



COMMUNIQUÉ

The Newsletter of **LA SOCIÉTÉ GUERNESIAISE**

February 2017 Issue No.92

Guernsey's Local Research, Natural History and Conservation Society

AGM 2017

The AGM will be held at Candie in the Frossard Theatre on Thursday 23rd March beginning at 7.30pm for the purpose of transacting the following business:

- (a) To hear the report of the President, Dr Andrew Casebow.
- (b) To receive the annual statement of accounts.
- (c) To elect the officers and members of the Council.

Three Ordinary Members of Council are retiring. Mr Richard de la Rue and Mr Mike Deane are not eligible for re-election and Mrs Lawney Martin is not standing for re-election. There are four vacancies for Ordinary Council Members. Any nominations for these vacancies should be sent to the Secretary, supported by a seconder, to reach her no later than Thursday 9th March.

- (d) To appoint accountants.
- (e) To consider any other matters or propositions affecting La Société. Any member who wishes to make a proposal at the AGM should submit it in writing, supported by a seconder to the Secretary to reach her by Thursday 9th March.

A full agenda together with the minutes of the last meeting and a copy of the 2016 accounts will be available to all members who attend the AGM. Details of nominations for Members of Council and all proposals for discussion will be displayed on the Noticeboard at Candie from Friday 10th March. After a short break, during which refreshments will be served, there will be a talk by Roland Gauvain of the Alderney Wildlife Trust.

2015 TRANSACTIONS

We hope to publish the 2015 Transactions by the end of March. Members for whom we have Email addresses will be advised when they are available for collection. Members who are not on the society's e-mail list are advised to collect their copies from mid-April.

Please also keep a look out for collection details on our website www.societe.org.gg

SUBSCRIPTIONS FOR 2017

Subscription rates remain unchanged for 2017 as follows:

	<i>Local</i>	<i>Overseas</i>
Single	£25	£25
Double/Family	£30	£25
Student	£5	£5
Corporate	£200	£200
Schools	£20	£20
Life Membership-single	£300	£300
Life Membership-double	£400	£400

Standing Orders were received in January and Direct Debits were also taken in January 2017. For those paying by cash, cheque or Paypal please note your 2017 Subscription is now due if not already paid. A few of our members are still paying by Standing Order at out of date rates. If you are paying by Standing Order then kindly instruct your bank to pay the correct amount as shown above. We do understand that some of our long-standing members may experience difficulties in submitting the correct amount but Council has regretfully decided that due to high printing and postage costs, these members will no longer receive a copy of the annual Transactions.

Please note 2017 Membership cards are being sent out with this newsletter. One card per household is issued. If you are a joint member and you would like an extra card or you live off-island or receive the newsletter via e-mail and would like a membership card kindly

Email: membership@societe.org.gg

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

"May you live in interesting times" was a traditional Chinese curse, but it is a blessing if you are a member of La Société, with so many fascinating things going on.

La Sociétés Council formed a small 'Way Forward Group' last autumn, which has had three meetings since November. This originally started with a long-standing desire to update La Société website and communications with members and the wider community, but it has rapidly expanded its remit into considering communications and governance of La Société. Two members, Barry Wells and Phil Atkinson, who have experience of the management of organisations (and NGO's), boundless energy and enthusiasm, have been co-opted onto the group and have led our discussions. Barry has a background in media and publishing whilst Phil, who is Head of International Research and Principal Ecologist at the British Trust for Ornithology, has managed our website for many years. The group originally hoped that it would be ready to report at the next AGM on Thursday 23rd March but, as is often the nature of these things, it is now likely that the group will report back to an Extraordinary General Meeting of members later in the autumn.

The annual Griff Caldwell Bursary of £1000 was awarded to a post-graduate student, Laura Bampton, whilst she was at home in Guernsey during the Christmas holidays. Laura is currently doing a Masters degree in Global Environment, Politics and Society at Edinburgh University following a first degree in Natural Sciences at Cambridge. There were 8 very good applicants this year. The annual bursary is open to all Guernsey students who are studying at either first degree or higher degree level and, hopefully as awareness of its availability becomes more widely known, we will have even more applications. Please spread the word to your family and friends.

I am pleased to announce that following the purchase of two parcels of land in St Peters and at La Clare Mare last autumn, La Société has made a successful offer to purchase more land near to the Chateau du Marais, in St Sampsons. This is land that has been designated as a Site of Special Significance in the new Island Development Plan and, over a period of time, it is hoped that with other Areas of Biodiversity Importance in that area, it will form the basis of a new wildlife reserve.

