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On
Jean Poingdestre,
Lieutenant-Bailli Jersey

A famous author said: *"The world knows nothing of its greatest men."* There is a lot of truth in this assertion, and if so when it comes to men of a universal reputation, much less can we say of a man who, apart from his reputation in the university had only a local celebrity. In wanting to write a note on the life of Jean Poingdestre, Lieutenant-Bailli Jersey, the biographer who encounter this difficulty arises so often to those who undertake a similar task, it is the scarcity of materials. This is much to regret, because among the illustrious Jersey seventeenth century John Poingdestre was perhaps the most erudite. Fire Messire Robert Pison Marett has praised Mr. Poingdestre, which, he says, "was a man of singular merit, including engineering, naturally fertile, was enriched by a culture assiduously. Nourished He had the spirit and formed a taste for reading ancient writings that has left us a precious legacy. Civil laws were familiar to him; he had meditated carefully, and had done her favorite study. Nobody better than he did know about our history, our institutions the privileges that we enjoy, the laws that govern us. He was busy in good time, and with attendance who never slows down until the last moment of his life. "

The April 16, 1609 was baptized in the Church of St.-Sauveur a child were ever to occupy one of the highest charges in his native island. It was Jean Poingdestre, the son of Edouard Poingdestre and Pauline Ahier, his second wife, daughter of Guyon Ahier, St.-Sauveur. The child was godfather to his older brother, Thomas Poingdestre, the son of Edouard and his first wife, Marguérite Messervy.

The family Poingdestre held a distinguished rank among families on the island. The father of the future Lieutenant-Bailli was Lord of Fief ès Poingdestre and was Grand Marshal of St.-Sauveur, for the first time in 1586 to 1587 and again from 1597 to 1611, as well as deacon in his parish. He died in 1622.

Jean Poingdestre was born probably in the former home of this branch of Poingdestre, now called "Swan's Farm," and behind the house known today as the "Manoir de Grainville." Young still on the death of his father, he had to make his initial studies in his native island and most probably at the School of St.-Mannelier. He was sent to Cambridge University, where his name is inscribed on the records of Pembroke College. He took his BA at the end of 1629 when he was only twenty years, and the degree of Maître-ès-Arts three years later, in 1633. Two years later, in 1635, as you know, King Charles I founded at Oxford University three grades of aggregated or "Fellowships" in the interests of native des Iles de la Manche. Poingdestre then went to Cambridge University to Oxford. His name is inscribed on the records of Exeter College, as "Gentleman Commoner," Oct. 9, 1635 to Nov. 3, 1636. He was the first

Jersey who prevailed for the new foundation. Elected Agrégé ("Fellow") of the College of Exeter on August 4, 1635, he was only admitted that August 4, 1636.

[1]

Poingdestre, who was considered at the University as one of the most learned men of his time, held this office for twelve years. Benjamin Le Journal de La Cloche [2] tells us that it was in 1638 tutor children of the great chamberlain of Roy, Milord Pembroke and Montgomery, and he delivered that year in his parish Church of St. - Savior two cuts money for the use of Sainte-Cène. In fact his fame had spread to the Court of King, and around this time he was also a place in the office of Digby Milord, Se crétaire d'Etat. [3] In 1648, when the fate of King became desperate, Poingdestre, along with several other staunch supporters of the monarchy, was expelled from the University by representatives of Parliament. He then returned to Jersey, where he helped George Carteret voice in the defense of Elizabeth Castle, besieged by the MPs.

Indeed upon arrival at Jersey Colonel Haines, Commander of the troops of Parliament, George Carteret Messire sent Poingdestre directly to the King, who was in Paris to represent Her Majesty the status of the fortress and siege. Charles, without resources, tried in vain to get help from the Court of France, and the mission of Poingdestre remained so unsuccessful. He returned to Jersey before the capitulation of Castle in December 1651 and, following Chevalier, took part in the drafting of the treaty of surrender.

But if Poingdestre was Royalist he knew, however, reconciling with the heads of parliamentary party in Jersey because, although he probably left the island for some time after the surrender of the Castle, there are indications of his presence in Jersey in subsequent dates. In 1654 he introduced a child for baptism in the Church of St.-Sauveur; he was even a charge of Solicitors for the parish of St.-Sauveur around 1656 to 1657. It is he who tells us in one of his books still unpublished. The Governor of the island in the Parliament at that time was Colonel Robert Gibbon. While he was in charge of the government, his cousin, John Gibbon, English antiquarian and herald, spent some time in Jersey in 1655 and had made the acquaintance of Poingdestre. He had already met many documents on the history of the island and the antiquarian did not fail to take a few notes in the collections of saving Jersiais. [4] It is therefore not allowed doubt that relations between Poingdestre and heads of Parliament in Jersey were friendly. Besides publications of the Office of Roles in London we provide proof of the most certain in this regard. As of July 15, 1656 (Domestic Series, p. 19) the State Council refers a case about sharing legacies of John and Jeanne Le Febvre to Col. Gibbon, Michel and Jacques Lemprière, Philippe Le Geyt, *Jean Poingdestre* and Hamptonne Laurens, as the most experienced in the rules and in my Coutu Jersey. During this period Poingdestre was visiting the island from time to time, and it was also noted at that time puisne his brother, Thomas Poingdestre, occupied the benefit of St.-Sauveur. [5]

