, mon prince! On me fait tort' which means 'Help, my prince, I am being wronged'. Then they must repeat the Lord's Prayer in French. The person who is supposedly doing the wrong has to stop immediately and the case must be taken to Guernsey's Royal Court.

The cry 'Ham' is said to be the war cry of the raiding Vikings and may be a mispronunciation of Rollo's name.



Re-enactment of the Clameur

lanchel nee controlled by the Kin

In 1364/5, a book of accounts for Blanchelande showed that it now owned a second watermill at Bon Port (Moulin Huet) and claimed a warren for keeping rabbits for food, between Jerbourg and Petit Bot. 'Rentas' — rents and dues to be paid to the monks each year — included money, wheat, chickens and eggs and, more specifically 83 loaves, a goose and the price of a pair of boots!

At this time Blanchelande went in and out of the control of the Kings of England.

In 1396 King Richard II gave the wardenship of the Channel Islands to the Earl of Rutland with specific instructions to 'enjoy' the incomes from the 'alien' priories such as Blanchelande. In 1405 however the Earl was arrested and King Henry IV gave a home and land on the fief, with a value of 15 gold crowns, to a Guernseyman, Periot Lorieulx the steersman of the Royal ship. This might have been a personal gift by the King to Periot Lorieulx when he retired from royal service. However, by 1415 the Earl of Rutland was recorded as being the Seigneur of Blanchelande.

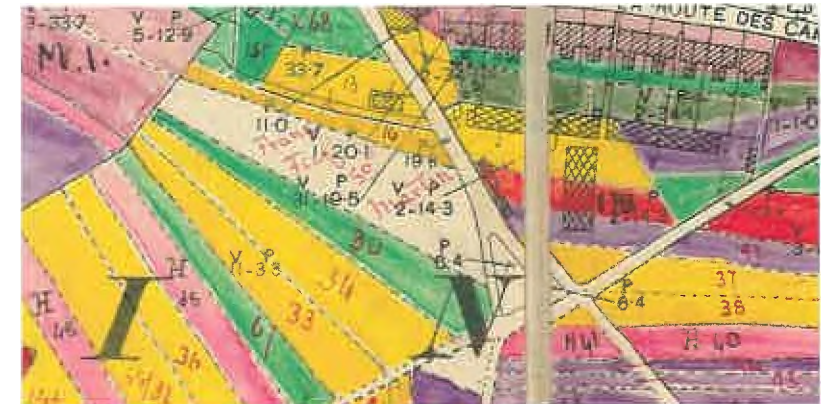
By the end of the 15th century the Fief de Blanchelande was once again in the possession of the King with his Receiver General in Guernsey collecting the dues. The fief court continued on the site of the present La Barbarie Hotel and the Livre de Perchage for the year 1488 lists all the properties in the fief and mentions the dependant fiefs of Durant, Richard des Camps and Lesant amongst them.



Guernsey fiefs were too small to provide the King or Duke with knights. One of the most important fiefs in Guernsey, Fief Le Comte, was only rated at half a knight's fee.

Other Guernsey Fiefs

By the 1250s quite a patchwork of fiefs had developed in Guernsey. Part of what was left of the Bessin estate became the Fief St Michel (and Fief le Comte). These fiefs, together with the Fief le Rol, took up most of the island. The fiefs were not necessarily in single blocks, and some were quite broken up with bits of land here and there over a wide area. The divisions of land at Les Camps (see map) are extremely convoluted and minutely divided, having been formed into minor fiefs in the 13th and 14th centuries.



Les Camps feudal ownership (detail) each colour represents a different fief in this small area of St Martins.

Spurs featured in the documents of 1331 as payment for fiefs. For the Fief A.ufay in St. Andrews, 'the King from Robert des Costils - one pair of silver spurs or 12 deniers tournois' and for the Fief Buron 'the King from Robert Tourgis - one pair of gilt spurs or 5 sols tournois'. Eventually these fiefs were combined as Fief des Eperons (of the spurs) and their duty of payment was a pair of silver-gilt spurs!