La Société is now the second largest landowner in the Island, after the States of Guernsey and we hope to organise members visits to all of our reserves throughout this coming summer. That reminds me that I must mention the excellent voluntary work being undertaken by Vic Froome and his team, which includes Chris Mourant and another who wishes to remain anonymous. They have been removing ivy and recapping the large granite wall adjacent to the Vale Pond. The capping stones on this wall had fallen into undergrowth on the pond side of the wall (on both sides of the hide) and the work has involved clearing the site, finding all the capping stones and cementing them back into place. Our thanks to Ronez for donating the sand and cement needed for this work. I visited last week with Richard Axton who had come over from Sark for the day. The Vale Pond is a truly magical place and from the hide overlooking the pond one forgets the traffic passing so close by.

Helen Litchfield and Hazel Hill of the Botany Section have started up a Facebook page with the intention to put up pictures every few days of species that are currently in flower, with information about the plants. I've joined and I would urge you to as well. Helen tells me that they are delighted with the response so far and with the number of people engaging with the page. **Try it for yourself** <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1310943042297921>

The Channel Islands Beach Clean was conducted on 14th January 2017 and what a success! Organized by the Alderney Wildlife Trust, and sponsored by Rothschild, several of the Channel Islands took part, including Jersey, Alderney and Sark. The Marine Biology Section of La Société led the Guernsey event, which took place at the Pezeries (near the fairy ring at Portelet). An amazing number of volunteers came along to the Guernsey event to help us clean the area; 34 in total! **Details of the event can be found on our Facebook page:** <https://www.facebook.com/LaSocieteGuernesaise> or by emailing the Marine Biology Section (marinebiology@societe.org.gg).

Finally, let me remind you that the AGM will be held on Thursday 23rd March at 7.30pm. Roland Gauvain, Manager of the Alderney Wildlife Trust, will speak on the truly inspirational work of the trust. I do hope that you will be able to attend.

Dr Andrew Casebow

Upcoming Talk - Saturday 4th March at 1.30pm, the Frossard Theatre Candie. "Ecology and Conservation in New Zealand" by Charles Hurford.

Free entry for Societe Members and £5 for non-members payable on the door. A presentation on the ecology of New Zealand, and how New Zealand is protecting and managing its conservation estate against the modern threats of invasive species, loss of habitat and changing land use. This talk will be presented by Charles Hurford who has worked with endangered species in his native New Zealand, holds a BSc in New Zealand ecology and now works in Guernsey for PEH.

NEW PUBLICATIONS

The Country People of Guernsey and their Agriculture, 1640 - 1840 by Richard Hocart.
(£12: available at local bookshops and from La Société Guernesiaise)

In this new book, based on several years research in Guernsey and in UK archives, Richard Hocart shows how the population of the island's country parishes made their living between the mid-seventeenth and the mid-nineteenth centuries.

He argues that during that period the island farming system evolved in response to changes in the market for produce.

The growth of the town of St. Peter Port stimulated local agricultural production and crop rotations developed by trial and error contributed to the success of agriculture. The introduction of new crops such as clover, lucerne and potato is charted.

After 1814 imports of relatively cheap French farm produce forced the Guernsey farmers to concentrate on their most profitable products and to improve the local breed of cow. Other industries, in particular fishing and hand knitting of garments for export, sustained many families and these industries are covered.

The impact on farmers of the law of inheritance and other customs, such as feudal dues is examined, and the place of farmers within the social structure of the island is considered.

Nick Le Messurier of the Guernsey Press writes: 'in contrast to some history writers, Richard Hocart manages to maintain a flowing writing style which makes the book accessible to anyone'.

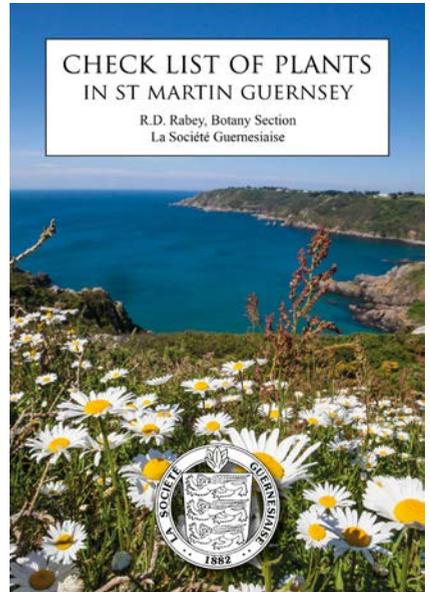
(Paperback. Text 229 pages. Illustrated with 20 reproductions of historic images and modern photographs and 3 maps.)

Check List of Plants in St Martin Guernsey by R. D. Rabey, Botany Section of La Société Guernesiaise.

An invaluable guide for any keen local or visiting botanist. This list could not have been produced without the help of Andrew Lee who scrambled up and down cliffs and through the undergrowth plant spotting. 21 pages, priced at £3.50 and available from our office at Candie - we are open Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday between 10 am and 12 noon.



