





# History, Farming & Politics at Hamptonne

Despite the tranquility of its setting, **Jason Castledine**, sees the growth of the farm at Hamptonne as reflecting the islands' political and agrarian development.

Nestled at the head of a valley in St Lawrence, Hamptonne, with its numerous granite buildings, provides a story of Jersey rural life across the centuries. Its very location typifies a trend of building farms where there would be not only a ready source of water, but also shelter both from the coastal elements and raiders from France.

A key element of rural tradition within the Island was the characteristic of the many smallholdings working alongside the larger farms, in fact as late as 1914 nearly 88% of holdings fell under 45 vergées (taken from *Triumph of the Country* by John Kelleher). Although Hamptonne - certainly from the 17th century - with over 100 vergées, was considered a fairly large farm, it reflected nevertheless the ethos of self-sufficiency and mixed farming prevalent across the Island. Through the evolution of its buildings, the site also provides valuable insight into the major developments of cider production, Jersey Royals and the Jersey Cow.

In the present day, Hamptonne's role as a museum enables it to portray not only Jersey's rural history, but also some key moments from the Island's political past. In 1987 the then owners, the Emmanuel family, sold part of the farm to the National Trust for Jersey, who bought it for £400,000 with matched funding from the States of Jersey on a pound for pound basis. At this point the Société Jersiaise agreed to undertake the cost of restoration and development of the site into a rural life museum. The culmination of the first phase of the project, which involved collaboration between the Société Jersiaise and Jersey Heritage, led to the museum being opened in 1993. The museum project was only made possible because the Société were left a very important collection of Chinese snuff bottles. The donor, local resident Eric Young, stipulated that the collection could be sold in order to fund a major project.



An aerial view of Hamptonne.

### The Houses & a Royal Connection

As was the case with many rural properties, the buildings at Hamptonne evolved through the centuries under the influence of those who both owned and lived there. Today the three main houses bear testimony to this though the names given to them of Langlois, Hamptonne and Syvret. Together, they enclose the southern courtyard, while an opening between the Hamptonne and Syvret houses leads through to the northern yard with its range of outbuildings, and what is now the entrance and shop.

### Langlois: the first of the houses

Connections to the Langlois family can be traced in the records as early as 1445, when Richard Langlois was granted permission for the construction of a square colombier at the site. A colombier or pigeon house, with often hundreds of birds nestling within the holes or *volières à pigeons*, provided an important source of winter food. Besides the practical benefits, the building of a colombier also inferred a certain status level, as the potential damage pigeons could cause to crops meant authorisation had to come from the Crown. Thus ownership of one carried recognition of a certain level in society.

### The Langlois House

It is interesting to note is that the house known as Langlois House was a later addition to the adjoining buildings. Originally the eastern half of the range began as a single storey cottage, believed to date to between the 15th and 16th century. However, in the 17th century the building was re-built to include accommodation on two levels in the form of an upper hall house. A legal document discovered dating to 1617 lists the owner of Hamptonne as Francois Langlois, which could indicate the house was instigated by him. This style of architecture was common across Brittany during this period, and highlights the influences on the Island from across the water. The upper hall house provided living quarters upstairs with a beautifully designed fireplace at the west end of the room. By the late 18th century this room had been divided into a bedroom and hall or main living room, probably by wooden partitioning.

Equally, the ground floor areas of the upper hall house would have been used for housing animals. This system provided further warmth from the animals' body heat for those who lived above. In the 18th century the timber partitions dividing the ground floor were replaced by stone cross walls from north to south. This created a separate cow and calf stables, a horse stable, a cart shed and a storage area.

Archaeological evidence has shown that the fine fireplace in the upstairs room of Langlois House had little use. This suggests that while the accommodation was built for occupancy it may not have been used continuously, and instead may have been more of a guest property to the main Hamptonne House. Certainly by the mid-1800s the house had ceased its lifespan as a domestic quarters, with the chamber floor being removed along with the partition walls in the upper rooms. This emphasises its change of use for agricultural purposes, as the area was probably used for a hay loft before becoming a potato store. The latter highlights the growing importance of the potato, and the increased export industry by this period. Annual export volume rose from 67,000 tonnes in 1867 to 81,500 by 1907.

### Hamptonne House and the royal connection

While Hamptonne overall can be said to typify the evolution of an Island farmstead, as well as highlighting key moments in Jersey's agricultural development, it also has a key distinction in terms of its 17th century political connections. In 1637 Laurens Hamptonne, who had by 1621 been made a Vicomte (Viscount) at the age of 21, bought the site.

With the advent of the English Civil War in 1642, following an irreconcilable breakdown in relations between Charles I and his parliament, a short period of parliamentary rule in the Island

followed. However, this quickly changed to the royalist cause under the leadership of George Carteret, although Guernsey remained on the parliamentary side. With the defeat of the King's forces by the parliamentarian army under Thomas Fairfax and Oliver Cromwell, the first phase of the English Civil War ended in 1649. Several failed negotiations with the King culminated in the decision among Parliamentary leaders to have Charles I stand trial. Subsequently he was executed at Whitehall on 30 January 1649, and England now became a republic for a short period until the restoration of the monarchy in 1660.

