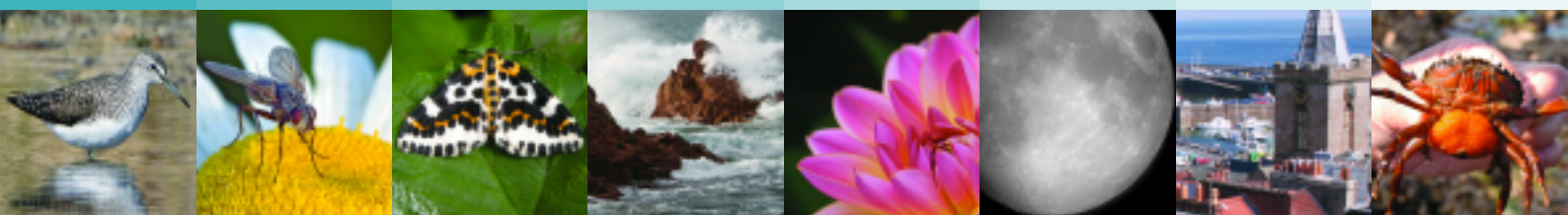




Guernsey's Local Research, Natural History and Conservation Society



Collection of Annual Transactions

**10.00am – 4.00pm
on Saturday 8th November**

Will local members please collect their copy or arrange to have it collected. If you do not want a copy, kindly let the office know. Christmas cards, books and small gifts will also be available.

Christmas Lunch

Please join us for our members' Christmas lunch which will take place at 12.15 for 12.45 pm on Sunday 7 December at the 4-star Fermain Valley Hotel. The price is £16 per head to include a tip to the staff but not drinks, which are available at the bar. Menu choices must be made in advance and sent to the Secretary along with your payment of £16 per head. Cheques should be payable to La Société Guernesiaise. PLEASE BOOK BY 5 NOVEMBER.

The menu is:

Seasonal soup of the day or
ham hock terrine with apple chutney

Roast turkey with pancetta and date stuffing or
salmon with citrus herb crust or
vegetarian alternative

Christmas pudding with brandy sauce or
seasonal fruit salad

Coffee

President's Report

Les Sablons

La Société Guernesiaise has, for many years, been looking for premises for an Interpretation Centre. When Les Sablons Tearoom at L'Erée, St Pierre du Bois, closed in June 2007, Jamie Hooper, our Conservation Officer, approached the owner, Eric Ozanne, to ask if we might rent the vacant room. At the time, Eric wasn't sure what the future of his business might be, but promised to give Jamie first refusal if it didn't restart. True to his word he contacted Jamie in April this year, offering us the site.

Five months later we have received permission from the States Environment Department for change of use, alterations have been made to comply with building regulations, the room has been refurbished and decorated and we are about to embark on producing information display boards.

In the meantime Joy Goldsmith has begun selling tea and cakes in one third of the room. Joy will act as custodian of the Centre and will open up and close each day and sell our own goods - books and cards etc.

This is an exciting project and will mean that visitors and locals, whether members or not, will have ready access to the vast amount of information that can be provided by the various Sections of La Société.

Continued on p.3

Subscription rise for January 2009

At the AGM in March it was decided to increase subscriptions with effect from next January, and members are asked to note these and to increase their standing orders where applicable. The last rise was in January 2006. The new rates will be:

	Guernsey, Sark and Alderney	Jersey, UK and overseas
Single	£19	£16
Double / family	£26	£19
Student (junior)	£5	£5
Single life membership	£250	£250
Double life membership	£300	£300
Corporate	£200	£200

It was also decided that, because of considerable administrative advantages in terms of cost and time saving, members be given the option to change their subscription payment method to Direct Debit. Approval has now been obtained.

We will be shortly writing to members to give them full details of this service, which they are strongly recommended to use. They will be asked to give their name, address, bank name, sort code and account number, and can be assured that no money will be taken as their subscription without prior notification.

We urge members to transfer to this easy and practical method of payment. Once registered with Direct Debit, they will need to cancel their Standing Order arrangement.