Some records suggest that in other fiefs 'a dozen butterflies' or gifts of 'gateau', a heavily buttered bread, at Christmas and Easter were considered adequate acknowledgement for the holding of the land.

Rights and responsibilities

As with Blanchelande, the Seigneurs and tenants of the other fiefs had their own different rights and responsibilities.

In 1288 King Edward I assumed all rights of drying and salting of fish in the Island - but the Fief de Sausmarez and others claimed to be exempt. The Seigneurs of fiefs on the south west coast (such as Fief de la Velleresse de la Fallaize and Fief Velleresse de Fermain), were said to be obliged to employ watchmen to look out to sea for pirates and invaders. They also had the right to buy conger and mackerel from their tenant fisherman at an agreed fixed price.

From 1309 the Seigneur of the Fief le Comte claimed a quarter of the value of many of the shipwrecks on the Island. Some other Seigneurs claimed the right to keep a dovecote. The Seigneur of the Fief au Canely is recorded as having the right to visit his dovecote by day or by night and on foot or on horseback and that right still exists today.

Matthew de Sausmarez claimed that he held Jerbourg Castle from King Edward III on condition that 'the men of the commonality of the said island shall be received there, with their goods and chattels, in time of war'. However, he also claimed the value of shipwreck on his fief, a free warren (the right to keep rabbits), the right of chase (hunting) and the right to operate a windmill to which all his tenants had to bring their corn to be ground.

The Seigneur of Sausmarez also claimed to have the role of third butler to the King should His Majesty visit the Island!



Seal of the
Fief le Comte



Other Traditions Dinners

The giving of dinners played a big part in the feudal system in Guernsey. The members of the Fiefs Courts traditionally met for dinner after they had concluded their business just as the Blanchelande Court does today.

Pierre Vieillard, the owner of a hand-powered flour mill, was obliged to give three dinners a year to the King's millers.

At Christmas — barley broth and bread.

At Midsummer — the same but with as much milk as could be bought for a denier tournois.

At Michaelmas — broth and bread again but now with a fish of any type but costing no more than a denier.

Each time all washed down with red Gascon wine — maybe brought in through St. Peter Port on its way from Gascony to England!

(Ref 1331 and 1488 Extant transcriptions/translations by H. de Saumarez. Priaulx Library)

The Chevauchee

One of the most spectacular events which has links to the Feudal system was the Chevauchee. Literally 'a riding' the Chevauchee was designed to check that the King's highways in the Island were kept clear of overhanging plants and trees.

The Seigneur and the Abbot of Fief St. Michel du Valle was required, once every three years, to organise a procession on a set route around the island with officials from various fiefs. They carried an 11 ft. (3.5 metre) white lance or 'wand' with which to measure the height of overhanging branches. If the wand touched an obstruction then the owner of the land had to pay a fine.

A modern version of this process is still carried out today twice yearly by the constables and douzeniers of each of the Island parishes.

The Chevauchee always followed the same route. Starting from the Vale Church it went across the Grand Pont at St Sampsons, along Les Banques to St Peter Port and paused at the Town Church. Then onto St Martins via Berthelot Street, the Ville au Roi and the Grande Rue and out to Jerbourg. They then came back via the Rue Maze to the Forest Church and onto Pleinmont where they stopped for lunch. The officers ate in a tent and the pions or pages, sat on the ground. In fact the Table des Pions (known as the 'Fairy Ring') at Pleinmont was specially made for them at the end of the 18th century! They then made their way across the dunes to L'Eree, round the Catoroc and onto the Grande Rue in St Saviours, and back to the Vale Church via the King's Mills and the Landes du Marche. The pions had to walk all the way leading the horses of all the most important people but they did get to kiss the girls on the way!

The last of these Cherauch'ees was carried out on May 31st 1837.

A re-enactment of the Chevauchee took place in 1966 as part of the 900th anniversary celebrations of the Battle of Hastings — when Normandy, which included Guernsey of course, invaded England!