Vraic gatherers on the West coast.
Photo courtesy of the Priaux Library.



Oxeye Daisies above Petit Port
– photo courtesy of VisitGuernsey

The Triumph of the Country, The Rural Community in 19th Century Jersey by John Kelleher.

Readers may recall J.D. Kelleher's *The Triumph of the Country: The Rural Community in the Nineteenth Century Jersey*, first published in 1994. It was the first and remains the only major history of nineteenth-century Jersey. It was an immediate success and ran to two editions. It is now due to be published in hardback in a revised and extended version.

The work analyses how, in the wake of the Napoleonic Wars and after centuries of relative isolation as an outpost loyal to the English Crown, the island of Jersey suddenly found itself exposed to significant challenges to its way of life from both within and without. These included a large immigrant population, particularly from Britain and the colonies, and massive economic growth (the Atlantic cod trade, the overseas carrying trade, the shipbuilding industry and a booming agriculture based on the Jersey cow and the potato industry), the advance of the English language, the popularity of Nonconformism and the clamour for the reform of Jersey's antiquated political structure and laws. The book charts those challenges through the eyes of the rural community and examines how they responded to them.

Dr. Kelleher will be issuing a pre-subscription offer enabling purchase at a reduced rate and is kindly extending that offer to members. If you wish to take up this offer, please register your interest by writing to the author at john.kelleher@careyolsen.com or 47 Esplanade, St. Helier, Jersey, JE1 0BD. Publication is scheduled for the early Summer 2017.

CHICHESTER NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY

Visit to Guernsey in April 2016 – reports on plants and birds seen on the trip.

As stated in Visit Guernsey's website, Guernsey takes pride in its own lily, *Nerine sarniensis*. These plants are fundamentally important to the island. Although native to South Africa, local legend has it that the bulb washed ashore on the west coast from a Dutch ship, wrecked while en route from the Far East. Like the southwest of England the climate on the Channel Islands some 100 miles to the south of Britain is mild and thus produces a panoply of wild flowers in spring.

Some 150+ species were seen on the recent CNHS visit in May. It is the quiet lanes which glow at this time of year. The banks and hedges include masses of three cornered leek *Allium triquetrum* (from the Mediterranean), bluebells *Endymion non-scriptus*, lesser celandine *Ranunculus ficaria*, primroses *Primula vulgaris*, and Common Dog violets *Viola riviniana* amongst many others. The density has to be seen to be believed.

Unfortunately the sand crocus *Romulea columnae* which grows on Sark was not one of these and was not seen although one of the known sites was visited. At the back of the dunes and on Sark we found Little Robin *Geranium purpureum*. This is a smaller version of the well known and commonly occurring Herb Robert *Geranium robertianum* but the flowers have yellow stamens. This is a rare plant in the UK and, interestingly, many other such rare plants recorded on the islands, but not seen on our visit, include plants which occur in Cornwall – Balm-leaved figwort *Scrophularia scorodonia*, and Haresfoot Clover *Trifolium arvense*. However, Rosemary did find Wild Clary *Salvia verbenaca*.

Guernsey is also known for rare ferns and, it is said that the rarest plant on Sark is Narrow-leaved Cudweed *Filago gallica* growing in the only place in the British Isles where it survives naturally.... which must mean it no longer occurs on the north coast of Cornwall on the former railway line (now a cycle and pedestrian route way) which ran from Wadebridge to Padstow.

Two forms of Tree Mallow occur, *Lavatera cretica*, the rare small tree Mallow and *Lavatera arborea* the Tree Mallow which has very velvety leaves. Again, much like Cornwall, there are also many introductions which have, in turn, become pests.



Chichester Natural History Society outside Saints Bay Hotel – photo courtesy of Donald Wells.

Plants such as the South African Kaffir or Hottentot Fig *Carpobrotus edulis* smothers coastal plants and very small pieces can keep growing which makes it difficult to erase; and, we also saw a small patch of Japanese Knotweed *Fallopia (Reynoutria) japonica*. One stunning and distinctive plant introduced from the Canary Islands grows to over 8 ft, the Giant Echium *Echium pininana* related to our well known Viper's Bugloss *Echium vulgare*. Despite being early in the year two of the group saw Southern Marsh Orchid *Dactylorhiza praetermissa* and Denise led us to a group of Early-purple Orchids *Orchis mascula* near Jerbourg en route to St Peter Port and the ferry home! What a lovely trip.