Poingdestre was not only well known to several men so famous temp n s, but enjoyed

their confidence. He had knowledge of Jersey Messire Edward Hyde. The Secretary of State, Nicholas Edward voice, in a letter to the chancellor at the date of March 7 1651-2, says about *Poingdestre*: "If you *shall make Poindexter desire to serve me in the place of a Secretary, I am so very well satisfied of his honesty and abilities as I shall willingly entertain him.* "[6]

In 1659 Poingdestre married Anne, daughter of Laurens Hamptonne, Viscount Jersey from 1621 to 1651, then Juré-Justicier and Lieutenant-Bailli in 1663. From this marriage he had two children: Charles, baptized May 15, 1662 at the Church St.-Jean-Baptiste in Oxford, and Elizabeth, who married George Bandinel, Lord of Méléches and Viscount Jersey from 1716 to 1741.

At the Restoration of Charles II Poingdestre returned to Oxford. We do not have any information on his life during that time, except that in 1662 he was a tutor of the son of the Earl of Carnarvon, and that he remained with Messire Clayton Thomas, Rector (Warden) of Merton College. [7]

In 1668, Jean Papon, Lieutenant of Messire Edouard de Carteret, Bailli, wishing to give his resignation given his age and indisposition, Bailli chooses Jean Poingdestre as his lieutenant, and a vacancy occurring on the seat of Justice, King sent an order under his seign sent to Bailli and Jurés-Justiciers of the Royal Court to elect Jean Poingdestre to this charge, as evidenced by the document [itself](#): [8]

"Charles Rex

Whereas we are certainly informed of the constant zeal and loyalty to our service which Mr. John Poingdestre hath demonstrated upon all occasions, and that he is a man knowing very well both in the Civil and Municipal Laws, and chiefly in those which are in force in our Island of Jersey, and thereby able to do us and that his native country, very good service in the administration of justice there. We have thought fit as well for his own encouragement, as for the good of the inhabitants of our Island said, to require you, as we do by these presents, to issue out your Order for his immediate election to the place and office of Jurat there, in which we expect your ready compliance. And so we bid you farewell. Given at our Whitehall Court at the 22nd day of February in the 19th year of our Reign (1667-8).

By his Majesty's Command,

Arlington.

To our Trusty and well-beloved Sir Edward

Carteret our Bayliff of our Island of

Jersey; to his Lieut.-Bayliff, and to the

Jurats of that said our Island, and to every

Of them, Jersey. "

As can easily realize this letter from the King raised Constitutional difficulties. Here's what Le Geyt (at page 65 of Vol. IV) says on the subject: "In 1668," says the author, "a juror was elected by letters of recommendation from Roy. He was a man of learning and credit to the Court, and he was to return to England, where he had remained since the restoration of King Charles II. He had agreed with the Bailly for the position of lieutenant, and according to the Coûtume, it was necessary to put it back on the bench before he came to the pulpit. It would not be more difficult to make Lieutenants-Baillis Roy, as Jurors in its recommendation, and few such examples would bientost losing Baillis and their former inhabitants privilege. "

Anyway, the Court did not want to obstruct the wishes of Sovereign, as evidenced by the act of the Court below.

"The year 1668, the 23rd day of May.

Pardevant Messire Edouard de Carteret, Knight, and so on., Bailly of the Island of Jersey, assisted by Elie Dumaresq, Jean and Thomas Pipon Pipon, Jurors; occurred Josué de Carteret, occurred aussy Edouard Romeril and John of the bell, which occurred aussy Georges Dumaresq.

The pleasure of having been by Roy Letters express Justice to declare their wish for the Election of a Juré this Isle of Jersey.

It is ordered that there will next Sunday at the conclusion of the Divine Service by all parishes. To this end a translation of the above Letters will leüe publicly. "

La Lettre du Roy is not recorded in the roles of the Court. The Court has been able to take advantage of a position embarassante as will be seen by the following:

"The year 1668 on May 27.

^R Mons. The Governor now.

Pardevant Messire Edouard de Carteret, Chevalier., Bailly of the Isle of Jersey, assisted by Francois de Carteret, Elie Dumaresq, Josué de Carteret, Jean Pipon, Thomas Pipon, Edouard Romeril, Dumaresq and Jean Georges de la Cloche, Jurors.

