

# The Church in the Orchard: St André de la Pommeraye

Darryl Ogier

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*A short history of St Andrew's parish church from the earliest known references in the eleventh century to the present day.*

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As is often the case with churches, including several in the Channel Islands, there may already have been a religious, perhaps pagan, presence at the site of Saint Andrew's before the church was built. Any such presence may have been associated with the fountain, long known as the *Fontaine de St Clair*, lying alongside the church.

St Clair is said to have been a monk in the Norman diocese of Rouen in the ninth century. He spurned the attentions of a woman of status, covering his eyes at her blandishments. She had him murdered. Clair was remembered at the French Abbey of Marmoutier, Tours: this is relevant to the history of St Andrew's Church as shown below. Clair's modesty associated him with the cure of sore eyes, and the fountain was resorted to in that connection in the nineteenth century and doubtless before.

When Robert I was Duke of Normandy (1027-35) his domain in Guernsey was

in two parts. The eastern, including the parish of St Andrew, was enjoyed by Nigel I, *vicomte* of the Cotentin. In 1047, Nigel II rebelled against the duke. The *vicomte's* Guernsey possessions were confiscated. Out of these, William the Conqueror, at a date between about 1052 and 1058, gave six churches to the Abbey of St Martin de Marmoutier. These included that of St Andrew and its tithes. Its priests became subject to the Abbot, and he made appointments when vacancies arose.

The charter putting the gift of St Andrew to Marmoutier in place, and one other, refer in Latin to St Andrew's Church as *Sancti Andreae de Putenti Pomerio*. This translates as "St Andrew of the stinking orchard". Some naturally prefer to identify this as an error for *Sancti Andreae de Patenti Pomerio*, which means "St Andrew of the wide-open orchard." Avoiding the issue, the church today is known in French as *St André de la Pommeraye*, and, more usually, in English, simply as St Andrew's.

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The Church was probably built in the first part of the eleventh century for the tenants of one of these *vicomtes* of the Cotentin, though no part of the fabric of that period remains. Most of what we see today was built about the year 1200 and extended after the period of ownership by Marmoutier in the fifteenth century. In the later part of the 13th century it is recorded that the monastery received a share of the tithes of the parish, to the value of £30 in the currency of Tours, and the rector received one quarter of the altar dues and alms, to a further amount of £25 *tournois* a year.

Complaints of the parishioners about defaults show that by the first decade of the 14th century the abbot and convent of Marmoutier and the rector together customarily paid one-third of the costs of repairs to their church and of the replacement of necessities such as books, rushes (for the floor) and vestments. A contribution was particularly needed following the French raid upon Guernsey

of 1295, when more than 1,500 islanders were reported killed, the churches sacked, and their vestments and vessels stolen. St Andrew's Church did not escape this devastation.

Towards the end of the fourteenth century the Abbey abandoned or otherwise lost its Guernsey possessions, and these were taken up by the English king, as they temporarily had been in periods of war. So matters remained; St Andrew today is still a Crown living.

The Church did stay until the 1560s in the Norman Diocese of Coutances and priests were appointed by the Bishop of Coutances, nominated by the Abbey or, later, the King. Guernsey's return to Henry VIII's *valor ecclesiasticus* (1535) declared the living of St Andrew's then to be worth £6-13-4 sterling, together with tithes amounting to 13 shillings and fourpence. The stipend remained at £6-13-4 sterling as late as the time of Christopher, Viscount Hatton's governorship of Guernsey, 1670-1706.

We can see something of the life of the parish in the 15th and early 16th centuries in the activities of the confraternities and lights established in St Andrew's church. Confraternities were religious guilds, usually organised by lay people, for the benefit of their souls and those of friends and family, living and dead. Typically, the brothers and sisters of each confraternity would place themselves under the patronage of one or another saint, or of Our Lord, etc., to whom there would be an altar, or at least a light, maintained within the church, or, occasionally, in a free-standing chapel in the churchyard.