Jill Sutcliffe

A Morning's Birding with 2 Guernsey RSPB Members:

On Monday 25th April some of our companions set off for Sark, some opted for other interests whilst Diana and I were picked up early at our hotel by Anne Seebeck and Mike Smith from the Guernsey RSPB group. First stop was to be a hide overlooking a small reserve close to the coast. We soon accounted for 19 species either in the reserve or flying overhead. The best sighting was a Common Sandpiper expertly picked out by Diana. We also had our first of what turned out to be many sightings of a Marsh Harrier that was apparently nesting beyond a far reed bed. Having exhausted the reserve we headed along the coast to a spot where a couple of Ring Ouzels had been seen. Alas, as we sheltered in the lee of a massive WW2 German bunker / fortification out of the rain, we could find no sign of an Ouzel where it had been previously spotted. We did add a few birds to our tally with Fulmar, Shag and Gannets.

On route to another stop we briefly scanned a sandy beach where several White Wagtails could be seen foraging along the high tide line plus a Little Egret, Whimbrels and a couple of juvenile Black-headed Gulls which are not that common on Guernsey. The next stop was Saumarez Park where we hoped to find a Short-toed Treecreeper. The numbers of species steadily grew with Chaffinch, Chiffchaff, Blackcap, Goldcrest and Song Thrush in the car park. There was still a damp drizzle in the air so it was time for a coffee break in the onsite café. After a brief respite we continued around the park and immediately Anne, who had an ear for birds, detected the call of the Short-toed Treecreeper.

I must admit that at first I couldn't hear it as I can't always pick out the higher sounds these days. The bird was working along a high avenue of trees and after period of about ten minutes Mike spotted it high above. We had a very short sighting but hey....my first ever Short-toed Treecreeper. Progressing onwards towards a lake central to the park we added Goldfinch, Dunnock, House Martin, Collared Dove and a flypast from a Great Spotted Woodpecker. By now we had identified 45 species. Our time was running out so one last stop was agreed.

We found ourselves at a small hide, with just enough room for 4, overlooking a small reed lined pond in deepest Guernsey. We soon had the best of views of a Sedge Warbler along with a Reed Warbler. Seeing the two together really helps with ID. The last birds found were a single Bullfinch and Mike was sure he spotted a Sand Martin. This took our final tally to 51 birds which all things considered with the wind and rainy conditions were a good count. One last note: Mike pointed out a Southern Marsh Orchid growing by the reed lined pond, out last stop. Anne and Mike kindly dropped us back to the hotel where we said our goodbyes and gave our thanks for a great mornings birding. They were two very friendly islanders who both were very accomplished with identification both by sight and sound.

Over the next few days we would spend time as a group combining birding with stops at other places of interest. Whilst generally visiting various sites around the island we found Marsh Harriers, White Wagtails, numerous Grey Lag Geese, Swallows in ever increasing numbers, Wrens seemingly in every bush, Blackcaps, Linnets etc. The tally of birds was now approaching the 60 mark.

St. Saviours Reservoir:

A walk by the whole group around St. Saviours Reservoir was a very pleasant morning's exercise. We either saw or heard 23 different birds whilst ambling around what is known as the Millennium walk, approx 3 kilometres in length, which follows the water's edge. The best birds were a pair of splendid Bullfinches and 4 Common Sandpipers. We were quite certain that we heard the call of a Green Woodpecker which is very distinctive but alas no visual sighting. We did add it to our numbers.

Herm:

A group visit to Herm had been planned for Thursday. Our coach driver dropped us in St. Peter Port where we took a 20 minute ferry ride to Herm Island. We had great expectations and were hoping to find the Puffins that had been reported there. I was also hoping to see a Razorbill as it was on my list of must see birds. The group that had visited Sark on Monday had already encountered some right in the harbour where they docked. Our guide, Leslie, met us at the key and outlined out planned route that would take in likely spots for birds and flora around the island. Although our entire group were interested in the birds many were hoping to find a good selection of wild flowers and maybe even an orchid or two. We walked clockwise around the island heading across the open common to the north and onto shell beach.

The shoreline leading to the common gave us views of Oystercatchers, Herring Gulls, distant Shags, Great Black-backed Gulls and surprisingly some late Brent Geese. There were Greenfinches, Robins, Chaffinches, more Wrens, Swallows and a few Blackcaps around the common. I have been amazed at the number of Wrens distributed across the islands. I must have seen more Wrens in my time there than I will see in the coming year.

We spent a short fascinating time at shell beach collecting a few shells to remind us of our time there. Our walk continued clockwise with interesting points of discussion with our guide to the farm which is located at a high point on the island. It was approaching the farm that a small brown warbler seen in the hedgerow became a problem with ID. If only it remained still enough for a picture. It didn't appear to be a Chiffchaff or a Willow warbler as I thought the beak was too strong. The colouration was also different.

