

The story of Jersey

This is the main exhibition in the museum and it occupies the whole of the first floor. Using original objects, illustrations and many other media, the displays show how the island has been created and the way that people have lived here for over a quarter of a million years.

The exhibition begins in the centre of the room, where the main themes are introduced via interactive computers which are operated simply by touching the screen. From the central area, you can explore the different galleries which radiate from it, to find out more about the island. There is no set way to go - choose the themes you find most interesting.

'A Peculiar of the Crown' explains just why and how Jersey is part of the British Isles but not the U.K. How we are governed by the States of Jersey rather than the British Parliament and why we have our own law and two sorts of police. 'Centuries of Change' will show you how the island has developed from the so called 'dark ages' through 1500 years to the bleak days of the German occupation. The formation of the island 8,000 years ago and the way that people first came to live here 250,000 years ago are explained in 'The Making of an Island'. 'Working the Land' illustrates Jersey's oldest industry - farming. The Jersey cow has developed as a result of controlled breeding as there has been no live importation of cattle into the island since 1789; the famous Jersey Royal potato is said to have originated from one fluke potato.

The exhibition also explains islanders' relationships with the sea and examines their everyday lives through a gallery full of everyday things. The story is brought up to date with 'Prosperity and Communications' which shows how Jersey has come to rely on good communications with the outside world to sustain its two main industries finance and tourism.

Barreau le Maistre art gallery

During 2008 the gallery will host a very special exhibition – *Romantics in the Channel Islands*. This exhibition showcases artists who were inspired by the Channel Islands, including, John Le Capelain, Peter Le Lievre and Sarah Louisa Kilpack. Exploring Romanticism in other forms, the exhibition will also include work from one of the Channel Islands' most famous exiles, Victor Hugo.

When a major art exhibition is not taking place the gallery normally displays the highlights of the art collection. Almost all of the works are by local artists or crafts people or depict Jersey subjects. All Jersey's noted painters including Philip Oules, John Le Capelain, Sir John Everett Millais and Edmund Blampied are represented. Their works and those of more contemporary artists provide a valuable insight into the history of Jersey over the last 500 years.

The display is divided into themed subject areas such as portraiture, landscape painting, sculpture and Jersey silver.

Look out for the Sir John Everett Millais portrait of Lillie Lantry which caused such a stir at its unveiling at the Royal Academy in London that it had to be roped off from the crowds that had gathered to see it. Edmund Blampied's delightful drawings, paintings and etchings encapsulate a way of life which vanished with the advent of modern machinery while Philip Oules and John Le Capelain have perhaps been the best ambassadors for the beauty of Jersey's coastline.

On the landing outside the Barreau Le Maistre gallery is a painting of St Aubin's Bay by PJ Oules. One of the details in the painting is a paddlesteamer called the *Ariadne* whose major shareholder was Philippe Nicolle who lived in the Merchant's House, next door in No 9 Pier Road which can be reached through the fine mahogany door at the top of the stairs.

The Merchant's House

No.9 Pier Road was built about 1818 for Philippe Nicolle and his family. As well as being a wealthy ship owner, Nicolle was one of the group of leading merchants in the island who paid for the land reclamation and harbour building scheme which is now Commercial Buildings (Le Quai des Marchands. In addition to his house in Pier Road, he owned a number of buildings on the newly constructed quayside. His home is a fine Georgian townhouse, in the English style, built from dressed granite in what was then the unfashionable part of St.Helier. The house had its main entrance in Pier Road although there was direct access on to the quayside (now the Weighbridge) from the ground floor.

During restoration work on the house in the early 1990s it was noted that the wooden floorboards in the bedrooms were caulked with tarred oakum just like the deck of a ship. It is more than likely that the men who built the house also worked in the island's shipyards. They may even have been Nicolle employees as we know that he had shipbuilding interests in Kensington Place and Havre des Pas.

The mahogany used in the house was brought into the island on board his ships returning from South America. As a leading member of island society Nicolle was also one of the first people to have gas lighting put into his house when it arrived in the island in the early 1830s.

Eventually we hope to restore the entire building to how it may have been in 1862 when Nicolle's daughter and her husband, Doctor Charles Ginestet, were in residence.

The merchant's house – family



The man who built the house, Philippe Nicolle Snr (1769-1835), inherited most of his wealth from his great-uncle Josué Mauger in 1788. In 1795 he married Esther Winter whose family were well established merchants in St Aubin. Together they, had thirteen children of whom eight survived into adulthood.

When Philippe died in 1836 he left the house to his daughter, Jeanne. She lived here with her brother, Philippe Winter, her mother Esther, who died of cholera in the 1849 epidemic, her sister Anne, and a nephew, Sydney. When Jeanne married Charles Ginestet, a French homeopathic doctor, in 1855 her brother moved out to his own house at Beau Desert in St. Saviour.

Charles Ginestet was born in Rhodéz, Avegron in 1808 and trained at Montpellier University. He was an ardent socialist who had been imprisoned for his views at the time of the 1851 coup d'etat in France. Once released, he went into exile in England before moving to Jersey where he mixed with Victor Hugo and many of the other political exiles who had moved to the island following the failure of the 1848 revolutionary movement on the continent. He had three children from his first marriage, two daughters Berthe and Alice, and one son, Théophile. In 1861 they were aged 18,16 and 11. They all lived here until 1869, when financial difficulties forced the family to move to France.

The family firm, Nicolle and Company, was badly hit by the slump in the Newfoundland cod trade and ceased trading in 1863.

The house was bought by Josué Falle in the early 1870s and it was he who gave it to the Société Jersiaise in 1893 to use as a museum.