Officers and Council Members

		Telephone Number	Email: please add @societe.org.gg to the name below
Officers:			
President	Pat Costen	264500	president
Vice-President	Vacant		
Secretary	Lawney Martin	237853	secretary
Honorary Treasurer	Peter Budwin	716134	treasurer
Membership Secretary	May Teagle	724835	
Editor of the Transactions	Richard Hocart	254693	editor
Reserves Committee Chairman	Jane Gilmour	700024	
Land Management & Conservation Officer	Jamie Hooper	266924	
Volunteer Co-ordinator - Reserves	Vanessa Crispini-Adams	728799	
Librarians	Jean & Gavin Sampson	234430	
Section Secretaries:			
Archaeology	Tanya Walls	727614	archaeology
Astronomy	Debby Quertier	725760	astronomy
Botany	Jennie Grange	713403	botany
Botany	Rhiannon Cook	253705	botany
Climate Change	Andrew Casebow	722245	climate.change
Entomology	Charles David	238978	entomology
Family History	Edith Le Patourel	721566	
Geology and Geography	Andrew Dorey	252123	
Historic Buildings	John McCormack	720303	
History & Philology	Bill Gallienne	265529	history
Marine Biology & Zoology	Vacant		
Nature Conservation	Denise Thoumine	723003	
Ornithology	Nancy Ogier	268191	ornithology
Associated Groups:			
The Alderney Society & Museum	The Secretary	823222	
Alderney Wildlife Trust	Roland Gauvain	822935	
Bat Group	Pat Costen	264500	
Guernsey Conservation Volunteers	Angela Salmon	721163	
Friends of the Priaulx Library	Gavin Lanoe	246715	
La Société Serquaise	Jo Birch	832788	
National Council for the Conservation of Plants and Gardens (Guernsey Group)	Tattie Thompson	239444	
Lé Coumité d'la Culture Guernesiaisie	Hazel Tomlinson	255891	
Guernsey Meteorological Observatory	Martin Crozier	237766	
WEA	David Le Conte	264847	

In addition to the Section Secretaries being Council members, other Council members are:

J. Hooper, (co-opted), G. Allez, J. M. Bairds, J. Nicolle, Mrs V. Crispini-Adams, A. Ritchie, J. L. Curtis, N. Day and Miss J. Gilmour.

Any member of La Société who is interested in joining one of the Sections or groups should contact the relevant Section Secretary.

Office Hours:

The office at Candie is normally open between 10.00am and 11.30am on Tuesdays, Thursdays & Saturdays.
Telephone: 01481 725093
Fax: 01481 726248

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Website: www.societe.org.gg
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President's Report ... contd.

Visit by Société Jersiaise

Years ago there were fairly regular exchange visits between the Guernsey and Jersey societies. However, the last one - by us to Jersey - was twelve years ago. Council therefore voted to invite the Société Jersiaise to visit us next spring. An invitation has been sent to their President, Mr Rowland Anthony, to visit us on 22 May 2009. It was suggested that a visit to Herm would be a popular option.

The Junior Section

Before I was approached to take over from Charles David as President of La Société I had planned, as an ordinary member of Council, to propose the formation of a Junior Section.

~~At my first Council meeting as President my proposal to form~~ this Section was accepted. As bats are my particular interest, I decided to launch the new Section with a bat walk in Saumarez Park followed by a short talk about bats a week later. Both were well attended and the Section is up-and-going. It was suggested by Rhiannon Cook, joint Secretary of the Botany Section, that we make the Junior Section open to non-members of La Société for the first year. This would give everyone the opportunity to see what was available.

Each Section will host the juniors once a year and parents will be invited to accompany their children if they wish.

Pat Costen

SECTION NEWS

Archaeology

Last spring the Alderney Society and La Société Guernesiaise sponsored a visit to the islands by Dr Christopher Young, Head of World Heritage and International Policy for English Heritage. On 16 April he spoke to La Société, outlining the role of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) and the selection process for and significance of World Heritage status. His work takes him



Vale Priory Excavations: The stone paving at the eastern end of the trench, adjacent to the Sunday School building. Late medieval or post-medieval robbing of the stones is visible at the lower left and right hand edges of the paving. The prehistoric structure lay below this area of paving.

around the world and his fascinating lecture drew on examples from the Galapagos Islands to the Egyptian Pyramids. Members of the Section took Dr Young to visit some of Guernsey's historic sites.

The storms which battered Guernsey's coastline early in 2008 accelerated erosion on some of the more exposed archaeological sites. Section members have spent time visiting coastal sites, recording find spots and collecting material which has eroded out. A new site identified near Pulus is of particular interest; prehistoric pottery has been found with flint working debris, suggesting settlement. It is hoped the presence of the pottery will help to date the site.



Archaeology Section visit to the Herm Humps: view looking north-west from Galeu to Longue Pierre and Grand Amfroque.

A development at the Vale Church Sunday School building has given opportunity for an archaeological excavation on the site of the Vale Priory. The building is thought to incorporate the last upstanding elements of the Priory, known to have been in existence by 1156. The excavation is being carried out by Guernsey Museum with assistance from Museum Archaeology Group and Archaeology Section volunteers. An intriguing sequence of occupation has been revealed, spanning some three thousand years. The earliest remains are a stone structure, which may have been a boundary, or an attempt at terracing or revetting the slope to aid agriculture. Prehistoric pottery recovered from the surrounding soil probably dates from the Bronze Age (c1000 BC). This prehistoric activity was entirely covered by a layer of wind-blown sand; similar deposits have been recognised on other sites around L'Ancrese and the west coast and are medieval in date. Set onto the sand is an area of stone paving, thought to date with the Priory, and medieval pottery has been found sealed beneath this.