Jean Poingdextre Gent (having a plurality of votes of the people has been admitted this today and sermenté Juré-Justicier of the Royal Court of ceste Isle of Jersey. "

On 21 January 1668-9 to the Heads Plaids Heritage Jean Poingdestre was sworn Lieutenant-Bailly, and the same day the Bailly, about to leave the island, he was given the seal public court séante. Below are the words of the act:

"Following the appointment of Messire Edouard de Carteret, Chevalier., And approval of Justice, Jean Poingdestre Escuyer has so far taken oath of Lieutenant Sieur said Bailly, who have testified perst be from this païs granted mesme time Court sçeau of the Isle in sondit Lieutenant. "

Poingdestre managed office Lieutenant-Bailli up to the year 1676. Le Bailli does not appear to have lived in Jersey because we believe it Poingdestre chair all meetings of the Court as that of the States. While the burden of administering the affairs of the island fall on his shoulders. We do not know why Poingdestre handed in his resignation to the Lieutenant Bailli. During his administration of the island he had gained the esteem and the public and government English. We saw that his election at the expense of Juré-Justicier was regarded by some as inconstitutionelle and that the King's letter was an attack against the privileges of the island. It was suggested that this was the cause of his resignation eight years later. This is unlikely, there is nothing to indicate what was the reason, but this does not seem sustainable even in the presence of the fact that he retained his load of Juré-Justicier until the day of his death. However, on June 15, 1676, the Plaids of Câtel chaired by Messire Edouard de Carteret, his resignation was accepted, and here are the terms of the act of the Court:

"Mons^r. The Bailly was required by Jean Poingdestre Esc^r. Who by various years performed the duties of that load Bailly as his lieutenant, luy give his discharge Lieutenant-Bailly she luy has esté ottroyée, with tesmoignage them estre well paid. "

On the same day Philippe Le Geyt, the Commentator of our laws, was sworn Lieutenant-Bailly. Jean Poingdestre, after his retirement, appears to have devoted his spare time to write his books on the laws of Jersey and to collect documents relating to the history of his native island. He transcribed all the charters of the island, he started work at his residence in England, and in 1685 he edited under the title "Privileges of

the island" *Abstract* or Compendium of royal charters and related Ordinances at the Island.

Poingdestre is the author of two books famous and well-known lawyers from exercising Course island. We want to talk about his comments on the Old Customs and the Customs Reformed. The Company Law of the People today published the first of these books. Another of his books, least known, because it is only in recent years that a copy was made of the original, shows a breadth and erudition is undoubtedly of the utmost importance to the legal point of view.

But we are indebted to Poingdestre for another book already delivered to advertising by the Clearing Corporation Jersey. "*Caesarea or a Discourse of the Island of Jersey*," the original of which, presented by the author to King Jacques II, is now in the British Museum, is full of interest for Jersey, which includes a study although completed on the Status of this island in the middle of the 17th century. In this fund, as well as among other manuscripts collected by our scholar, Révd. Philippe Falle has drawn perhaps the greatest part of his story, like the rest he himself admits, and it was noted with some reason that if Poingdestre he had not paved the way, do our Historian would never ventured to write its history. In 1689 Falle had succeeded Thomas Poingdestre as Rector of St.-Sauveur, and despite their unequal age, the two celebrities were the most intimate friends. The good Rector spoke in the most affectionate of worthy magistrate he would soon lay down their mortal remains in the tomb. In fact, on September 4, 1691 at the age of 83, Jean Poingdestre was buried in the Church of St.-Sauveur, where a monument erected in his memory, carries an epitaph following highly classical models use at that time.

Endowed many talents enough to decorate the career of any man, Poingdestre, by his love of the study of classics, and Lois Civiles and Roman, not to mention his thorough knowledge of the Laws Normandes and Jersiaises, gained a place at the forefront of distinguished Jersey. A reading of his works will only confirm their importance and will highlight the trail of cultivated mind of the author and the intelligence with which he lit considers matters of law. In this regard the comments Poingdestre on the Laws and Customs of Jersey rival those of his great contemporary Le Geyt. He often treats his subject as a part; often blurred or he leaves the question non-résolue; one ever. The style of Poingdestre is clear and concise; he speaks in a manner and with convincing authority. The writings of Le Geyt rife with curious facts and historical anecdotes and pleasant. Works Poingdestre are strictly legal. Nobody Jersey had an insight into the Custom of Normandy and no one knew better than he how far it was applicable to the island. That's why these comments are so precious in the hands of lawyers and Writers of the Royal Court of our small country.

ED. TOULMIN NICOLLE,

Lawyer near the Royal Court

[Editor's note: This biography of one of Jersey's most distinguished jurists was first published in 1907 by The Law Society of Jersey with Poingdestre's Commentaries on the Old Coûtume.]

Footnotes ([Top](#))

[1] Boase. Registr um Co ll. Exon. P. 104

[2] Bulletins the Sociét é Jersia ise, Vol. li. P. 476

[3] Boase. Sup. Cit.

[4] Bulletins from the So ciété Jer siaise, vol. li. P. 129

[5] Thomas Poingdestre was R ector of St.-Sauveur from 1638 to 1689. Some surprising as it may seem, Jean Poingdestre had two brothers named Thomas, the oldest of which was only a half-brother. This, as we have seen, was the sponsor of Lieutenant-Bailli. Thomas, Rector of St.-Sauveur (born in 1613), had the same mother as Jean.

[6] Nicholas Papers (Camden So ciety), vo l. I, p. 288.

[7] Wood's Life and Times; Ed A. Cl arke, I. P. 400.

[8] See: S. P. Dom. Entry Bo oks 30. F. 7, 21, p. 63.