

The La Cloche Family *in Jersey*

Linda Romeril delves into fascinating details of over 500 years of one family's history that have been deposited with the Jersey Archive.

In 2003 Jersey Heritage was delighted to accept custody of the private archive papers of one of the branches of the La Cloche family. The descendants of the family placed the collection on long-term deposit at the Jersey Archive, thus ensuring that the fascinating information the documents contained would be preserved for future generations of researchers to study and enjoy.

In 2006 the collection was fully catalogued, and the archive material is now available for members of the public to study at the Archive in Clarence Road.

The La Cloche Archive consists of nearly 300 documents detailing the property transactions, court appearances, religious and military careers and personal lives of the family from 1444 until 1951. The earliest document concerns the rights of the tenants living on the Fief du Chesnel, and in total the collection includes 11 documents from the 15th century. It is truly remarkable to think that these documents have survived in private hands for well over 550 years, and that the earliest pre-date such historical milestones as the Wars of the Roses, the Tudor Monarchy and the English Civil War.

La Cloche origins

The La Cloche (or de Cioches) family originated in Normandy. The name de Cioches is listed on the Falaise Rolls, which detail the names of the companions of William the Conqueror at the Battle of Hastings in 1066. The rolls include the names of Gonfroi, or Gunfrid, and Sigar de Cioches. Gunfrid and Sigar were from Choques, near Bethune in Northern France, and were kinsmen of the hereditary Advocates of Boulogne.

As a reward for following William to England, the de Cioches family received lands in Bedfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Northamptonshire, Leicestershire, Lincolnshire, Hertfordshire and Gloucestershire. The lands were mainly in Northamptonshire and were known as the honour of Chokes. These lands descended to Anselm de Cioches, who forfeited them under Henry I and who then in 1130/1 paid 170 marks of silver, five warhorses and three palfreys for their restoration.

He was succeeded by his son Robert de Cioches (or Chokes). Robert was the last in the direct line to hold the lands, which on his death passed to William of Bethune, brother of Baldwin, who eventually held the lands through his claim as the great-nephew of Anselm.

While the family name appears to have died out in England, the La Cloche Family continued to flourish in Normandy. Estienne (also known as Stephen) La Cloche is known to have married the daughter of the Seigneur of Carbonel in Normandy

in the first part of the 14th century. The Carbonel Family were sires of Cerisy in the arrondissement of St Lô. Stephen and his bride are thought to have first settled in Jersey in around 1320. Unfortunately, while we do know that Stephen moved to the Island in the 14th century, we know little else about his life in the Island.

One of the problems that researchers will find when investigating medieval history in Jersey is that there are very few documentary sources within the Island that date from before the 16th century. The only sources that we have at the Jersey Archive have come from private collections rather than public sources such as the Royal Court records. Unfortunately for the Island, a fire in Morier Lane in St Helier in 1502 destroyed all the official medieval records that were held in the Island².

There are other sources that researchers of medieval history in Jersey can consult – most importantly the records held at the National Archives in Kew. A search of their catalogue retrieves 148 records when looking for documents concerning Jersey between 1000 and 1500. These include documents from the Chancery, the Exchequer and the courts, and are often confirmations of grants of special privileges from the Crown to the Islanders.

Mills and property

Many of the earliest documents in the La Cloche Collection contain information on the various mills situated in Jersey. Milling was extremely important throughout the Island's history, as it produced the basic food needed for people to survive. There were up to 83 water mills in the Island between the 11th and 20th centuries, though not all at the same time. Other mills were also in operation during this period, including a number of windmills and a paper mill. The water mills made use of the natural valleys in the Island and many can still be seen in St Peter's Valley, Waterworks Valley and Grands Vaux.

In medieval times all mills belonged to the seigneur of a fief, who might be the king if it was a royal fief, an abbey to whom he granted the revenues or a local fief holder. The tenants of the fief owed the seigneur 'suite de moulin', meaning that they were obliged to grind corn at their mill and to render services for the upkeep of the mill buildings.