This year Professor Chris Scarre of Durham University has begun an exciting new project to investigate the prehistoric landscape of Herm. Geophysical and soil auger surveys have taken place on the Common to try and establish the depth of the buried Neolithic land surface. The results of this work will be used to target excavations which will take place in September. To assist with the project, Section members have cleared vegetation from known prehistoric funerary monuments and compared the remains with plans made by the Lukis family who excavated on Herm in the 1840's. The forthcoming excavations will be the first on Herm since those of Lukis. The project is particularly timely in view of the changing tenancy of the island; it promotes the importance of the Herm monuments and their surrounding landscape.

The Herm Humps were the destination of a Section trip at the end of August. Mick Goddard kindly took us out in two parties to visit Galeu, Godin and Longue Pierre. Flint debris and stone tools, possibly used for working the flint, were found eroding in large quantities on Longue Pierre, and a few were found on the other islets. This was an exciting and most productive opportunity to visit one of the less accessible parts of the islands.

In addition to the work in Herm, there is also a research excavation on the L'Erée headland. This is a joint project by Dr Fraser Sturt of Southampton University and Dr Duncan Garrow of Liverpool University. For some time prehistoric pottery and flint has been eroding from the coastline at the top of the beach on the south side of headland. The site was the subject of a small excavation by Professor Barry Cunliffe in 1998. It is thought that there was a Neolithic settlement nearby and the current work is intended to try and establish this.

Botany

The summer months have been busy ones for the botanists with plenty of interest to see on every occasion. Our May meeting was held on the cliffs at Pleinmont where we were searching for the small, cliff turf specials such as Dwarf Pansy, Field Madder, Upright Chickweed, Sea Mouse-ear and Heath Pearlwort. In an open area both Early and Changing Forget-me-not were seen. Along the cliff path it was interesting to find the familiar Sea Campion beside the form with pale yellow calices. We returned to our starting point by moving onto Société land. This field yielded both the blue and white versions of Heath Milkwort, Lousewort – which is a semi-parasite on grass – as well as the tiny Wall Speedwell.

foot bearing flowers as well as its curious beaded pods. As we left, we noted the Blue Atlantic Cedar with smooth egg-shaped cones.

Our July meeting was held at Candie Gardens. We observed a Japanese Red Cedar in its juvenile foliage phase. We saw Cork Oak with simple, evergreen leaves and clearly visible corky bark. This can be removed and used to manufacture bungs for wine bottles after about 8 years. A row of pollarded London Plane had mottled bark. Frequent sloughing of the bark makes it possible for this tree to survive in heavily polluted city conditions. In the lower garden, a number of flowering plants grew by the pond – including Kangaroo-apple with its purple flowers, Tutsan, Lady Fern and Royal Fern with its unmistakable large leaves sterile with a terminal fertile portion. We enjoyed seeing a healthy Maidenhair Tree for the third time in less than a year. Towards the end of the walk, a large specimen of Yew was seen. In the border, Ivy Broomrape was found growing parasitically on Fatsia – a close relative of Ivy. A large mature tree of Japanese Red Cedar with older foliage, red-brown bark and small cones on upper branches was seen and compared with the earlier mutant form. Our last tree was Liquidamber with Sycamore-like foliage which, when crushed, smell of petroleum and which provide an array of colours in the autumn.

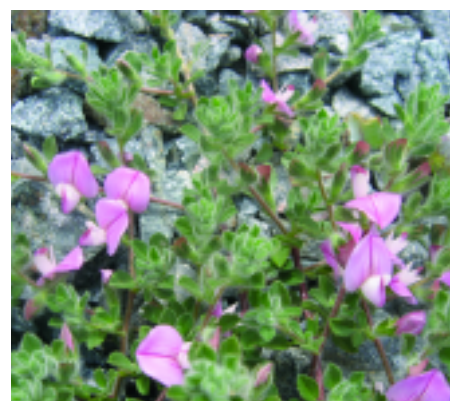
The August meeting at Pembroke was a truly memorable meeting as we were delighted to be joined by Patience Ryan's family. Close to the car park was a patch of Tansy, the leaves of which are highly dissected and strongly aromatic. Rest-Harrow, so called as its roots are extensive and said to cause problems to impede the passage of a harrow through a ploughed field, was seen. We went to the area where the Longleaf was last seen and much to our delight it was spotted. Its distinctive long strap-like leaflets with toothed margins was viewed and several flower heads were developing. The