Re-enactment of the Chevauchee in the 1920s

Fief for Sale Nicolas Careye

A major change of direction came for the Fief de Blanchelande in 1563 when the eminent Guernseyman Nicolas Careye, HM Receiver General, purchased the Fief from the Royal Commissioners. They had been appointed by Queen Elizabeth I to close down and sell off much in the Bailiwick which had connections to Roman Catholicism. This was the time of the Reformation and there was great religious upheaval, not just in Guernsey but all over Europe.



Nicolas Careye was Her Majesty's Receiver General in Guernsey at the time. He paid £20 sterling for the Fief and agreed to pay the Queen and her successors an annual rent of 70 ecus (about £5.96 in today's terms).

At this time Blanchelande had an area of about 570 verges on which the rentes came to 65 quarters, 2 bushels and 3 quints of wheat a year as well as chickens and eggs. There was also an uncultivated area of common cliff land between Petit Port and Petit Bot. Careye was careful to reassure the parishioners that their commoners' rights to graze their animals were not affected. The Livre de Perchage of 1581 records the dues:

*'Nicolas Careye dolt a Sa Majeste pour L'abbaye de Blanchelande
rhacun an 70 (-ens inoe assavoir 216 p'ecu'*

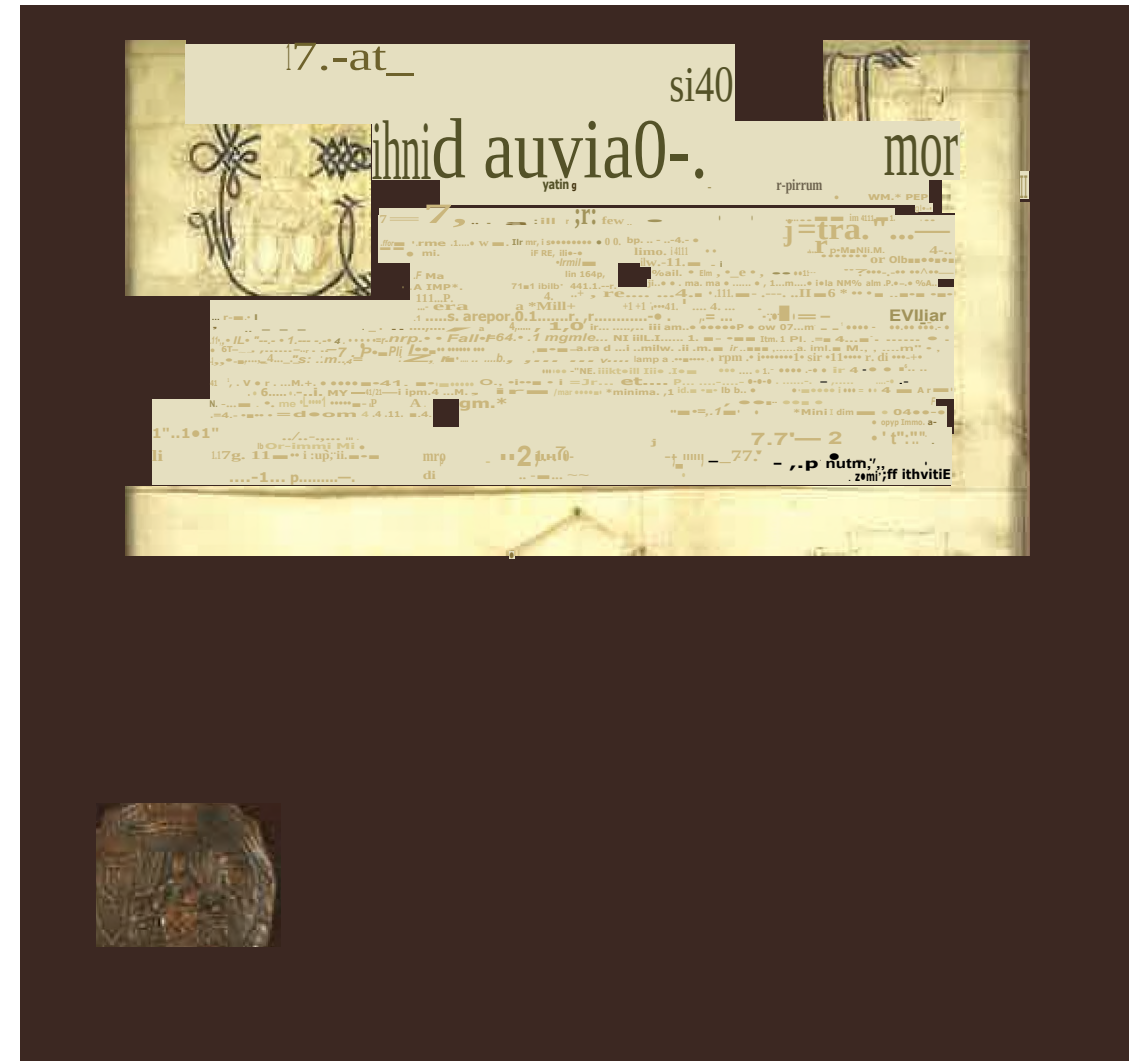
At the same time as he purchased Blanchelande, Nicholas Careye also purchased a piece of land at the 'top of the Town'. This plot had a standing stone, 'La Pierre de L'Hvyreuse' on it and Carey built a windmill here. The windmill was eventually demolished in 1846 and replaced with 'Victoria Tower'.



