



Ancient History. It's all in the Past

La Barbarie Hotel is named after Barbary Coast pirates kidnapped and put to ransom the owner in the 17th century. Things are little quieter around here now.

It was probably Robert, duke of Normandy, the eldest son of William the Conqueror, who made a grant in the late 11th century of lands in the parish of St. Martin, Guernsey, to the priory of Martinvast, in the Cotentin. Within a century these lands had passed to the abbey of Blanchelande: probably by gift of Goeffrey Plantagenet, comte d'Anjou, about 1142.

The abbot of Blanchelande claimed a one-third interest in the patronage of St. Martin's church, which interest was always resisted by the abbot of Marmoutier who held the patronage of six Island churches prior to the Reformation, nonetheless the abbot did present one rector to the living, as was confirmed by papal decree in 1376.

The Fief de Blanchelande occupies nearly 600 vergées, equivalent to about 240 English acres, of land in that part of St. Martin's between les Camps du Moulin and la Villette, towards Saints and lcart.

A small priory building or cell was established in the later 11th century by the prior of Martinvast at Saints, in the property now known as "**La Barbarie**". The court of the Fief de Blanchelande, probably created between 1220 and 1270, met at this property. The actual court-house of later years was built in the 18th century. And was unfortunately demolished in 1964 to make space for a hotel extension. Existing court records date from the 18th century and continue with some breaks to the present day. The livres-de-perchage or "measurement books" of the Fief survive from 1488 and these continue with regular renewals until 1956.

The abbots of Blanchelande held their Guernsey fief until the Reformation when it was seized by the crown, and soon afterwards it was acquired by the Carey family. It later descended to Admiral Nicolas Lefebvre, and then to Mr. Gerard Gosselin and subsequently to his wife for her life enjoyment, after which the will decreed that it be held by the Bailiff of Guernsey in office for the time being upon certain condition: and it is presently held by Sir Geoffrey Rowland.

Chefrentes or annual payments in wheat or cash equivalent were always due on the fief, and these and the "Conges" (the 2% charge on property purchased on the fief) were paid by the tenants of the fief to the abbots and later to the seigneurs of Blanchelande up to and until 1986. In 1987 the Feudal Dues law transferred this income to the Crown, and it is used to augment the establishment of H.E. the Lieutenant-Governor and to maintain the Prison. Income from the fief which arose between the death of Mrs. Gosselin in 1981 and 1986 now constitutes the capital fund, the income of which is distributed between the Victorian Hospital Fund and any residents on the fief who are in need. The fief court now exists to make the latter distribution as it sees fit in the spirit of Mrs. Gosselin's will.

The court of Fief de Blanchelande consists of senechal (or steward), four vavasseurs (jurats or vassals) and officers who include the greffier and his deputy (court clerks), a prevot (sheriff), a sergent (sergeant to serve summonses) and a grenetier (grain store-keeper) The court always met at least three times a year at Chief Pleas after Michaelmas, Christmas and Easter, although since the German Occupation this has reduced to the one Chief Pleas after Michaelmas. However, this sitting has continued the long tradition of having a court lunch immediately afterwards, at **La Barbarie Hotel**.