After several of us consulting a book we thought maybe it had been a Cettis Warbler but as most times a Cettis is identified by sound and this bird was too intent on foraging it made no sound at all. I am afraid it was to be a bird that escaped ID. At this point our group fragmented with some opting a short cut back to the harbour. The rest retraced our oath back to the coastal cliffs and continuing around the island. We had more sightings of Marsh harriers and inevitably many more Wrens then around the next bend 4 Razorbills were close to the foot of the cliffs showing quite well and these took our tally of birds to 60. No sooner had we lost sight of the Razorbills the call came....Puffins. A distant group of 10 were flying back and forth then drifting on the tide.

Finally we had reasonable views from high above as the birds drifted closer to shore. Once again our group became less in numbers with just 5 of us covering the last leg around the island with some choosing to return with the guide and catch the next ferry. We were happy to wait for the last ferry of the day. The 5 of us lunched where we could see the Puffins and also had sightings of several Fulmar, Shag, Gannets, a Peregrine Falcon and a large seal made a brief view before diving and disappearing for good.

At last we found ourselves back at the harbour where a few of our party were waiting for the last ferry. They added a few more birds to our list in the shape of Guillemot, Meadow Pipit and Stonechat. We had a last beverage at the Mermaid restaurant where a Peregrine flew over our heads and some Red-legged Partridges were seen. We caught the last ferry from Rosaire steps and finally a bus back to the hotel.

North shores and Saumarez Park:

Friday being our last day was a trip to the northern shores and a visit to Saumarez Park. This turned out to be our wettest day but still produced a few birds. We had more Wheatears, Stonechats, Linnets, Meadow Pipits, finally found some Turnstones, more Whimbrels and yes believe it or not.....more Wrens. Our Tally was now at 69 identified species and the big question was "would we crack 70"? We bumped into a fairly well known photographer, Chris Bale, who had just photographed a Long-eared Owl not 100 metres from where we stood. Unfortunately it was roosting in some conifers in someone's back garden out of sight and not visible from anywhere else other than in the back yard. That would have made our 70....oh well such is the life of a birder.

Thanks must go to our organisers, especially Denise Bowerman, our guides on the islands Sylvia Brouard on Guernsey, Leslie Bailey on Herm, Anne Seebeck and Mike Smith from the Guernsey RSPB, the hotel staff and all the individuals of our group who made the trip a great success.

Graham Whitehead (Chichester RSPB)

ARCHAEOLOGY

In November Shane Le Page reported peat exposures at the north end of Vazon Beach. Winter storms had washed away sand and shingle revealing the peat, and in it Shane observed flint and the remains of two wooden stakes apparently driven in. The archaeology Group visited the site and collected more than 200 flints; interestingly most of these had been subjected to heat and this must have happened in prehistoric times when sea levels were lower and this was not a beach. David Lane has examined the collection and his report will appear in the Transactions. Peat analysis has shown that periodic burning took place during the Neolithic period and Bronze Age; it is likely this was done deliberately to clear land for cultivation.

As for the two wooden stakes, a little exploration revealed that there were more: in total about 15 were found, running in a roughly southwest / northeast line for about 11 metres. Due to the depth of the sand we were limited in our ability to excavate and it is likely that there are more. The stakes are quite small - typically about 6cm in diameter - except for one which is about twice the size. This largest stake was excavated and found to have been shaped to a point, possibly by a stone tool. A sample of the wood will be sent for radiocarbon dating. Working theories are that this was either a prehistoric feature, from the time before this was a beach, perhaps an enclosure; or the remains of an historic fishtrap. The radiocarbon dating will hopefully shed some light on this.

Talks

Tuesday 21st February at 7.30pm - "Archaeological Excavations in St Peter Port in the 1970's" a talk by Tanya Walls (Archaeology Secretary) with Nicky David and Judith Keen. A number of rescue excavations were carried out in Town in the 1970's; this talk will describe some of these and there will be an opportunity to look at some finds.

Tuesday 21st March at 7.30pm - "Recent discoveries from the Jersey Hoard" by Philip de Jersey (States Archaeologist). This huge hoard of Iron Age coins, torcs and other valuables was discovered in 2012 and has now been taken apart by conservation specialists. This is an opportunity to hear the latest news on this internationally important find.

We will also be looking at sites affected by coastal erosion over the next few months. Please contact the Section Secretary, **Tanya Walls** archaeology@societe.org.gg for further details.

Tanya Walls



Vazon Map - Air photo showing the location of the line of stakes set into the peat. The flint was also recovered from this general area. Photo Courtesy of © Digimap 2016.



Line of Stakes: Members of the Archaeology Group along the line of the stakes. Photo Courtesy of Philip de Jersey.



Excavation of Stake - This stake has been removed and a sample will be radiocarbon dated. It was shaped in to a point before being driven into the ground. Photo Courtesy of Philip de Jersey.