A chapel which probably served such a use stood in the south-eastern corner of St Andrew's churchyard. Before being knocked down to widen the road in the later eighteenth century the chapel had been used to store armaments. Churchwardens' accounts refer to the parish cannon stored in the Chapel and the cannon's transport behind parishioners' horses.

From subscriptions and investments these confraternities regularly provided masses, and priests were paid to celebrate them; charity was supplied to members in need, and sometimes more widely; a light was kept burning before the image of the patron saint; and a mass and feast was held on the saint's day. Funerals of members were subsidised, or at least attended by, living members.

The five confraternities at St Andrew's were dedicated to Notre Dame, Jesus, St Maur, St Nicolas, and, probably, St Katherine, whose presence is recorded only in connection with a light. There may have been others.

The confraternity of Notre Dame has left the fullest records. These set out monies and rents owed by members and the

*below: the Church in the late seventeenth century, showing chapel*  
(Northants Archives Service)



services provided to and by these people: in early years of the sixteenth century masses with the lighting of three candles were celebrated for brothers and sisters living and dead every Sunday and Monday and they were promised a further mass at their burials.

The Jesus confraternity must have been attached to the Jesus Mass, popular in England from the late 15th century, and often celebrated every Friday. The records of the Jesus confraternity of 1527 refer to rents due to the confraternity including one in respect of Pierre Psalmon, priest.

St Maur, traditionally celebrated on 15 January, was popular in Normandy and featured in Guernsey's secular calendar, one of the Royal Court terms being designated as that beginning after St Maur's Day.

St Nicolas's Confraternity and St Katherine's light, the latter very likely also supported by a confraternity, may have been for the young men and young women of the parish respectively. These last two are known from the report of a Royal Commission of 1563 sent to Guernsey to close these and, to Protestant minds, other "superstitious" organisations. Here we might note the historian Berry's mention that after the Reformation the Lord's Prayer replaced the celebration of mass when the court of fief Ste Hélène assembled. The mass was due as a condition of a gift of 1489 of a field to successive rectors.

Records from the century following the 1560s, when the Presbyterian form of worship prevailed in Guernsey, include parts of the register, 1615-55, of the parish church court, known as the consistory. This frequently sought to reconcile squabbling parishioners, dealing with those who cursed their fellows, were absent from services, or partied

excessively, occasionally suspending the recalcitrant from Communion.

Nor were all ministers beyond reproach. Amongst those who erred were the notable drinker Pierre Painsec, who after 1605 was in trouble with the Colloquy (the island church assembly), including regarding his marital relations, and sometimes suspended from the ministry. Painsec's successor, Jean de la Marche, spent time in prison in 1633 following a dispute over tithes, and precociously advocated regicide in the early 1640s.

After the Restoration, in 1662 Anglicanism was enforced in Guernsey and there began a series of more conventional rectors, a few of whom were concurrently Deans of the island such as Nicolas le Mesurier (Rector 1681-1716) and his son Jean le Mesurier (Rector 1716-59). The gravestone of the latter is next to the organ.

The earliest surviving parish accounts date from the 1700s. These indicate that much building work and maintenance took place at the Church throughout the eighteenth century, including enlargements to the windows and regular whitewashing of the interior. The accounts also cover secular concerns such as the parish school, after its foundation in 1737, the parishioners' duty to repair the banks of the millpond (écluse) and, especially during the French Wars, the upkeep of armaments and the supply of horses to transport them.

In particular there was the parish cannon. This is mentioned in the accounts of 1761-62 as being imported from the Forest parish, and by 1763 the cannon, carriage, and ammunition were kept in the Church building. As noted above it appears that in later years they were kept in the former chapel in the churchyard. Later still these were removed to another building now



above: *St Andrew's Church (Berry, 1815).*

also demolished. In December 1815, following Napoleon's final defeat, a parish meeting resolved to sell off the munitions and effects in that building and to allow its use by the Rector.