Facing Page Document dated June 1642 with the condition that in exchange for the right to build a mill a red rose must be paid annually in midsummer week

Left to right Jean La Cloche 1657-173, Maria Clasina La Cloche (née Van Gangelt) died 1732, Jane La Cloche (née Laugée) 1805-1876, Florence La Cloche 1871-1927 and Mathilda La Cloche 1864-1937



Whis indenture made by six
England in Betwene George Dartwott &
wheras his Ma^{ty} hath bin graciously
Gramuill, and Normont wth his apptona
Hood, This Indentent new writte
mobbings; that he granted and sett over by his
Ma^{ty} for said grant, to build drott and sett
unto his said Stepson de la Ologye his heirs & all
lands that are adjoining and adiacent to his house
Ologye; So that it doth not exceede y^e nombs or quantite
Stepson de la Ologye for the same, (if he oweth any
day in the full possession of the said Stepson de la
George Dartwott doth bynde himself his heirs and
of M^rlesche or Gramuill wth may anywise be
Stepson de la Ologye doth bynde himself his heirs
his heirs and all, And he right wth his w^{ch} said
upon his owne grounds) and also upon that he shall
have of all rent to be paid by his said George Dart
woll and truly to pay the yearly Rent of a Shilling
said Stepson de la Ologye doth bynde and obligo
build drott and sett in, a good sufficient Waterm
of Steepwatts **And** the said Stepson de la Ologye
said George Dartwott his heirs exorutors and
them peaceably and quietly to have take and gat
out of the said Mill for built & established by the
w^{ch} shall and may happen to be expended upon the
But in case the said Stepson de la Ologye
terms of years, that he shall his grant & writing
or the said Stepson de la Ologye: And both y^e said
the usual custome of the said Island

The mills were an important part of Jersey life, providing the means to grind corn for the tenant as well as revenues for the seigneur.

The La Cloche family had interests in the mills located in Grands Vaux in the 15th and 16th centuries. In 1484, a lease in perpetuity shows that Estienne La Cloche leased the Moulin de Malassis in St Saviour from William Harvey, Bailiff of Jersey. The mill is described as being 'in a state of disrepair' and was leased for the sum of five quartiers of wheat to be paid to Harvey with four capons to be paid to the King each year. The Moulin de Malassis, or Stephen's Mill, was located in Grands Vaux opposite Stirling Castle Farm on the boundaries of the fiefs of Mont Neron and Grainville.

The La Cloche Collection not only contains documents concerning the family interests in the mills of the Island, but also in other property. One of the earliest, dated 1464, concerns the purchase by Stephen La Cloche of a house and messuage in St Helier from Raulin and George Lemprière. Unfortunately the document does not describe the location of the property in any great detail, so while it tells us that the family owned property in St Helier, we cannot pinpoint the location of one of the early La Cloche houses.

Early land and property transactions, such as this document, often have very sparse descriptions of the boundaries of the land being sold and its location within the Island. The boundaries of land are generally defined by their relationship to fields owned by other individuals, rather than by the names of the adjoining properties. For example, a field might be described as being bordered on the north by the land of Jean de Gruchy, on the east by the land of Philippe de Carteret and on the south by the main road. And although many early transactions specify in which parish and fief the land is located, some transactions do not.

Family connections

While no baptism or birth records exist in the Island before the 15th century, by looking at the dates during which Stephen La Cloche was passing contracts, we can guess that the approximate date of his birth was around 1430. The types of transactions with which he was involved, concerning mills and property within St Helier, show that by the middle of the 15th century the La Cloche family had become well established in the Island.

It is at this point that the La Cloche family splits into two distinct branches. Stephen's two sons produced two separate lines of descent, while his daughter, Mabel, was to marry Gideon de St Martin, the son of the Seigneur of Trinity.

One branch of the La Cloche family descended from Stephen's second son Clement, who owned a large estate to the north of the Chapel of St Mannelier in St Saviour. Clement's son, also called Clement, married Blanche, a daughter of the des Viviers family of Normandy. Their son Benjamin married Collette, the daughter of John Nicolle, the Seigneur of Longueville. She became the heir of her brother, Hostes Nicolle, and the fief and seigneurie of Longueville, with the seat at Longueville Manor, passed into the La Cloche Family.

The fief was part of the La Cloche family inheritance until the 18th century, when Amice La Cloche's only heir was a daughter, Anne, who married John Durell. This meant that the fief then passed to the Durell family.

The collection contains some copied extracts from the Court of the Fief et Seigneurie of Longueville, but the majority of the records concern the branch of the family that descends from Stephen's eldest son Thomas. He married Mabel, the daughter of Laurens Falle, and they had at least four children, Thomas, William, Sebastien and Peter.