Bodleian: library
MS. Ashmole 1462, fol. 54v



The Letters Patent



[MATO W gaAirETH I 7 NO I lad

Oa: W.I. Sed ShOWN Obveru and reverse

*The Letters Patent that bear the
Great Seal of England which
records the sale of the Fief de
Blanchelande to Nicolas Careye.*

The Lefebvre Family

The Fief de Blanchelande remained under the control of the Careyes for about 160 years. However, when Nicholas Careye died in 1674 the fief passed to his married sister Marie, and her husband Daniel Lefebvre was recorded as the Seigneur. By 1745 the Seigneurship had passed completely into the Lefebvre family.



Nicolas Careye (1638-1674)

Daniel Lefebvre 1698-1754

George Lefebvre 1722-1812

The Court House

The cell and Court building at the top of Saints Bay road gradually fell into disrepair. A conveyance document from 1649 stated that the Priory was in ruins and that any building of a house on the site should include a place for the feudal court to meet. Later a Court house was built with its gable end bordering the road. Although most of it was demolished in 1966 the roadside gable was not and this remains as part of the La Barbarie Hotel boundary wall.



Members of the Court of the Fief de Blanchelande at the door of the Saints Bay Road court house in 1910.

(From a glass negative)

Fief de Blanchelande in the 19th Century

As far back as the sixteenth century the Royal Court had attempted to restrict the powers of the fief courts. It was felt that the fief courts should do no more than appoint officials and collect rentes on behalf of the seigneur. In 1861 the Court of the Fief St. Michel du Valle was actually 'suppressed'.

However, the Fief de Blanchelande carried on and one of a number of notable events in the 19th century was a major dispute with the parishioners of St Martin in 1843. The then Seigneur Lefebvre of Fief de Blanchelande leased part of the cliffs between Petit Port and Moulin Huet (earlier called La Vieille Port) to a Mr. Georges so that he could drive a shaft into the cliffs looking for silver. Little but lead was found in the seam but the people of the area above the mine claimed their wells had run dry. The Royal Court eventually ordered the mine closed and the shaft blocked up.

The blocked mine is still visible in a small gully at the base of the cliffs to this day.

By 1854 when another Nicolas Lefebvre became Seigneur, the business of most of the Fief courts, including Blanchelande's, was largely a matter of making an annual roll-call of tenants, and noting changes in ownership of properties on the fief over the previous year. New tenants had to come along and acknowledge these changes of ownership in a process called an 'Aveu'. A small payment was made to confirm this. Any tenants failing to turn up for three successive years would have been liable to have their property seized in the name of the Seigneur. In this case the property was let out until the amount of the dues owed was recovered.