As this news of the execution filtered through to Jersey, the Island became one of the first places to proclaim the King's son as King Charles II. As Vicomte, it fell to Laurens Hamptonne to make this declaration in the Royal Square in early February 1649. With England under parliamentary rule, the young king spent his early reign in exile, some of which he spent in Jersey. There have been suggestions that during one of these visits he actually stayed at Hamptonne, but while there is no definitive evidence for this, it is extremely likely he visited the property. Certainly he sold a Patente to Laurens Hamptonne for 2,000 livres, and this Patente provides Hamptonne with its alternative name. The document was vitally important, as it granted Laurens the right to attend Seigneurial Court, as well as giving permission to rebuild the colombier mentioned earlier, both of which elevated his status. However, it is perhaps a third aspect that proves the most significant in how we see the property today. For the Patente also permitted the entailment of Hamptonne, which meant that it had to pass from heir to heir, whether female or male, direct or maternal. This was exceedingly important in preventing its division at a time when many Island properties were being divided into smaller holdings due to the local inheritance laws.

The Langlois House





The Syvret House (left) and the Hamptonne House (right).

### Syvret house: the last of the three

When Marie Esther Hamptonne married Elie Syvret in 1784, as heiress to Hamptonne, the property passed into the hands of the Syvret family. It is believed that the last of the three houses in this enclosure was built after this, circa 1830s, as accommodation for their son, George. The house was built on the site of an earlier agricultural building. While all of the houses help to tell the story of the evolution of architectural styles in the countryside, Syvret house, with its large windows, perhaps typifies a style more akin to the town houses at the time.

A significant feature to the house besides the domestic space is the barn to the north. Archaeological evidence at the time of the restoration highlighted the presence of a press and a mill or apple crusher dating to 1834. This clearly indicates cider production on site, as well as emphasising the importance of this trade to numerous Island farms during this period. This is commented on as early as the 17th Century by Poingdestre, when he states how “there is hardly a house in the Island, except in St Helier, that did not have an orchard of one or two vergées sufficient to produce an average of 20 hogsheads a year” (a hogshead = 54 gallons). In the early 19th century, exports for 1810 amounted to 4.5 million litres. However, exports had declined considerably by the 1870s, and began to be replaced by the potato and cow. Nevertheless, despite a decline in exports, cider production has remained an important part of rural life into the present day. Equally the traditional methods of cider production used at this time have been preserved in the present day through events such as La Faîs’sie d’Cidre, where a horse-drawn crusher and manual apple presser recreate the atmosphere of this bygone era!

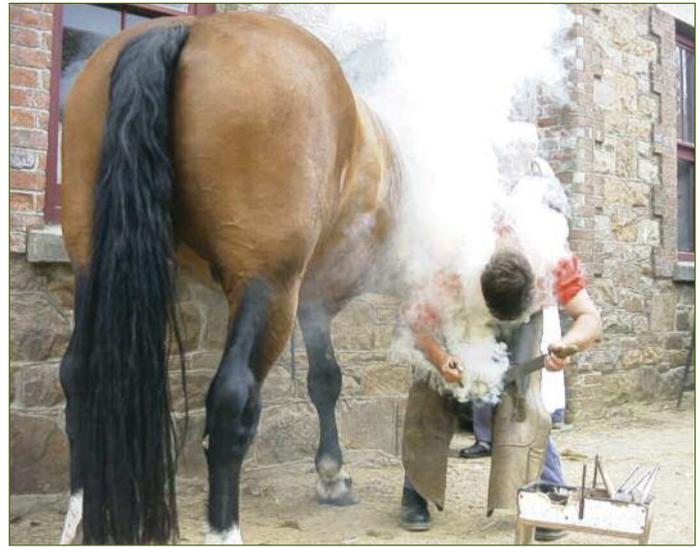
Religion also formed an important part of daily life, and some of the issues of the period are highlighted in a piece of graffiti, discovered in the room above the barn (this is now the Joan Stevens room). A wood partition bears the image of a man (Pope Pius IX) hanging from the gallows being prodded by a devil with a pitch-fork, indicating the re-emergence of anti-papal feeling amongst the Protestant Islanders during the mid-1800s following Pius’ announcement regarding papal Infallibility. This shows the strength of anti-Catholic feeling among Jersey’s farmers, despite the fact that many depended upon Breton, and therefore Catholic, labour.

Anti-papal graffiti in the Joan Stevens Room.