The Section opened its observatory to the public for the last Open Evening of the year on 4th November. In all we held ten Open Evenings during the year, most of them during the summer holidays so as to appeal to visitors as well as locals. There have also been group visits throughout the year, organised by our Events Co-ordinator, Frank Dowding. During the last quarter we had visits from Beaver and Scout groups, and the U3A. Members meet on Tuesday evenings and there is usually a discussion topic. In the last quarter topics included Fred Hoyle, Ancient Astronomers, the Foucault Pendulum, the Oort Cloud and the Twin Paradox. We also had a presentation by Jean Dean on DSLR Astrophotography. Jean has produced some stunning astronomical images and has an in-depth knowledge of astrophotography. With her help several of our members have been inspired to try astro imaging for themselves. We concluded our activities for 2016 with a Christmas dinner at Moores Hotel. At the start of each year David Le Conte, the Section's Public Relations Officer, prepares a look ahead to the year's astronomical events. The Guernsey Press printed David's article as a centre page spread on the 4th January. The big event of 2017 will be the solar eclipse on 21st August. It won't be very impressive from Guernsey, we will only see half an hour of a 13% partial eclipse, but a total eclipse will be enjoyed by millions of people in the United States. Astronomy Section members will have recently received a copy of our annual newsletter, Sagittarius, along with a Federation of Astronomical Societies astrocalendar with monthly star charts and listings of astronomical events. Looking ahead to February we will once again be running the six-week WEA 'Stargazing' course, the sixteenth year in succession that the Section has put on the course.

Peter Langford

See the Stars with Large Telescopes

Visitors are welcome at Guernsey's Astronomical Observatory on the following date:

Bank Holiday Monday, 29th May 10.30am to 12.30pm to observe the sun.

Visitors will be shown how the telescopes operate with viewing if clear and given illustrated talks on space related subjects. Donations are welcomed and assist with running and maintenance costs. We suggest adults £2, children £1.

The Observatory is in La Rue du Lorier, St Pierre-du-Bois. Perry's Guide reference 21 E3. Parking is usually available at La Houquette School, Rue des Paysans. From the school go 100 yards up the road, then left onto Rue du Lorier, then immediately right, behind a large bunker. The road is dark, so a torch is advisable. For further information and directions see www.astronomy.org.gg or call Peter Langmead on 265557.

BAT SECTION

The Bat Section of the Société Guernesiaise was established on 5th March 2016. The aims of the Bat Section are to rehabilitate injured bats and to carry out roost surveys to help identify the various species of bats found in Guernsey and to record any changes to the populations of those species.

If you find an injured bat you should contact Aimée Golden directly on 07911 713115 or the GSPCA, who will contact the Bat Section. Bat Section meetings are held on the first Wednesday of every month in the Section Room at Candie at 7.45pm. New members are very welcome.

Aimée Golden

BOTANY

Please join the Botany Section's new Facebook page where you will find details of the monthly walks and recent plant photos. Once you have joined you can add your own images - please see <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1310943042297921/>

For further enquiries about the monthly Botany walks please contact Anna Cleal
by Email: botany@societe.org.gg

Membership enquiries can be sent to Rich Austin, Maymyo, Les Amballes, St Peter Port, GY1 1WY
or Email: richmond.austin43@gmail.com

ENTOMOLOGY

Any queries kindly contact Mark Lawlor Email: mplawlor@cwgsy.net

FAMILY HISTORY

Opening Hours 2017 - The new Section room at the Russell's at Les Cotils will be open on the first and third Saturday of each month between 10am and 12 noon until further notice. All welcome.

Events:

Saturday 18th February - OPEN morning, Section Room at the Russells, Les Cotils, St Peter Port - 10am to noon. All welcome.

Wednesday 22nd March - Frossard Theatre, Candie. A talk by Brian de Jersey entitled "The Vale Parish" - 7.45pm.

Wednesday 17th May - Anna Quick will give a talk with reference to the Grammar School log book of 1914 (title to be announced) Frossard Theatre, Candie at 7.45pm. Please see our website www.societe.org.gg for further details.

Any general Family History queries should be addressed to:

The Family History Section, PO Box 314, St Peter Port, Guernsey GY1 3TG.

Alternatively Email Maria van der Tang: researchenquiries@hotmail.co.uk

GEOLOGY

Contact Andy Dorey Tel 252123 or Email: andydorey3@gmail.com

HISTORIC BUILDINGS

Events - Please note the talks below are by John McCormack and begin at 7.30pm in the Frossard Theatre, Candie.

Saturday 11th February - "How were the vaults of our medieval parish churches constructed?"

Saturday 25th February - "Where did the architectural styles of our churches originate?"

Saturday 11th March - "Why are Alderney houses so distinctive, and to what do they relate?"

Saturday 25th March - "The houses and shops of medieval St. Peter Port."