Sea Rocket at Jaonneuse



Dwarf Pansy at Pleinmont



Rest Harrow on coast

We met at St Peter's Church in June, where the parish was holding its Open Garden week-end. As the Silbe Reserve was somewhat overgrown following a wet spring, we decided to visit two gardens looking for wild flowers and trees of interest. Our first garden visit was that of Mr and Mrs Roussel. We appreciated the way the cottage garden flowers were enhanced by wild ones such as Bloody Crane's-bill, Red Valerian, Dotted Loosestrife, Creeping Jenny, Pink Oxalis, Hedge Woundwort, Foxglove, and Lady Fern. In Mr and Mrs Winter's garden, we admired a Tulip Tree from North America before taking a mown path round the wild part of the garden. We found several Heath Spotted Orchids growing amongst Yorkshire Fog in the shade of the suckering Aspens. On the rabbit-mown lawn we saw a good spread of Common Bird's-

slipway at Jaonneuse Bay yielded Sea Holly with its stunning blue flowers, Rock Samphire, Sea Kale and Sea Rocket with its delicate pale pink flowers. Near the Golf House and were pleased to find that the Wild Asparagus has spread to a number of sites nearby and had formed bright orange berries. Close by, in a dip in the common, we found several plants of Musk Mallow in fruit. Finally, on our return to the car park we came across remnants of flowers and fruits of Fragrant Evening Primrose and hooked fruits of Houndstongue.

In September, Mrs. O'Rorke kindly allowed us to visit her Nature Reserve at Marais Nord. In the last 25 years the trees and shrubs have matured providing a shady walk-way around the lake. Trees of interest were Sweet Chestnut laden with

fruits, White Poplar, Blue Gum, Common Alder and two conifers – Monterey Pine and Monterey Cypress. In an open area we found plants typical of this wet habitat such as Water Mint, Hemp Agrimony, Meadow Buttercup and Ragged Robin. Common Fleabane was once used as a strewing herb to deter fleas and also to provide relief from dysentery. Gypsywort has small flowers but we were intrigued to find that the sap of young shoots stained the skin as brown as a gypsy!

Visits for the rest of the year:

4 October – Jerbourg - 2.15pm meeting in the car park opposite the Doyle Monument, Perry's Guide 31 G3.

1 November – Le Douit and La Pomare, St. Peter's, Perry 20 D4.

6 December – Saumarez Park, Castel, Perry 15G1.

For further information contact Jennie Grange on 715059.

Family History

The Section has been very pleased to publish a limited edition of David Kreckeler's latest book "The Brothers' Burial Ground 1719 – 1948", which had taken 5 years of diligent research between 1980 and 1985. It is a record of the vault and gravestone inscriptions that are fast disappearing.

Graham Guille's talk in May, titled "Letters to my wife", gave a glimpse into the life of Andros Guille gleaned from his letters home and the diary he kept while serving in the Union Army during the American Civil War.

In June, members were invited to visit Richard Keen's home to view the memorabilia he had collected following his mother's death.

"Noughts and Crosses" was the title of Sylvia Brouard's walk/talk, taking in the "Church paths" leading to the Castel Church.

To accommodate the number of members wishing to visit the Island Archives, two visits were arranged. Thanks go to Nathan Coyde for his most interesting talk on the centre at St Barnabas and its contents and the work of the archivists.

19 November at 7.45 pm at Frossard Theatre, Candie: Bryan Vandertang "Les Dicqs and Rousse Headland". All welcome.

Any queries should be addressed to The Family History Section, PO Box 314, St Peter Port, Guernsey GY1 3TG.

Edith Le Patourel

Juniors

The Astronomy Section will host an evening for juniors on Thursday 6 November at 7.00pm. Weather permitting, we will show them a variety of objects including galaxies and star clusters. The moon will be 5 days old and should provide a fine sight in the telescopes. We will also show them key constellations and how to find the north star. The observatory is situated on the corner of Rue du Lorier and the main road to L'Erée, and we will put notices outside before we open. There is some parking on site, with additional parking at La Houquette School.

Marine Biology & Zoology

For details please telephone Charles David on 238978.

Nature Conservation

Contact Denise Thoumine on 723003 for further details.

Ornithology

As always seems to be the case, although the Section has only about 20-30 regular attendees, a lot has been going on in the past months. The Colin Best Nature Reserve at L'Erée has seen the scrapes deepened and extended with the help of members of the Section. With autumn rains imminent this will result in quite a substantial amount of water being held in front of the hide. Indeed we are already seeing an increasing number of birds using this area. Significantly, this June saw two Spoonbills on the reserve for a short period. Prior to this in May we had a Buff breasted Sandpiper there, which is a wader that had flown all the way from America. It looked very much at home there too. With autumn now upon us, by the time you read your Communiqué, who knows what goodies may have turned up?

One of the rarest finds this year, a first Channel Island record, was in the lanes behind St Margarets Lodge Hotel. This was a Pine Bunting, a sparrow-sized bird that is normally found in Asia. It was down to the diligence of one of our members (Mark Guppy) walking through the lanes that brought this little beauty to the attention of the islands birders.