In 1863 Payne's armorial records the farm as having 100 vergées<sup>1</sup> of land. Between the 1850s and early 1900s the farm was developed with an enclosing wall to the north forming a northern yard. Following this enclosure additions were made to the yard including a stable, coach house, bake house and a room, which by 1906 had become the washhouse. Both the coach house and the somewhat grand stables highlight the importance of horsepower, both for transport and power. David Le Feuvre comments how, at least in respect of smallholders, this remained the case until as late as the third decade of the 20th Century, when there were some 1,600 horses to only 70 tractors, on 1,800 smallholdings.

Through a large part of this particular period Hamptonne remained in the ownership of the Syvret family, finally ending this association in the early 20th century. This resulted when George's son, George Laurens Hamptonne Syvret, fell into bankruptcy. Despite transferring the property into the hands of his wife, she was forced to sell it around 1920. By the 1950s it had become the property of the Emmanuel family who continued to work the farm until it was sold to the National Trust for Jersey in 1987. However, having retained a portion of the farm on the other side of Rue de la Patente, as well as a number of fields, they have continued to farm into the present day.



A farrier at work at Hamptonne

A major occurrence across the Island's farms and smallholdings came with the development of the Jersey cow during the 19th century, as well as with such aspects as the introduction of the Herd Book by the Royal Jersey Agricultural & Horticultural Society in 1866. This increasing importance of the breed to local farmers and the escalating international recognition from the period into the 20th century can be found at Hamptonne. The presence of cattle and calf sheds in the Langlois buildings highlight this, and so do photographs, such as the one in this article. However, two other major connections emphasise this even more in the form of the Parish Shows, and a champion cow.

The Parish Shows for years provided an important platform for breeders and in October 1927, the owner of Hamptonne at this time, Francis P Dutot, began hosting the autumn St Lawrence Cattle Show, and continued to do so for several years. Prior to this, however, the Dutot family was also responsible for breeding one of Hamptonne's most famous bovine residents. Lavender Lady bred by the Dutot family was born on 3 August 1923. The booming live cattle export business at the time led to the cow being sold to Meridale Farm, New York, and shipped out on 9 March 1927. In 1932 she went on show in the Aged Cow Class at the Minnesota State Fair, by which time she had become the only cow to be National Champion three times. Ultimately she became an important part of the breeding stock for future generations.

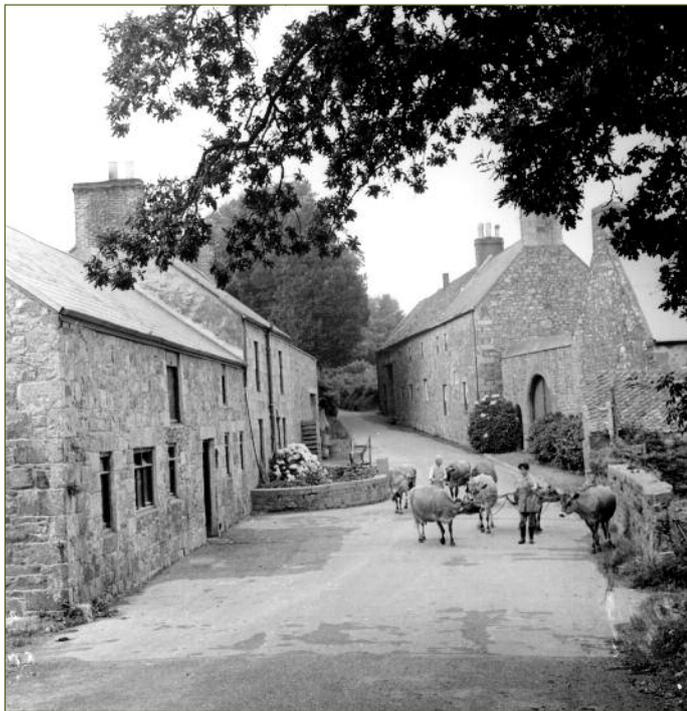
The importance of horse-power for a working farm, and how this is reflected in the stables and coach house at Hamptonne, has already been mentioned. For the Jersey farmer, having a horse for working the land was often coupled with owning a faster/lighter horse not only for the family wagonette, but also for ensuring that they won the race to the best collection points for vrac on the Island's beaches. An interesting side note is that the Dutot family kept a racehorse in the stables during the 20th century.

To conclude: Hamptonne provides a significant insight into not only the Island's political history, but also a reflection of Jersey's rural developments and the dedication of its many smallholders and farmers to the land.

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Cows walking down the lane near Hamptonne.  
(Courtesy of the Jersey Evening Post)

### Farming at Hamptonne

As the visitor walks around the present day museum, key moments and trends of Jersey's agricultural past reveal themselves. The press house and the subsequent use of Langlois house as a potato store has already been mentioned, but discoveries can also be made.

The pigsty to the side of Langlois indicates the importance of pigs as a source of meat for many farms in the Island. Furthermore it highlights the idea of self-provision, which from early on was as vital as the cash economy provided by knitting, cider, and later on, the Jersey Royal potato and Jersey cow.

<sup>1</sup>(1 vergée = 0.44 acres)