Saturday 22nd April - "A medieval, purpose-built tavern in Jersey."

Any queries can be sent to John McCormack: mrjam@cwgsy.net

JUNIOR SECTION

Events:

The first event of the year will be at the **Silbe Nature Reserve** (Perry's guide map page 20 D/4) - this will take place on **Sunday 26th March at 2:30pm**. Please note that parking in the area is limited, though in the past the tearoom at the bottom of the lane have allowed us to park in their car park. I will try to get in touch with the owners to make sure this will be okay again.

The Silbe Nature Reserve has been given to the Junior section for the children to gain hands-on experience and to help develop their interest in wildlife and to improve the area for the future. I will be looking at doing quite a few events with the help of the children to improve this reserve and through doing so they will develop a greater knowledge of the natural environment. The second event will be the boat trip to **The Humps** that unfortunately I had to cancel last year. This will now take place on **Sunday 28th May**, weather permitting. It will be about a three-hour trip from St Peter Port to the north, to an area known as the Humps. The area is not only renowned for its marine life but also for the birdlife that make the islets their home. Many seabirds return each year to breed on these islets and it is also where the largest population of Atlantic grey seals breed within the Channel Islands. No time has been set for this event yet as I need to know numbers in advance as it might be necessary to do two trips. Please can you let me now as soon as possible if you would like to come on this trip so that I can arrange times. Please note that there will be a small charge for any parents attending this event and that children will take priority as the boat is only licensed for 12 passengers. Contact details below.

Contact details: Mobile: 07911 130415 or Email: chris.mourant@yahoo.co.uk

LA SOCIÉTÉ CONSERVATION HERD

Since last autumn the steers of the Conservation Herd have been grazing their winter lands. These are private fields, which are generously loaned to the Conservation Herd, where the steers can graze during the wet and windy weather. This is essential as at this time of year it is not possible to graze the sensitive nature reserves or coastal grasslands.

Although this very dry winter has made the winter much easier for the Herd. This winter we produced the first beef from La Société Conservation Herd.



One of the steers enjoying some winter sun.
Photo courtesy of Julia Henney.

This is a very difficult and controversial, though essential stage in the cycle of the Herd. The beef was sold to volunteers and members of La Société and has helped raise essential funds to support the on-going costs - such as purchasing equipment and supplementary feed. The decision to keep a rotation of cattle in the herd is not only a financial one - it is essential that the herd is made up of cattle of different ages, including young stock.

If we maintained a herd of eight fully grown steers their combined weight would likely cause damage to the sensitive habitats they graze. By grazing sites with a herd of varied ages they are able to reduce the vegetation of site without causing damage to the structure of the grassland.

LA SOCIÉTÉ CONSERVATION HERD (CONT)

As they age their grazing patterns change, this variety of grazing which includes more coarse vegetation also adds to enhance the biodiversity of the land.

Cattle are born on a local farms and, were they not recruited to the Conservation Herd, they would be slaughtered at less than a week old. The Conservation Herd is able to take these steers, which are essentially bi-products of the dairy industry, and care for them for three years, providing them with a quality life whilst they help enhance Guernsey's biodiversity.

At the end of last year we welcomed two new steers to the Conservation Herd. Born on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day, herd members Nine and Ten are still young and being fed on milk. They are being reared up in private fields and will be heading out to start grazing the Nature Reserves early in the summer. When the weather starts to warm and the winter storms have blown over we will be moving the steers back to Port Soif Common for a second year of grazing.

For details of how you can help with the Herd please Email Julia Henney: conservationherd@societe.org.gg



Nine and Ten in their calf hutch.
Photo courtesy of Julia Henney.



The two new members of the Herd; Nine and Ten.
Photo courtesy of Julia Henney.

MARINE BIOLOGY

Events:

Saturday 25th February at 11.30am - Big Seaweed Search. A Big Seaweed Search will be carried out at Portelet on Saturday 25th February. We will meet at 11.30am at Portelet kiosk. Here is the link to the Big Seaweed Search website for more info: <http://www.nhm.ac.uk/take-part/citizen-science/big-seaweed-search.html>. The editor for the Torteval Parish Magazine has asked the Section to write an article on seaweeds for the April edition, and so we can use this event to feed into the article.

Sunday 12th March at 12pm - Ormer Survey. The Marine Biology Section annual Ormer survey will take place this year on Sunday 12th March. We will meet in the Lihou causeway car park at 12pm. As in previous years, we are teaming up with the Alderney Wildlife Trust (AWT) for this event: they will be carrying out an Ormer survey at the same time at Clonque Bay in Alderney. The data is then shared and compared, and submitted to the Guernsey Biological Records Centre.

Here is the AWT website: <http://www.alderneywildlife.org> Sturdy footwear required! Please note that the aim of this event is the collection of data, not of Ormers.

