Water Water Everywhere!

This walk features Waterworks Valley, where three of Jersey's main reservoirs are located. Formerly known as Le Chemin des Moulins (Mill Lane), the streams in this lovely valley were first dammed in 1895 to store water, purify it and provide clean healthy water for St Helier. Today the majority of island homes obtain their water from stored water. The circular route also passes the Potato Shack, Rondel’s Farm Shop, the Centre Stone, the strawberry fields at La Croix Anley, and Hamptonne, Jersey’s famous country life museum.

The Route
Walk up La Ruelle St Claire to the junction with Mont Cochon at the top of the hill. Cross straight over into Fern Valley.

There is a diversion available at the very bottom of Fern Valley, via a track leading to a delightful valley pasture set in the surrounding woodland. The beauty spot is owned by the National Trust for Jersey, which maintains properties, and country and coastal sites, given to them over the years by members of the public.

The lane now leads steeply uphill then bends to the right at the top (ignore the track off to the left). Turn left at the next junction, along La Rue de Maupertuis to pass a house on the left Le Picachon.

“The Potato Shack” is set back on the left a short distance further on, where Jersey Royal potatoes, other vegetables and free-range eggs can be bought most of the year. This is an 'Honesty Box', a frequent roadside feature in Jersey, where the buyer is trusted to leave the correct money for purchases! The board on the wall of the shack tells its own story!

Continue to the main road; cross with great care – the Union Inn public house is just along the road to the right for refreshments – into La Rue de Haut de L’Orme, towards Rondel’s Farm Shop on the right-hand side.

The Rondels
The Rondels have been growing and selling Jersey Royal potatoes since the end of the 19th century. They bought the present farm at the end of the WWII, and concentrated on keeping Jersey Cattle – they were selling prize bulls to the USA in the 1940’s for £1000 a head, the same price as today.

Some eight years ago however the latest generation of the family decided to concentrate on growing and marketing the Jersey Royal potato. Expanding the planted area to over 800 vergées and selling by personal visits to customers in the UK, they succeeded in re-establishing the potato in the UK market.

In 2003 together with four other major growers, the Rondels formed Jersey Royal Potato Marketing Limited, which now exports 98 percent of all Royals grown in the island, with contracts with the main UK multiple retailers. In 2006 the group were responsible for the export of 32,000 tons of Royals between April and July at a value of £23.5 million.

Distance: 6 miles (9.6 kms) if arriving by car; 7 miles (11.2 kms) if using the bus.

Bus no’s: Route No 7, 8, 9, 12, 12a, 14, 15. Get off at Millbrook and walk half a mile (0.8 kms) up Waterworks Valley (C118) to La Ruelle St Claire.

By Car: drive up Waterworks Valley (C118) from the Inner Road (A1) and leave the car in the car park at the bottom of La Ruelle St Claire.
Jersey Royals
Correctly named The Jersey Royal Fluke, reflecting the potato's characteristic kidney shape, it was discovered in 1880 by Hugh De La Haye. He cut a normal potato into 15 eyes and planted them in different locations across the island. The best results came from those planted on sloping south-facing fields or côtils. Demand from England for this sweet-tasting early potato soon had farmers throughout the island converting their farms. Over 80,000 tons were being shipped annually by the end of the century.

Today just over about 30,000 tons of Jersey Royals are produced. The first crop is planted in early January on the côtils. These are lifted in early April, all by hand. The larger flatter fields are planted in February and March, again by hand, but usually lifted and sorted by machine. Plastic is used to cover the first few weeks of growth to bring them on and protect them from frost.

The earliest côtil crop commands the highest prices, up to £5 a kilo. While the Jersey Royal is a genuine outdoor potato, some are now grown in 'tunnels' during the winter to ensure a longer season.

Potato fields have traditionally been fertilised by seaweed or vraic, still used today but less extensively than before.

The Jersey Royal also boasts an 'appellation contrôlée', an EU Designation of Origin.

To prepare Jersey Royals
Jersey Royals should be eaten as soon as possible after digging. Wash them, leave the skin on, boil them in salted water with a sprig of garden mint, and serve with Jersey butter.

Other potato varieties, known generically as 'main crop' are also grown, including Desirée and Estima. These have a hard skin and are better suited to making chips, baking or mashing.

