

St Pierre l'Eglise

Accueil : <http://www.decouvrir-montfarville.fr>

It is a 1600 inhabitant place 16 km far from Cherbourg. The village looks provincial and oldish with granite built houses both common and identical among which some are still thatched.

In the very center there is a square where markets and fairs are held: every Wednesday is market day whereas the main fair called Grande Saint Pierre takes place on august 1st.

Though the town look so insignificant to a visitor's eyes, its fame comes from particularity that many more remarkable cities could envy; it is the birth place of the real founder of the Society of Nations- better still, it is the place where the very society was imagined, over than 200 years ago. As it is the place where Abbé Saint Pierre conceived the first idea of his project for a perpetual peace, a monument is meant to commemorate the great man on the village square in the near future.

The church

The former church had been built at the turn of the 13th century, of which only remains the bottom part of the tower: a very typical norman doorway, part of the chancel where you can see the original ogive - the place of the former church was used for the single side aisle of the new one built in the middle of the 17th century. The trend was no longer for norman nor gothic style. Yet the architect of the present church imagined it in the shape of a turned-over boat to honour st Peter's.

We can therefore see the ridge of the vaulted roof that represents the keel, from which start eight carved stone ribs meant as the frame. They hold on one side, on the pillars of the arcades and on the south wall in an ogive shaped arch.

Seen from the outside the building looks far from a sight, with its plain windows and its large gabled roof topped by a lean meaningless campanile- one would imagine a market place were it not for the spire above it.

The spire was raised in the 17th century; almost 30 meter high with a platform on top on which four watch box like turrets adorn the angles all linked with a granite railing.

Charles de Saint Pierre, the father of the abbé, was the main donator for the building of the church in which he is buried together with his wife Madeleine Gigault de Bellefonds and their first son Bon Thomas who had been granted the title of marquis de Saint Pierre.

The manor

The magnificent manor we can still see today in St Pierre l'Eglise, was built in the middle of the 18th century (one hundred year after the church)- there had been two former ones previously.

The first one was a castle, built right opposite the church doorway, on what is nowadays a pond. A local insignificant nobleman, member of the Ligue, Jean de Raffoville, attacked it and set it on fire in 1595. There were only walls burnt to a cinder left.

Sometime later, another manor house was built a little bit further away in the park, the place where Abbé de Saint Pierre was born in 1658.

Finally In the 18th century, Marquis Bon Hervé de Saint Pierre, a nephew of the abbé, wished to make use of his important income, in a way that would serve the local workers and the poor in the vicinity. He had heavy work done: a wall was built around the park, high trees were planted inside the enclosed area for a future wood, the present manor was built according to Nicolas Blondel's plans - he was the king's architect.

The noble dwelling built on an extensive vaulted basement is composed of a 41 meter long twin building. The central pavilion is crested with a triangular pediment. The whole building embodies a majestic simplicity. The arrangement inside is happily testifies for a luxurious comfort.

The park with magnificent trees and different species spreads on about 130 acres of land: eight avenues converge to a central round about.