Pine Bunting, photograph by Mark Guppy

Mark also came across a much larger bird recently while birding at Pleinmont. It has yet to be accepted by our Rarities Committee, and this species has yet to be officially recorded in Britain. It was a Booted Eagle (the closest population is in southern Europe), and was seen flying inland heading towards Fauxquets Valley. It was relocated the following day and was seen by other birders.

One of the events that our Section organises in the summer, weather permitting, is a pelagic. Put simply, this involves chartering a boat and heading out to sea into mid-channel. There is then put overboard a foul mixture of fish heads, chopped up bits of fish mixed with oil and anything else that Chris Maurant finds that is unfit for human consumption! This of course attracts a lot of sea birds, and often draws in species we would not normally see from land. The Section

has been on two of these pelagics recently. They headed off towards the Hurd Deep 24 miles northwest of Guernsey. The conditions were near perfect, and good numbers of seabirds were seen, including on the first trip Pomarine Skua, which had never been seen on previous trips. It was on this trip that Paul Hillion took photos of Sooty Shearwater. One of his photos achieved "Photo of the Week" award on the nationally acclaimed bird site BirdGuides.

The second trip was even more eventful, with no less than at least 650 Storm Petrels, 9 Grey Phalaropes, 3 first winter and 4 adult Sabine Gulls. In addition were Black Terns, Great and Arctic Skuas, Little Gull, Manx and Sooty Shearwaters. This was on top of the more common species. It was indeed one of the Section's all time great outings.

More and more of our members are submitting excellent photographs online of birds seen in Guernsey, and the standards just seem to go ever higher. For all local rarity sightings and photographs it is well worth logging on to our Section's Recorder, Mark Lawlor's website at:- <http://www.geocities.com/mplawlorque/guernseybirdnews.html>

Our summer outing took place in August with a meal at the Imperial Hotel, and included a birding trip around Pleinmont. This was enjoyed by all the attendees. The Section has also recently sponsored the visit of Mr Edward Mayer. You may be aware that Vic Froome, one of our members, has been very active in installing Swift nesting boxes in numerous locations around the island. There is currently a article on the success at Delisle Church on the La Société Guernesiale website. A species that once was common during the summer months is now sadly less obvious. This is due almost entirely to the blocking of holes in the buildings they once inhabited. Mr Mayer, who is based in London and runs a organisation called London's Swifts, was invited by Vic to give a lecture "Living with Swifts", at Candie on the subject of Swifts, and what we can do to help them. If you want any further information on helping Swifts please find the details at:- <http://www.societe.org.gg/press/swifts.html>

Rod Ferbrache

La Société Sercquaise

The Société's Charter, see below, now has over 1,100 signatories and was presented to the President of General Purposes Advisory Committee of Chief Pleas on 20 May. Signed copies are still being received and added to the total, so it is not too late for anyone to sign.

A comprehensive exhibition of William Arthur Toplis' work was held on 18 – 30 August with much material lent by Fiona Toplis Kelly, the artist's great-granddaughter. This celebrates the publication of *The Book of Sark* 100 years ago and there are plans to re-publish the book later this year.

Highlights of a busy season include a third silver-mine survey and public talk by mining historians from the Trevithick Society. The Guernsey Farmers Wildlife Action Group had their annual walkabout in Sark, Charles Alluto of the National Trust in Jersey gave a talk about his work in conservation, and the Society helped to launch Richard Le Tissier's book, *Mined Where You Walk* about the Occupation in Sark. Professor Cunliffe and his Oxford archaeology team returned for a highly successful excavation; there were some terrific

finds and we have sent several samples for carbon-dating and mineral analysis.

Marine biologists from Seasearch (Marine Conservation Society UK) visited and dived for 5 days; they will provide a full report of the underwater health of Sark. They too gave a talk. A Beachwatch clean up is organized for 21 September.

And the Eperquerie Pool was repaired by a team of volunteers working under the guidance of Andrew Prevel whose grandfather built the pool during the fifties.

PROTECT SARK'S UNIQUENESS

A charter of community values

La Société Sercquaise was founded in 1975 to study, preserve and enhance Sark's natural environment and cultural heritage. The society's Council has identified areas of great importance to our way of life, hoping to find widespread community support. **If you agree with these statements please obtain a copy from Jo Birch, sign it and return it to her;** you will help the Society do everything possible to protect the unspoiled diversity that makes Sark unique – and vulnerable in the 21st century. We can't afford to take these things for granted.

1. Support and maintain traditional freedom of access to all bays and footpaths.
2. Support Sark's ban on cars and other motorised vehicles and its horse-friendly policies on roads.
3. Support the ban and control on helicopters and other aircraft overflying Sark.
4. Support protection of the coast and natural landscape from intrusive 'suburban' features (such as street lighting, kerbs, surveillance cameras, communication masts).
5. Support sensible building control laws, encouraging energy saving, rain-water catchment and solar energy collection, design and planting that suit the environment.
6. Support a basic code to protect historic buildings and archaeological sites.
7. Support basic codes to protect coastal waters and foreshores, and to conserve agricultural and unspoiled land, pasture and cliff-top habitats, fresh water sources, and sites of special geological or botanical interest.
8. Support reduction of all forms of waste and pollution (including noise and light pollution) to land, air, and water.
9. Support the use of renewable energy sources and environmentally friendly, sustainable economic activities.
10. Support policies to strengthen Sark's self-reliance and economic self-sufficiency.