Cliffs between Petit Port and Moulin Met where silver mining was attempted.

Admiral Nicolas Lefebvre (1797-1884)

Nicolas Lefebvre was a very active Seigneur of Blanchelande who took a prominent role in Island life after a distinguished career in the Royal Navy.

He was born in St Peter Port in 1797. He joined the Royal Navy as a volunteer in 1811 and served under Admiral Sir James Saumarez in HMS Victory in the Baltic. In 1812 Lefebvre was made a midshipman. In 1815 his ship HMS Zenobia escorted Napoleon into exile into St Helena and on the return journey Lefebvre dived overboard to save one of his men from drowning. He repeated this brave action in Plymouth a few years later and received a medal from the Royal Humane Society. By 1838 Lefebvre was serving aboard HMS Zebra fighting pirates in the East Indies.

In 1853, as captain of HMS Dasher, he saved the mailboat Dispatch from being wrecked in a storm off Jersey. Nicolas became Seigneur of the Fief de Blanchelande in 1854 and although he retired from the Navy in 1856 he continued to be promoted, reaching the rank of Vice-Admiral in 1876.

Nicholas Lefebvre was a generous benefactor and when, in 1866, 41 local fishermen signed a petition to have a harbour built at Saints Bay, he donated £500 towards the cost and gave permission to extract granite from the cliff for the construction work. The States, built the harbour access road and provided the balance of the money required (£2000). However, though the harbour outer wall was finished quite quickly, before it could settle it washed away in a gale. A small length of cobbled slip and a few yards of foundations are all that remain of this original structure. The States finally built a landing stage and steps at Saints Bay in 1909.



Rescue of RAIS Dispatch by HMS Dasher by Pi. Oules 1853



Partly- destroyed outer wall of Saints Bay harbour c 1866

Admiral Lefebvre lied to Account!

Admiral Le Lefebvre was once indirectly involved in a dispute with Queen Victoria when in 1876 the seneschal of his fief court had the nerve to fine the Queen!

This was to do with an army barracks which stood in ruins on Icart Point. The seneschal thought, that someone should pay rent for this building which was on fief land and fined Her Majesty 5 old pence for non payment of rent before the

Fief Court!

The Fief continued to collect its rentes throughout the Admiral's seigneurship. One property on the Fief owed, beside wheat and one and one third of an egg - presumably paid in cash - a further bushel of wheat, a duck and a cake: 'un ane et une gatel pour le dit boisseau'. Outside the Fief the Admiral was responsible for installing, at his own expense, a sewer in Lefebvre Street in Town.

Admiral Lefebvre was also a great collector of Guernsey's historical records and worked to develop laws to protect the poor.

He died at his home at Lefebvre Street on October 7 1884. The Guernsey Star commented:

'in every phase of life he was the soul of honour and fearless integrity. Such was Admiral Nicolas Lefebvre, one of Sarnia's brave sons and noble heroes of the present century.'



Admiral Lefebvre also erected an obelisk at Saint's Bay in honour of his brother Charles (1799-1867) who had administered the Fief for him. It has the dates 1854 -1857 and includes the inscription 'frere de Seigneur de Blanchelande'.

During the Occupation of the Island by German Forces (1940-45) the monument was blasted into the sea. It was recovered during rescue operations in 1960 and 2000 and now stands again.



Admiral Lefebvre's tomb in St Peter Port in the shadow of Victoria Tower

The Last Hereditary Seigneur

After the Admiral's death, the Fief de Blanchelande passed to his nephew, the wonderfully named Bertram Mont Orgueil. Hadsley Gosselin. He took the surname Gosselin-Lefebvre and being very interested in the history of the Fief, published the old Livres de Perchage and created an excellent map which is still used today. When in Guernsey — his main home was in Hertfordshire — he lived in the house he called Blanchelande in St. Martin's, which actually stood on the land of the Fief Le Roi. Rentes continued to be paid although the Star newspaper of April 26 1887 did, report on a successful legal action by the prevot against three tenants! They had not paid their rent in the form of 'one fowl, one half and one sixteenth of a fowl, 28 eggs and three fourths and one eighth of an egg'. Perhaps a fine of a few pence would have been easier!