Building works of the eighteenth century included the removal of a pillar from the arcade separating the nave and north aisle, to provide more space before the pulpit, necessitating the lengthening of the arch. This in turn required the reinforcement of the eastern pillar (as may still be seen) and the removal of a large amount of rubble from the roof. Why the parishioners did not simply move the pulpit is unclear.

The early part of the nineteenth century saw further enlargement of the windows. Extensive repairs and "restoration" to the Church building were undertaken 1882-84 according to the design of the architect William Oswald Milne (1847-1927) although not before legal proceedings between the parishioners and the Rector of

the day over pew ownership. The missing pillar was replaced, and others recut. The altar was moved to the original chancel and a western gallery demolished and the organ therein removed to the north-east end of the building. A baptistry is said to have been created under the tower although if it was it was soon to be replaced by the vestry. Pitch pine choir stalls and pews were installed, notwithstanding objections, providing seating for 340 persons. The total cost of the restoration was said to be £1,700.

Nineteenth-century opinions as to the merits of the Church varied. *Cochrane's Guide* (1826) called the Church "a very respectable building" although *Bichard's Guide* of a generation later instructs that "this building having no attractions whatever, the visitor will do well in avoiding it". Mrs Lane Clarke (*Redstone's Guide*, 1844) thought it "... prettily situated in a valley, and the sheltered churchyard boasts of the earliest violets in the island".

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Frank Feather Dally's *Guide* (1860) called it "by far the most picturesque and perfectly rural church in the whole island", noting the popularity of its services, with "many English" combining worship with a Sunday stroll from St Peter Port. Adams's *Descriptive Guide* (1859) mentions that services in English were held alternate Sunday mornings and afternoons. Nearness to St Peter Port might also account for the Church's popularity for weddings from outside the parish, a thing noticeable as early as the late seventeenth century; the insalubrity of the Town must have been another consideration.

After the restoration of 1884 works include the installation of a new font, the replacement of the organ and the creation of the war memorials, on each of which see below. The carved oak reredos dates from 1909. The sanctuary was extended in 2005 in memory of Andrew Mitchell (1966-85).

### A description of the Church building

The history of the Church building has been elucidated by John McCormack, FSA, in his *Channel Island Churches* (1986). The nave and chancel were first to be built, about the year 1200. Their vaulted roof dates from fifty or so years later. Buttresses at the east end of the chancel suggest that this originally was lit by lancet windows with a round window above them. What is now the window at the south-west end of the nave appears to have been the south door. A priest's door to the chancel once was where the window second from the east end is today. The use of the recesses on the chancel's inner wall is not known, although these may once have been niches for tombs.

The north aisle was added in the mid-fifteenth century, as indicated by the arches and pillars of the arcade, installed

when the church was enlarged. The tower appears to be of about the same time although its upper reaches are later. A clock was first introduced in 1847.

At the south-eastern corner of the chancel is a much restored sundial dated 1681. The rainwater head, dated 1805, at the eastern junction of the aisle and chancel, records the names of the Rector and churchwardens of the day, namely the Rev. Etienne Gibert, Nicolas Robert jnr, and Nicolas Quertier (of Les Fauconnaires).