If you wish to have a copy of this, contact Jo Birch, Hon Sec., La Société Sercquaise, socsercq@gmail.com
You can also sign online via a link on the official Sark site, www.sark.info.

Bat Group

For details of bat walks please consult the Société web-site.

The telegraphic transmission of Greenwich time to Guernsey

Some time ago I came across a reference to the fact that in 1874 a time signal originating from the Royal Observatory, Greenwich, was transmitted at 10.00 am daily to Guernsey (but not to Jersey).¹ Intrigued, I set out to discover more about this curious piece of information.

This year, 2008, is the 150th anniversary of the installation of the electric telegraph cable, in September 1858, from Weymouth via Alderney to Guernsey, and thence to Jersey. It was a cause for much celebration in the latter island, where there was a church service, a procession through decorated streets, a gala dinner and fireworks, (but not in Guernsey, where The Star bluntly stated: *"We apprehend that in Guernsey we shall not get up our enthusiasm to the praying and dining point."*).²

The telegraph office was set up in the *"Pier Guard-House"*³ (presumably the Picquet House). Guernsey men and women were now able to send messages with almost instantaneous transmission. Indeed, messages transmitted from London to Guernsey arrived at an earlier time than that at which they were sent! This curious anomaly arose because Guernsey clocks were set to local time, which, due to the island's 2½ degree west longitude, was ten minutes later than the time in London.

*"Seems it not a feat sublime intellect
hath conquered time."*⁴

The service, provided by the Telegraph Company, was initially successful, but failed by 1861 because of repeated breakages in the trans-channel cable between Portland and Alderney, and the consequent depletion of the Company's assets. For a few years messages could continue to be routed to England, at a considerably higher cost, by a circuitous route through a cable between Jersey and France.

In 1870, however, the British Government-controlled General Post Office took over the operation of the telegraph, and by 1872 the direct service was again operational, the telegraph office again being at the Bureau à l'Ancien Corps de Garde, Quai du Sud. In 1874 it moved to the Bureau de la Poste, 36 Arcades Commerciales.⁵

Not only messages were sent via the electric telegraph. In England there was increasingly widespread telegraphic transmission of time signals from Greenwich, which had responsibility for maintaining time standards. The distribution of accurate time had originated with a visual signal in 1833, when the Royal Observatory installed a time-ball, which fell precisely at 1pm daily, to enable mariners of ships anchored in the Thames to set their chronometers – precise time being essential for the determination of longitude. (1pm was chosen, rather than noon, because the astronomers were at that time too busy making observations of the Sun for the determination of the time).

At about the same date London clockmakers were taking their clocks and watches to Greenwich to be checked against the Royal Observatory's accurate chronometers. There was such a demand for this service that in 1856 the Observatory itself started sending an assistant with a chronometer through the streets of London to the clockmakers – a tradition which his widow, and then his daughter, perpetuated right up to the 1930s.⁶

George Biddell Airy became Astronomer Royal in 1835, and, being a precise man, actively promoted the distribution of precise time. In 1852 there was established a time ball at the offices of the Electric Telegraph Company at Charing Cross, for the benefit of the general public. In 1854 another time ball was installed at Deal in Kent, for the benefit of shipping in the Dover Strait. These time-balls were automatically triggered by telegraph signal from Greenwich. There followed other time balls along the south coast, and, in some cities, the firing of time guns.

It was reported in September 1858 that Newall & Co., who were the cable contractors, presented £150 for the erection of a time ball on Fort Regent in Jersey, triggered in the same way as the other time balls.⁷ I have, however, so far found no evidence that any similar donation was made for a time ball in Guernsey, or that a time ball was erected here.