Gosselin-Lefebvre died in 1909 of a cold caught when driving in a motor car. The Seigneurship passed to his widow who was then succeeded by his brother Gerald. Gerald Joshua Hadsley Gosselin was the last male hereditary Seigneur of the Fief de Blanchelande. He died in England in 1942 (although due to the occupation of the Island by German Forces from 1940-45 it was not recorded till 1945), and he willed the Fief to his widow with the proviso that on her death the Fief de Blanchelande should be held by the Bailiff of Guernsey during his term of office. This remains the situation today.



Gosselin's map - showing in yellow, land on the Fief de Blanchelande (detail)

The Mouissonfere:

In 1889 Gosselin-Lefebvre, argued that, when calculating the champart two sheaves of wheat should go uncounted. He said that as the birds eat all the wheat in the top sheaf of the stack they shouldn't be included! (Mouisson or mouissaon is Guernesiase for a bird).

Blanchelande to the Present Day

By the 1950s Blanchelande was one of the few remaining active fiefs. On March 29th 1955 the 'Guernsey Star' reported that 'many of the ancient courts now survive in little more than name, but there are a few which meet annually... about four of these - Le Comte, Sausmarez, Anneville and Fauville, Blanchelande — are well known and their proceedings are reported at length in the local press'.

This lack of activity hadn't stopped the neighbouring Fief Le Roi collecting annual rentes of nineteen pounds, one shilling and tenpence half penny (i19.9p) from its tenants in St. Martin's just three years earlier through the account of HM Receiver General, in line with all the Crown fiefs.

In 2011 the Court of the Fief de Blanchelande still sits on a regular basis. It attends to the business of the Fief and distributes charitable funds derived from Gosselin - Lefebvre's will, to persons in need who live on the area covered by the Fief.

The Court continues to be one of the two most active fief courts remaining in Guernsey (the other being the Fief le Comte). It deals with such items as the tenancy lease on Saints Bay Kiosk and negotiates agreements on water pumping stations and telephone cables. This includes the new Cable and Wireless telecoms submarine cable called 'HUGO' connecting Guernsey to England and France which comes ashore on Fief land at Saints Bay.



Saints Bay Kiosk

Conge

One of the feudal dues that survived into the 1980s was not popular with many Guernsey people; this was the conge. If you sold your house then the seigneur on whose fief your house stood was entitled to receive a payment called treizieme (1/13th). This was paid for by a 2% levy on the sale of the house called the conge. House prices being what they are in Guernsey this was a tidy sum for what was an outdated tax left over from the Middle Ages.

There was considerable discussion in the newspapers and in the States and in 1985 the payment of conge to individual seigneurs was abolished. However conge continued to be paid to the States by the house purchaser as a property tax.

After 900 years the States had nationalised cone

The prestige of being the Seigneur of a fief still remained however:

In 1987 the title to the Fief laumarquis in St. Andrew's was purchased for £25,000.

Blanchelode Court Tod

The Fief Court is still run on similar lines to the way in which it was first created in 1199.

The officers remain:

The Seneschal — the head steward of the Court

The Prevot — who oversees the allocation of various dues

The Greffier — the keeper of Fief records

The Depute Greffier

The Sergeant — who summons tenants to the court

The Grenetier — who originally collected and stored the seigneur's wheat.

Four Vavasseurs — officers of the court: Jurymen who report changes of tenants on the fief.

The seigneur attends the fief court by invitation and is required as a free tenant, to attend Her Majesty's Court of Chief Pleas at Easter, and at the Bailiff's discretion, the sessions held in early October and mid January.