The Farm Shop
The Rondels have been selling potatoes from a stall on the main road for over 20 years. Today the shop offers an alternative to a supermarket, with quality home-grown produce, including Jersey beef and pork, from seventy local producers. With a philosophy to help regenerate the local agricultural trade, the Rondels plan to develop their shop and range of products in the near future, and even offering allotments for schools to use, to learn the pleasures of home growing.

From the Farm Shop, continue along La Rue de Haut de L’Orme, to the next crossroads (La Rue du Becquet Vincent). Turn right then immediately left into La Rue du Douet, to pass ‘Crossbow’, a superb example of 18th century Jersey architecture on the right-hand side. The name derives from the Larbalestier family, who once owned the house. Larbalestier is old French for a crossbowman.

Turn left at the T-junction with La Rue des Haies and La Rue des Houguettes. Note the 1881 Parish boundary stone dividing Trinity and St John.

This lane leads to the junction with the St John’s main road, La Grande Route de St Jean. The Macepela cemetery on the corner is where a number of Victor Hugo’s friends ‘Les Proscrits’ are remembered. Victor Hugo lived in Jersey between 1852 and 1855. He was asked to leave because he supported the publication of an article criticising Queen Victoria’s visit to Paris. He went to live in Guernsey, together with his family and mistress, Juliette Drouet, before returning to Paris in 1870.

Turn left and immediately right at the main road (or take a short cut through the shop car-park). This lane La Rue des Servais is reputed to be at the centre of the island – look out for the round boulder against the wall of a house about 200 metres on the left.
The lane descends now to the boundary of St John and St Lawrence, which runs along the stream. On the right-hand side of the road at the boundary, is an abreuvoir, a drinking place for animals, made by creating a diversion in the stream.

The name of the lane has changed at this point to La Rue des Saints Germains. The house set back in lovely gardens on the right is Les Saints Germains. The original house on this site is said to have been a replacement for Le Manoir de La Brequette at L’Étacq on the north west coast, inundated by the sea in the 14th century and rebuilt as far away from the sea as possible! It fell into ruins later and much of the stone was used in the early 17th century in the construction of Elizabeth Castle.

The next T-junction (La Croix Anley) provides an opportunity (in summer) to enjoy some outdoor Jersey strawberries from the trolley on the corner. The fields all around here have been used for growing strawberries for over 40 years.

Strawberries
"Wife, into the garden and set me a plot With strawberry roots, the best to be got, Such as grow abroad among thorns in the wood, well chosen and picked, prove excellent good. “Thomas Tusser: A Hundreth Good Pointes of Husbandrie (1557)

Wild strawberries have been eaten for over 2000 years, and strawberries remained extremely popular through the centuries. But these were mountain and wood strawberries and it was only when the Puritans arrived in the New World, and discovered that the local Indians were cultivating this wonderful fruit, that the strawberry was introduced to the European market generally.

The strawberry we all know and love in Jersey restaurants and at home (accompanied ideally by a generous helping of delicious Jersey cream!), has evolved from an 18th century hybrid plant using two American types, Fragaria chiloensis and Fragaria virginianas.

The varieties grown in the fields here are Elsanta, established for over 30 years as the most important variety in the UK for its consistency and long shelf-life, and the Dutch bred Flamenco, an ‘everbearer’ which produces a high yield of over 1 kilo of fruit per plant.

Young plants are stored during winter in low-temperature conditions at the UK suppliers, and imported for planting in May. Person and Frière, the growers here, plant 58 vergées of fields that have been used for strawberries since the 1960’s.

The young strawberries are planted in rows and protected by black plastic, which also covers the irrigation system. The plastic not only prevents weeds without requiring weed-killer, it also stops rainwater splashing the berries.

The plants put in the ground in May, will produce a crop of fruit in September and then again the following May. An average of 80 tons a year is picked and sold mainly in punnets of 250 and 500 grams. Everything is sold on the local market.

Company director Joe Frière, who originates from Madeira, has a philosophy about growing: he says: “The profit of being a grower is to enjoy it; it is all in the love of the land”.

Turn right at the strawberry fields along La Rue du Bel au Vent (‘the road of the windy farm’), to reach the crossroads with the unusual ‘finger’ signpost. Turn left towards St Lawrence Church along La Rue des Moraines, which becomes Le Mont Gavey, before descending steeply around sharp bends (be careful of oncoming vehicles).
The house at the bottom of the hill is built on the site of Le Moulin de Quétivel, one of seven water-mills in what is now known as Waterworks Valley. The present owners have reinstated the mill-wheel. (A mill of the same name in St Peter’s Valley has been restored by the National Trust for Jersey. It is open to the public on certain days during the summer).