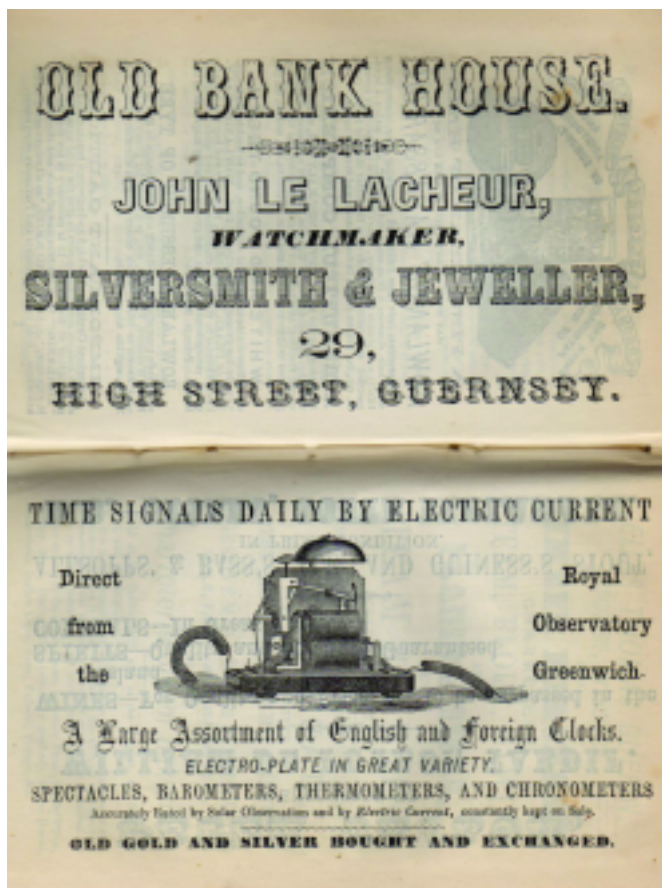
Telegraphic transmission of time to railways and official clocks followed, but there was also a service for private subscribers to receive time signals at 10am and 1pm.⁸ These were used primarily by clockmakers, but also by others who needed accurate time. By 1865 Guernsey-born Warren De La Rue had installed such a clock at De La Rue & Company, in Bunhill Row, London, and estimated that it saved the Company £300 annually by *"having exact time and enforcing strict attendance on his work-people ... of this he is able to make a return to his work-people in the way of additional privileges as respects holidays"*.⁹

It has been reported that the Electric Telegraph Company sent daily time signals to all its public offices, for the regulation of the office clock, but there is no independent verification that the signals were sent to the Guernsey office.¹⁰ Signals sent for that purpose would not, of course, have been subject to subscription.

This brings us back to the original question of who in Guernsey was subscribing to the 10am signal. Was it, for example, a clockmaker, or was it used by the Post Office, or for maritime purposes or other official use? In 1874 the signal was mostly used in the provinces, being sent to subscribers in 21 English towns, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Dublin, Belfast, and, of course, Guernsey. (The 1pm signal, being more expensive, had fewer subscribers.)

I pursued this issue to the archives of the Royal Greenwich Observatory held at Cambridge University Library, but these merely confirmed that the information came from a report of 1874 by the Astronomer Royal to the Observatory's Board of Visitors.¹¹ I visited the BT archives in London, which holds the archival records of the Post Office, but there was a dearth of information other than a description of the time service written in 1870, and an historical account written in 1908. No detailed records of subscribers in the 1870s seem to have survived.

However, examination of Guernsey almanacs in the Priaux Library did turn up the answer. Although there is no indication of an official use of the time signal, some contain advertisements for clockmakers. Most make no mention of the checking of their timepieces, although they must have had a means of doing so, probably by reference to a public clock, such as that on the Town Church, or with an accurate sundial. The advertisement of one clockmaker, J G Allen of 24



Advertisement by John Le Lacheur, from Le Lievre's Almanack, 1874. Courtesy Prialx Library

Commercial Arcade, specifies: "The time taken by solar observation." This refers to comparison with a sundial, due account being taken of longitude and the variations in the Sun's motion.¹²

One Guernsey clockmaker, however proudly announced that his chronometers were "Accurately Rated by Solar Observation and by Electric Current", and specifically referred to "Time signals daily by electric current direct from the Royal Observatory Greenwich."¹³ This was John Le Lacheur, watchmaker, silversmith and jeweller, of the Old Bank, 29 High Street, Guernsey. So it was this enterprising gentleman who was most likely the first private user of precise Greenwich Time in Guernsey.

On the evidence of the advertisements, Le Lacheur's subscription to the telegraphed Greenwich time signal seems to have lasted for ten years, from 1872 to 1881. The rate of the subscription was determined by the distance of the user from the post office. The distance from the Post Office in the Commercial Arcade to Le Lacheur's premises in the High Street is small, and therefore the minimum rate of £12 per annum would have applied (assuming there was no extra charge for the cross-channel transmission).¹⁴ This was still a significant outlay, however, equivalent to £1000 today. There is some evidence that the 10am time signal was transmitted to the Guernsey (and Jersey) Post Office in the 1880s¹⁵, and by 1904 two tradesmen in the Commercial Arcade were commended for displaying Greenwich time, telegraphed daily.¹⁶ By 1911, however, there appears to have been no telegraphic time signal users in the Channel Islands.¹⁷

It is of interest to note that, although Greenwich Mean Time was in widespread use throughout the country in the latter half of the 19th century, and had been adopted in Guernsey for official and public application for several decades, it was not until 1909 that it was legally adopted as the standard time here - but that is a story for another article, which will appear in the next issue of Communiqué.