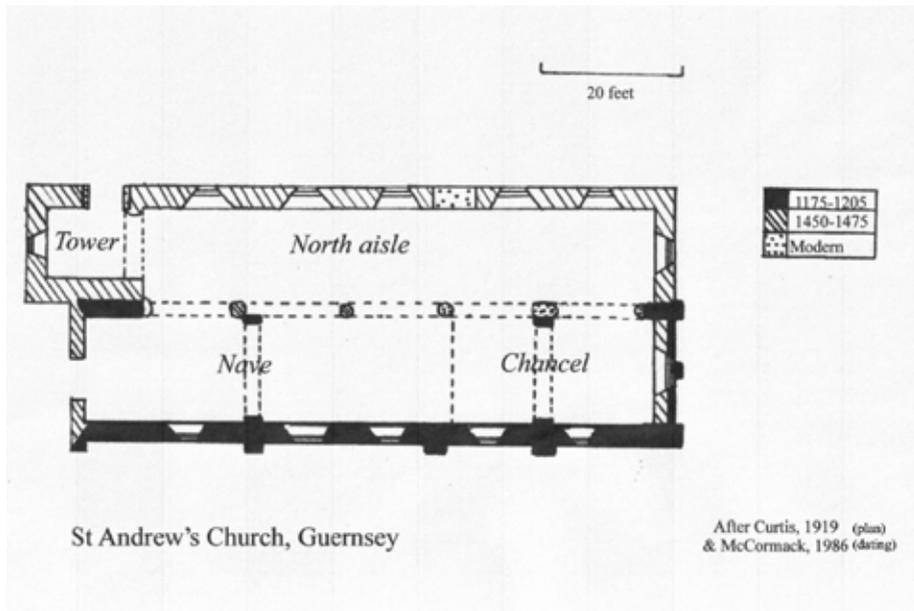
Mr McCormack suggests that the tower's north door is eighteenth-century and indeed in 1787 the idea was put forward that the then north door should be blocked, and another opened at the western end. On that occasion a parish meeting resolved



only that the north door should be kept closed between 1 November and Easter each year. It nonetheless was eventually to be sealed off as may still be noticed on the outside of the building's northern wall.

### The Clarinet and the Organ

After 1822, the Churchwardens' accounts refer to the maintenance of a clarinet which



accompanied the singing of psalms. It was played by Jean Girard until 1834, when Nicolas Torode took over. This probably fell out of use before an organ was installed in the church in 1846 or thereabouts. At first the organ was situated in a loft built over the west door. Both the organ and loft were paid for by Rosa Barnes, née Brock (1812-92), the wife of the Rev. William Maule Barnes. Her second husband, Major-General Alfred Huyshe C.B., later paid for the organ's enlargement. The present organ, costing £320, was built by Norman and Beard of Norwich and London, and installed in 1902 in the north aisle in memory of Queen Victoria. It was thoroughly renovated in 1994.

### The Font

The medieval font doubtless was done away with at the Reformation. One was not to be restored before 1833, bought for six guineas from a certain Thomas Younge. A bowl ("une bolle") to furnish it was

purchased the following year. It appears that until that time a silver "pot", as the Churchwardens' accounts describe it, and which probably was the ewer given by Mrs le Messurier in 1729 (see below) and was repaired in 1809, was used in baptisms. In 1902, the present font, replicating one at Christ Church, Oxford, was installed in memory of Mrs Huyshe.

### Monuments and tombstones

An artefact described in Hill's *Historical Directory* of 1874 as "a brass or plain legend" had by that date disappeared from the chancel, then situated in the North aisle. As late as c. 1870 this aisle was sometimes known as the "Chapelle des Gouies" and the brass may, or may not, have had some connection with that family or their property near the Church.

We know no more of that or of any other pre-Reformation (indeed pre-Anglican) monuments. The earliest of the plaques in the nave commemorates Jean Guille



of the Rohais who died in 1758. The memorials in the north aisle include one to the memory of Cecile Gibert who died in 1794 aged just sixteen years. Her gravestone lies next to the organ. She was the then Rector's only daughter. His death too is remembered on the plaque. Plaques to the right of the main entrance commemorate men of the parish dying as a result of service in both world wars.

### The Pulpit and lectern

The church was served until the restoration of the nineteenth century by a hexagonal oak pulpit carved with St George and the Dragon and floral decoration, dated 1664. The present pulpit was given to the Church in 1888 in memory of Jurat Jean Rougier, who had been a keen supporter of the parishioners in the pews dispute, and Louise le Lacheur his wife. The eagle lectern commemorates Julius Brock Carey (1850-84). It was given in 1887 by his widow Marie Rougier.