Their eldest son Thomas increased the family holdings by buying a property in St Lawrence from the Jourmeaux Family on the Fief des Meleches to the north east of the Moulin de Vicart.

Thomas's brother was the Reverend Sebastien La Cloche. The collection contains his testament dating from 1554, in which he describes himself as a 'cleric of the Parish of St Helier'. Sebastien's testament is unusual as it is one of the few documents at the Jersey Archive which is written in Latin, the language of the Catholic Church, rather than in French.

The year that Sebastien made his testament, 1554, was one of turmoil, both for the Church in England and also in Jersey. Edward VI, the Protestant King, had died in July 1553 and was replaced on the throne by his sister, Mary. She was a staunch supporter of the Catholic Church, who reversed the religious policy that had been prevalent throughout Edward's reign. In Jersey, this meant that the Catholic clerics who had left the Island then returned, while the Protestant clergy who had preached during Edward's reign departed. Church services were once again in Latin, rather than in French.

Given that Sebastien's testament was made in Latin, rather than in the French or English favoured by the Protestant religion, we can assume that he was a member of the Catholic Church.

The collection contains only one other document, dated February 1553, which relates to Sebastien. In it he sells any inheritance he received from his mother and father to his nephew Stephen, the son of Thomas.

Stephen features in a number of documents within the collection. Stephen was born in about 1530 and was married to Blanche Le Bastard, the daughter of Clement, by 1555. The evidence of Stephen's marriage to Blanche can be found in a particularly interesting document that also sheds some light into the process of land transactions before the enrolment of documents in the Public Registry, which began in 1602.

Before then any transactions of real property (ie land, houses and rentes) were solemnised in front of witnesses in the churchyard after divine services. The transaction was then committed to the collective memory of the parish. This process was known as *ouïe de paroisse* and had its obvious downfalls – what one person or family remembered might not tally with another! By the 16th century the written deed became the principal evidence of the transaction, but problems still occurred when deeds were lost or destroyed. Sir Walter Raleigh, the Governor of Jersey, established the Public Registry in 1602, after which all transactions of real property were required to be enrolled in the livres of the registry.

Document L/C/131/A2/12 in the La Cloche Collection is a *retrait lignager* (basically a repossession of real property by right of a relative). If real property was sold and all or part of the purchase price was in cash, the family of the person selling the real property had a right to repossess the property by paying back the purchase price. In this document Stephen La Cloche claims *retrait lignager* to 4 quartiers, 4 cabots of wheat of rente that was sold by Hyou Le Bastard to Philippe Dirvault. Stephen claims the right to repossess the rente through his wife, Blanche.

The document itself is dated 1 May 1557, but it is described as a report to the Court by Stephen La Cloche, son of Thomas, of an *ouïe de paroisse* that took place in St Saviour's Cemetery on 1 March 1555.

Stephen La Cloche, Rector of St Ouen

It is Stephen's grandson, also Stephen La Cloche, or Estienne as he is referred to in many of the documents in this collection, who was one of the leading figures in Island society and politics in the 17th century. Stephen was the son of Edouard La Cloche, Centenier of St Helier, and Elizabeth Le Gallais. He was the first cousin of the Seigneur of Longueville

Longueville and was connected by marriage with the seigneurs of Trinity and St Ouen. Stephen was educated at the University of Basel, Switzerland's oldest university, which was opened in 1460. He was appointed as a rector, and the certificate of this appointment from Basel dated 1614 and written in Latin, is a part of the Archive collection.

Stephen returned to Jersey and was appointed as Rector of St Ouen in 1621. This document, complete with its clerical seal, is included in the collection at the Archive. Stephen was a firm friend of Sir Philippe de Carteret, the Lieutenant Governor and Bailiff of Jersey in the 1630s and 1640s. He became embroiled in the English Civil War when, in 1643, fighting broke out in Jersey between the Royalists, led by Sir Philippe de Carteret, and the Parliamentarians led by Michel Lemprière and Leonard Lydcot (who had been sent from England to Jersey).

When Sir Philippe died in 1643, Charles I confirmed the appointment of George Carteret as Bailiff. In September, Stephen La Cloche visited Carteret who was in St Malo to let him know that Jersey was sick of Roundhead rule. The Royalists signed a petition asking the King to liberate Jersey, and La Cloche delivered this back to the Island. La Cloche arrived back in Jersey on a Saturday night, and the next day delivered a sermon to the parishioners of St Ouen asking them to accept the King's pardon. The St Ouen farmers refused to revolt and La Cloche was lucky to escape to the Royalists at Mont Orgueil.