NB The route can be shortened at this point by about 2/3 mile (1 km) by taking the marked footpath through the woods.

Continue up La Rue de Bas, then turn left into La Rue de la Patente to reach Hamptonne, the Country Life Museum on the left. There is an entry fee, but there is much to see and also an excellent café for refreshments.

Hamptonne
Hamptonne is named after Laurent Hamptonne who, in February 1649, proclaimed King Charles II in the Royal Square in St Helier, following the execution of his father in London. Although the Hamptonne estate was not a fief, manorial status was granted by Letters Patent in 1649 in recognition of Hamptonne’s loyalty. The King is reputed to have visited the house when in exile in Jersey in 1650.

The property is now a fascinating museum, with each house and associated farm outhouses restored to the highest standards. The Good Wyf describes for visitors what life was like in the 17th century and the museum is stocked with many animals, hens and geese.

In 2006, the property was used to film Thomas Hardy’s ‘Under the Greenwood Tree’.

From Hamptonne, continue along la Rue de la Patente to the T-junction and turn left. The square colombier on the right is one of only two square dovecots in the island, all the others being round. It was unusual for permission to be granted for a colombier where the property was not a recognised manor, but there has been one here since 1445. The present building dates from 1674.

Follow the road with care down the hill and join the marked footpath below the wall on the left (walkers taking the short-cut from Quetivel mill will exit from the woods at this point). The construction of this wall was one of several schemes designed to keep Jersey people busy during the Occupation; they would not then be available to work for the Germans.

The footpath is now well signed all the way to the end of the Millennium Walk.

St Lawrence Millennium Walk – Le Sentier des Moulins
Le Sentier des Moulins was constructed by volunteers from the Parish of St Lawrence to commemorate the Millennium. Cut into the woods and alongside the stream, it wends its way down both sides of the valley, crossing the road at several places. There are descriptive plaques at various places along the walk.

Half way down the walk passes the St Lawrence Parish Millennium Stone. A gift from the Société Jersiaise in the year 2000, it is local granite from Roncez’s quarries and was erected by the Jersey Field Squadron. Every parish received a similar Stone, as well as a Millennium Cross given by the States of Jersey.

Water in Jersey
Water in Jersey is provided by the Jersey New Waterworks Company, the oldest company in the island. Originally set up in 1863, the Company supplied St Helier from a well in this valley, before completing its first reservoir at Millbrook in 1895. Today there are six...
raw water reservoirs in the island with a total capacity of 2700 million litres, plus another five small reservoirs for treated water.

The reservoirs gather water from streams and run-off from the land, and are replenished from streams across the island by a series of eight abstraction points. Water needs to be pumped from reservoir to reservoir because in some cases the catchment areas produce more water than their reservoirs can hold.

In addition to the collection of rain, spring and stream water, the Company operates a reverse-osmosis desalination plant, providing additional water in times of low rainfall and high demand.

The Company supplies just under 35,000 connection points of which about 8,500 are metered, sending 7,300 million litres of water annually through 450 kms of mains piping. The average rainfall in Jersey is 850 mm per annum.

**Jersey’s Water Mills**
Milling using water power has been used in Jersey since mediaeval times: with valleys running down from the high ground in the north to the low lying south coast, the topography of the island provides fast-running streams ideal for mills. As many as forty-seven water mills have been recorded in Jersey. Mills were used for milling corn, fulling cloth, crushing sugar, making paper or grinding malt for beer.

Philip Dumaresq wrote in 1685 “there are pleasant rivulets that in their way to the sea drive several corn mills by the help of sluices”.

Either the Crown or the Seigneurs owned the mills and were responsible for certain elements of their construction and maintenance, such as the grain measures, the scoops on the wheel and the sluices. Their tenants were required to provide roofing, stone for walls and heavy timbers, and pay for the transportation of the mill-stones.

The mills were at their busiest in the mid-1800’s, when corn was imported into Jersey from the Baltic to meet a demand from America for flour. In 1847 there were riots in St Helier because of the high price of flour.

The walk ends in the car park at La Ruelle St. Claire