At Chief Pleas HM Procureur now answers for the Fief de Blanchelande with the response 'Monsieur le Bailiff' as the Bailiff is nowadays the Seigneur of Blanchelande.

Seigneurs of Blanchelande have owed Suit of Court since before the Fief was sold to Nicolas Careye in 1563. The Extante of 1331 shows that the Abbots of Blanchelande were also required to do this duty.

Until recently the Fief Court held a regular census of property and produced a livre de perchage once a generation. The Fief Court still meets annually at St Martin's douzaine room followed by the traditional dinner at La Barbaric Hotel - now paid for by the court members rather than the Fief tenants!



Court of Fief de Blanchelande inside the
Saints Ray Road Court house in 1922

Suit of Court

11 Seigneurs holding a position as a free tenant have to attend the Court of Chief Pleas three times a year.

The Court, which includes representatives from The Royal Court, requires the Seigneurs to present themselves to receive formal acknowledgement that the monarch permits them to be the tenants of their fief. The Seigneurs pledge to

do homage to the monarch whenever he or she visits the island. This ceremony is known as 'Suit of Court'.

Religious Seigneurs owing homage and Suit of Court since 1331:

The Bishop of Winchester*

The Abbot of Mont St Michel

The Abbot of Marmoutier-les-Tours

The Abbot of Blanchelande

The Abbot of 'La Rue Frairie'

The Abbot of La Croix St Leufroy

The Abbess of La Trinite, Caen

**since the Reformation - before that it was entered
as the Bishop of Coutances*



The Fiefs above (except for Blanchelande) which were confiscated by the Crown of England as 'alien' fiefs by 1414 are now represented in the Royal Court by the Procureur (Attorney General). He answers 'Sa Majeste' to emphasise the connection to the Crown of England.

The following secular Seigneurs answer for themselves:

The Seigneur of Fief d'Anneville

The Seigneur of Fief de Sausmarez, St Martin's

The Seigneur of Fief des Bruniaux de St Martin

The Seigneur of Fief des Mauxmarquis

The Seigneur of Fief des Bruniaux de Noirmont

The Seigneur of Fief de Henri de Van grat

The Seigneur of Fief des Philippes

The Seigneur of Fief an Canely

The Seigneur of Fief de Fantome

The Seigneur of Fief des Rohais



The Present Seat of the Fief de It L nde Court

■ little remains today of the Priory at La Barbaric Hotel except for a few scattered dressed granite stones left over from the ruined building and some well carved lintels and stones taken from the Priory and rebuilt into other St Martin's properties. The well dressed Ogee moulded lintel over the front door of the house just fifty yards _____ to the north of the old Priory site is such a bit of recycling.
 The Court's original 'seat' has long disappeared but in 2004 the then Bailiff and Seigneur of Fief de Blanchelande, Sir de Vic Carey unveiled a stone set on top of the old Court gable at La Barbaric Hotel, to commemorate the anniversary of the loss of Normandy in 1204.



2004 Court of the Fief de Blanchelande and parish officials standing by the gable of the old Court House

ecent Members of the Court of Fief de Jtlea nchel nde



LA COUR DU FIEF DE BLANCHELANDE LE 30 OCTOBRE 2009

<i>R. C. BERRY OBE</i> <i>Vavasseur</i>	<i>J. N. VAN LEUVEN</i> <i>Q.C. Greffier</i>	<i>D. F RICH</i> <i>Vavasseur</i>	<i>H.G. GOODEVE MBE</i> <i>Sergent</i>	
<i>P. L. OGIER</i> <i>Vavasseur</i>	<i>B. .1. NERVE</i> <i>Grenetier</i>	<i>P. E. R. PENNEY</i> <i>Prevot</i>	<i>DR D. M.</i> <i>OGLER Archiviste</i>	<i>F. LE C. SARRE</i> <i>Vavasseur</i>
<i>SIR GEOFFREY ROWLAND, BAILIFF</i> <i>Seigneur</i>		<i>D. R. JEHAN</i> <i>Seneschal</i>	<i>SIR FABIAN MALBON KBE</i> <i>H E Time Lieutenant Governor</i> <i>(Guest)</i>	