La Cloche was a staunch loyalist, but when Carteret turned to licensed piracy in 1644, La Cloche denounced his actions in the pulpit in St Ouen. Carteret was furious and arrested La Cloche and placed him in solitary confinement in Mont Orgueil for 11 months. La Cloche was offered his freedom if he would apologise and pay a fine, but he refused and was eventually banished to live in Brittany.

Given the stormy end to the relationship between Stephen La Cloche and George Carteret, the La Cloche archive contains a particularly fascinating document made between Stephen La Cloche, Rector of St Ouen, and George Carteret, Lieutenant-Governor of Jersey and dated June 1642 – during the Civil War conflict. In the document, Carteret gives La Cloche the authority to build a water mill in either the Fief des Melechès or Grainville. One of the conditions that La Cloche has to undertake in exchange for the rights to build the mill is the yearly payment of a red rose in midsummer week.

Military connections

Stephen's grandson, John La Cloche, rather than establish himself in the hierarchies of the Church, chose to join the British Army. His father had been a colonel in the Royal Jersey Militia and John himself became a captain in Colonel Mordant's regiment in the British Army, who were serving in Holland in the late 17th century. Holland and England were closely linked at this time after William of Orange had become King of England in 1689.

While still in the Army, John La Cloche married in Maestricht in 1696. In the marriage register he is described as Monsieur Jean La Cloche, Captain in the Regiment of Colonel Mordant, native of Jersey. His new wife was Marie Clasine Van Gangelt, daughter of Matthieu Van Gangelt and Jeanne Vergoossen.

The La Cloche collection includes a copy of the marriage contract signed by John, Marie and Marie's parents. The contract includes a number of conditions, including that Marie's parents, on her arrival in England, will give the couple the sum of 5,000 florins to spend buying a place to live.

After John's career in the Army came to a close, he returned to the Island with Marie.

The Rev Philippe La Cloche

The collection continues into the 18th and 19th centuries, with records showing the various transactions of the La Cloche family during this period. One of the most interesting documents from the 19th century is a Commonplace Book belonging to the Reverend Philippe La Cloche.

Philippe served as a curate for the parishes of St Ouen and St Lawrence and also as a clerk in the parish of St Helier. Philippe's Commonplace Book includes a number of topics of research and observations which he found interesting, such as the following extract from the *Gardener's Magazine* of 10 December 1825:

How to keep Cauliflowers by burying them underground

'I have been able to keep cauliflowers for a length of time by cutting them in a dry day, shipping off all the leaves and then burying them among bog mould.

The idea first struck me in Scotland from considering that bog mould was antiseptic and capable of resisting putrefaction, particularly if excluded from atmospheric air. I covered some heads of cauliflower in July under the rubbish taken from the bottom of an old peat stack and in November following found them still fit for use.'

Jersey Archive

The archive holds a large number of private collections of fascinating and important archive material on long-term deposit. By depositing their papers, members of a family can be sure that the documents are looked after in the correct environmental conditions but that the family still owns and maintains an interest in the material. As part of the deposit agreement, the records are fully catalogued by the professionally trained staff and made available for members of the public to research in our supervised reading rooms.

Collections that are deposited are also repackaged and stored in the correct conditions to ensure their long-term preservation. Two documents in the La Cloche Collection have also benefited from preservation treatment from our professionally trained conservator. The items consist of folded parchment documents, each with a single red circular pendant seal that were set into a metal skipper. Although both documents and seals were in excellent condition, they were cleaned and boxed to help preserve them during storage, handling and display.

¹From: *Parishes: Rushden, A History of the County of Hertford: volume 3* (1912), pp. 265-70.

²M Syvret and J Stevens, *Balleine's History of Jersey* (Chichester, 1981), p. 69.

If you would like to find out more about the La Cloche Collection or about depositing your family papers at the Archive, please contact Linda Romeril (details below).

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The logo features the words 'La Cloche' in a highly decorative, flowing cursive script. The 'L' is particularly large and ornate, with a long tail that loops under the 'a'. The 'C' in 'Cloche' is also large and features a prominent loop. The overall style is elegant and historical, fitting the theme of the archive.