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### The Bells

The three bells were cast, or recast, by Messrs Pack and Chapman of London, in 1778. They are inscribed with that year and the names of the Rector and Churchwardens at the time, the Rev. C.A.F. Gounon de Pradon, Nicholas Blondel, and Pierre le Lacheur. Cawley and Sharpe's *Church Bells of the Channel Islands* (2007) reports that the tenor (B Flat) is 34 ½ inches in diameter, weighing some 7½ cwt, the second and the treble (which is cracked) about 5½ and 4¼ cwt respectively. They were once hung for ringing but now operate with an Ellacombe Apparatus whereby hammers strike the stationary bells.

### The Registers

The registers record burials and marriages from 1574 and baptisms from 1575. They may be consulted at the Priaulx Library, St Peter Port. Other muniments of the parish are preserved at the Island Archives.

### The Plate

There are said to be two distinct collections of plate although confirmation of the modern situation has proved difficult to find.

The first, described by S.C. Curtis in 1917, is largely Victorian, comprising two chalices, a flagon, two patens, and a spoon, all having been recast by J. Keith of London in 1859. The exception is the ewer inscribed as the gift to St Andrew's of Elizabeth le Messurier, widow of Pierre le Messurier, of the parish of St Pierre du Bois, for baptismal use, and dated 1729. The maker's mark is that of the stubbornly elusive Guernsey silversmith, "JH".

The goods melted down to make the 1859 pieces were an eighteenth-century

paten given by Bertranne Lihou, the wife of Hellier Bonamy, and two silver chalices, one dated 1702, the other, (the gift of Marie Guille, the widow of James Lihou and wife of the Rev. Faudrier) dated 1704, and a plate. There was also a pewter vessel dated 1782.

The second collection of plate is also Victorian and was described by M.M. Le Gallez in 1967. This is a silver gilt chalice, cruets, and paten, all decorated with jewels, originally given by his congregation to the Rev. William Collings Lukis (1817-92) curate at Holy Trinity, Bradford-on-Avon, 1841-46, and, fittingly, the author of *Specimens of English Church Plate* (1845). These he willed to St Andrew's Church.

### Incumbents

A list of these and other priests associated with the parish is exhibited in the Church.

### A note on authorities

*Island Archives, Guernsey*: church-wardens' accounts; parish constables' accounts. *Greffé, Guernsey*: Collections of the Rev. G.E. Lee. *Priaulx Library, Guernsey*: St Andrew's Church file; minutes of Colloques, 1585-1619. *The National Archives, Kew*: SC8/175/8719. *Northamptonshire Archives Service*: FH/G/G/0312.

W. Berry, *History of Guernsey* (London, 1815). D. Cawley and F. Sharpe, *The Church Bells of the Channel Islands* (Winchester, 2007); S.C. Curtis, "The Church Plate of the Deanery of Guernsey: part ii", *Transactions of the Guernsey Society of Natural Science and Local Research* viii (1917), 21-36; "The Evolution of the Country Churches", *ibid.* (1919), 192-213. G.E. Lee (ed.), *Actes du Consistoire de l'Eglise de St André en l'île*

*de Guernesey 1615 à 1655* (Guernsey, 1885). M.M. Le Gallez, "St Andrew's of the Apple Orchard", *Guernsey Life* i/8 (Aug. 1967). J. McCormack, *Channel Island Churches* (Chichester, 1986). E.B. Moullin, "Notes on the Registers of St Andrew's parish, 1578-1700", *Transactions of La Société Guernesiaise* xv (1952), 198-206. Société Jersiaise (ed.), *Cartulaire de l'île Normandes* (Jersey, 1924). Guidebooks as noted in the text, and almanacs.

### Acknowledgements

The late seventeenth-century sketch of the church and chapel is reproduced by kind permission of Northamptonshire Archives Service (FH/G/G/0312). Previous paragraphs name the other repositories to which we are similarly grateful.