1 nchel nde's Seigneurs

Feudal Seigneurs of the Fief de Blanchelande from the time of the purchase by Nicolas Careye from the Crown:

Nicolas Careye I	1563
Nicolas Careye II	1621
Nicolas Careye III	1631
Thomas Careye	1665
Nicolas Careye IV	1675
Daniel Lefebvre I	1745
Daniel Lefebvre II ...	1747
George Lefebvre I	1753
George Lefebvre II	1812
Nicolas Lefebvre	1845
Bertram Gosselin - Lefebvre ...	1884
Laura Gosselin Lefebvre	1911
Gerald Gosselin	1931
Joan Gosselin	1942

From 1981 the Bailiffs of Guernsey:

Sir Charles Frossard	1981
Sir Graham Dorev	1992
Sir de Vic Carey	1999
Sir Geoffrey Rowland	2005
R.J.Collas esq	2012

lanchelande Connections

The name of Blanchelande has two well known connections in the parish of St Martin. The first and oldest is the fief established in 1199, the second the more recent Blanchelande Catholic school which was established in one of the homes of Mr Gosselin Lefebvre, Seigneur of Fief Blanchelande. The house was originally the home of Mr Thomas de Putron and was called Le Rocker (so named because of the Neolithic standing stones which existed in this area). It was sold to Gosselin Lefebvre although it was not on land belonging to Blanchelande but on the Fief Le Roi (the King's Fief). Blanchelande College was established in 1902 and the Sisters of the Sacred Heart of Jesus ran this girl's school until they left in 1956 when the Alderney Sisters of Mercy operated the school. In 1995 they moved to Les Vauxbelets in St Andrew and the site of the house is now Blanchelande. Residential and Nursing Care Home.



Nicolas Careye 1666-1745



Court of the Fief de Blanchelande 1914

The n mes of the 1 ndholdin are s of Fief illanchel ode

La Bouvee Henry Patty	Le Fief Hen '	La Prise Robert Sevi SeconA
La Bouvee des Anquetils	Le Fief Capis	La Prise Robertd'Icart
La Bouvee Giquet	La Vingt Boisselee	La Prise a la Glentine
La Bouvee Robert d'Icart de Bas	Le Fief Durant	La Prise Perotine Marche
La Bouvee Robert d'Icart de Haut	Le Fief Avallet	La Prise Robert Sevi Tiers
La Bouvee au Bret	La Prise au Turcq	La Fief Lesant
La Bouvee an Turcq	La Prise Guillaume Queripel	Le Fief etc.. No.1
La Bouvee Michel Gosselin	La Prise Thomas Queripel	Le Fief etc.. No. 2
La Prise de Rougiere le Villain	La Prise Thomas Sevi	Le Fief etc.. No.2
La Bouvee Giffroy de Beeville	La Prise Robert Queripel	La Carterie Durant
Le Fief Richard des Champs	La Prise Guillaume Tiebos	La Prise Guillaume Angot
Le Fief Henri de Castel Second	La Prise Guillaume le Bret	La Carterie d'Icart
La Prise Thomas Guille	La Prise etc. No.4	La Prise Michel Gosselin
Le Fief Henri de Castel		

Meanings:

Prise - acquired from

Fief - a feudal holding

Bouvee - a measurement of land

Carterie - land owing a quarter of wheat rente

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Written by: **Roger Charles Berry OBE**

Additional text: **David Mosley and Lynne Ashton**

Produced and edited by: **Lynne Ashton and David Mosley**

Additional drawings: **Aim Segers-Heremans**

Other Fief Seats in the Island



Fief Suart



Fief Michel Castel



Fief des Eperons



Fief de Sausmarez



Fief Robert de Vicq



Fief le Comte



Fief de Longues



Fief du Jean Gaillard



Fief Janin Besnard



Fief Groignet



Fief d'Anneville



Fief des Gohiers



Fief de in Cour