All of the MBS events are put up on the La Société website www.societe.org.gg under the SECTIONS area, and on the La Société Facebook page. If you would like to be included in the Marine Biology Section's mailing list to find out more about our events etc., or would like to become more involved, please Email: marinebiology@societe.org.gg

More information about the section can be found on the Société website or by contacting Lesley on 710737 or Email: lbourgaize@cwgsy.net

ORNITHOLOGY

In the last issue I focussed on the Snow bunting - we have been fortunate that some of these little gems again visited us during the Autumn of 2016. A species which, until 2015 had been recorded as a vagrant ie it occurs as a wanderer from its normal range was recorded here late last year.

There was a record 15-18 Cattle egrets in Fauxquet Valley in December. Cattle egrets are one of the most successful and widespread birds in the world. Only they and Arctic terns have been recorded in all of the world's seven continents. In 2007 a large number appeared in England, mainly in the South and West. Most of them returned to their breeding grounds, but, two pairs stayed and in 2008 bred in the Somerset Levels.

Unlike most herons these egrets are not reliant on wet habitats and this probably explains their success. Their name gives a clue as to where they like to be - in fields foraging among cattle or even on the backs of buffaloes or elephants, helping to rid them of parasites. We are fortunate to have their cousins Little egrets, resident and breeding here, so, how do we tell them apart?



Cattle Egret. Photo Courtesy of Rod Ferbrache

Cattle egrets are more creamy/white than their pure white cousins, and, in the breeding season exhibit orange plumes on their heads and backs and have an orangey /yellow bill; Little egrets are black-billed. Also they are slightly smaller, more compact and less elegant than the Little egrets. In a few years maybe they will feature on our list as resident or Winter visitor.

Other Autumn/Winter visitors to our shores which once we could count in good numbers are now scarce or not seen at all. Our visiting wader numbers have plummeted this century, due to a number of factors, including climate change.

On our small island disturbance is a major factor, so, please, if you own a dog, please find somewhere away from the beach to exercise it. Also please discourage any other dog walkers from the beach.

Nancy Ogier

LUNCH TIME LANGUAGE LESSONS AT CANDIE MUSEUM AND LANGUAGE WORKSHOPS

“Lessons at lunch time” is a Guernsey Language Commission supported initiative. Guernsey language classes take place at Candie Museum in La Société Guernesiaise’s room on Tuesday and Wednesday lunch times (generally from 12.15pm - 1pm and 1.15pm - 2pm). The classes are run as a series of six sessions which are informal and relaxed, the emphasis is on speaking. All levels are catered for from beginners, to elementary and intermediate. There is also a class for ‘ralumeus’ (‘rekindlers’/rememberers) specifically for people who spoke the language when they were younger, and wish to rekindle it). A 6 week series of sessions costs £25 (£20 if you have a Museum Discovery Pass), and are open to all. In addition to lunchtime lessons, stand-alone beginner language workshops are run from time to time.

Yan Marquis

If you are interested in coming along to the lessons, or taking part in a workshop, please contact myself janmarquis@suremail.gg or Josephine Dowding.

Access & Learning Manager / Guernsey Language Commission Culture & Heritage - Tel: 01481 747264 or josephine.dowding@gov.gg

<https://www.facebook.com/Guernesiaais/?fref=ts>
<http://language.gg/>

LEGACIES AND DONATIONS IN LIEU OF FLOWERS

Members are reminded that it is possible to make La Société a beneficiary of their will. Money or property can be left for general use, or if desired for a specific purpose. They are also reminded that donations in lieu of flowers can be made in memory of members who have died.

ASSOCIATED GROUPS:

Alderney Wildlife Trust	Roland Gauvain	822935
Blue Dolphins Sub Aqua Club	Jessi Jennings	bluedolphinsac@gmail.com
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Guernsey Conservation Volunteers	Angela Salmon	721163
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Le Cercle Français	Geoff Mahy	263029
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The Alderney Society & Museum	The Secretary	823222
The Guernsey Beekeepers’ Association	Chris Tomlins	07781 100311
The Guernsey Botanical Trust	Ivan Le Tissier	07911 719115
The Guernsey Society	Michael Paul	235858
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In addition to the Section Secretaries being Council members, other Council members are:

Jamie Hooper (co-opted), Jane Gilmour (co-opted), Helen Litchfield, Richard de la Rue, Michael Deane, Jessica Jennings, Adrian Nicolle, Lawney Martin, Rodney Collenette, Alex Hershel and the Very Reverend John Guille

Office Hours:

Our office at Candie is open to the public on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday mornings between 10am and 11.30am

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Published by La Société Guerneslaise
Candie Gardens, GY1 1UB

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Website: www.societe.org.gg

Design, production & printing:
www.printedinguernsey.com

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