David Le Conte

Acknowledgements

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References

1. Account by H Eaton, Post Office Telegraphs, 1874. Quoted in *Greenwich Time and the Longitude* by Derek Howse, p105 (Philip Wilson Publishers Ltd, London, 1997).
2. *The Star*, Guernsey, Thursday, September 2, 1858.
3. *The Star*, Guernsey, Saturday, August 21, 1858.
4. Chapter on *The Electric Telegraph in A Topographical and Historical Guide to the Island of Jersey* by James Graves, 1859. It described the elaborate festivities in Jersey and people's fanciful ideas about how the telegraph worked, thinking that paper messages must be transmitted down a narrow tube!
5. *Almanach de la Gazette de Guernesey*, 1871, 1872, 1873, 1874. The office was open from 7am to 10pm on weekdays, and on Sundays 7 to 10am and 3 to 6pm!
6. A.J Meadows: *Greenwich Observatory, Vol.2: Recent History (1836-1975)*, Taylor & Francis, London, 1975, p69.
7. *The Star*, Guernsey, Tuesday, August 24, 1858 and September 14, 1858.
8. The 1pm signal was much more expensive than the 10am signal because "it would interfere with the ordinary business, and that special arrangements and special apparatus must be provided at every Station." (Letter by the Chief Engineer, Post Office, BT Archives, POST 30/2536, File I.)
9. Statement by G B Airy, quoted by William Ellis in *Lecture on the Greenwich System of Time Signals* p323, Howse op cit, p104.
10. *The passage of Time in Distant Writing*, by Steven Roberts (2008), pages 20-21. This includes an account of the transmission of time by the Electric Telegraph Company.
11. RGO 6/17 244-5.
12. The variations in the Sun's motion during the year are recorded in tabular form, known as "The Equation of Time". The Almanacks included such tables, with instructions as to how to apply them. For a detailed description of how to read a sundial and an explanation of the equation of time, see *Guernsey Sundials* by David & Dorothy Le Conte, La Société Guernesiaise, 2004, pp29-33. An alternative method of obtaining accurate time would have been to use a transit telescope to observe stars crossing the local meridian, but there does not appear to have been such an instrument in Guernsey.
13. See, for example, the 1874 *Guernsey Almanack*, by E Le Lievre, and the 1874 *Mackenzie Almanack*.
14. A letter of November 1870 from the Engineer in Chief, (British) Post Office, described increased charges (BT Archives, POST 30/2536, File 1). The charges were reduced in 1911 (BT Archives, POST 30/2536, File XXII).
15. *Studies of crustal magnetic anomalies of the British Isles*, by Andrew Jackson, *Astronomy & Geophysics*, April 2007,

Vol.48, Issue 2, page 2.11. This is an account of Rucker and Thorpe's survey of 1884-92 (*Roy.Soc.Phil.Trans* 1890, 181, 53-328 and *Roy.Soc.Phil.Trans* 1896, 188, 1-661) in which chronometers were checked against the 10am telegraphic time signal sent to all post offices in Britain, and were therefore never in error by more than 4 seconds. A map (figure 3) of survey stations shows good coverage of the Channel Islands.

16. "Guernsey is certainly indebted to the two Arcade tradesmen who, at their own expense, have the exact Greenwich time telegraphed to them daily, and who give the public, free of charge, the benefit of that information." (*Guernsey Evening Press*, January 25, 1904). This is the introductory paragraph of a lengthy Press comment about the inaccuracies of the town's public clocks, and the need for one showing precise Greenwich time.
17. BT Archives, POST30/2536, File XX contains a list of about 118 time signal renters in 1911, none of them in the Channel Islands.

Guernsey Conservation Volunteers

The biggest event in recent months for the Guernsey Conservation Volunteers took place in June when they teamed up with BBC Guernsey to carry out a BBC Springwatch project.

The project was based at St Germain Nature Trail in Castel and the main focus was to develop the pond in order to encourage more wildlife to use the area. Other work around the site involved removing tree guards from the trees that no longer needed them.

The work at the pond involved removing the pond weed in order to try and catch the hundred or so goldfish that were breeding there. The original goldfish were probably put there by a member of the public, but they needed to be removed so that more native wildlife would inhabit the pond. The fish were to be re-homed in the pond at Candie Gardens. Having removed the pond weed many members of GCV waited patiently with their shrimping nets trying to catch the fish. After spending a very long time trying to catch the fish, and only one being caught, GCV decided that the fish had got the better of them... for now! GCV returned the less invasive pond weed to the pond and also planted a selection of new pond plants. When these new pond plants are established they should attract a greater variety of wildlife to the area. The pond plants are all native to Guernsey and were collected from other areas of the island by Charles David and Jane Gilmour. GCV was very grateful to both of these people for helping to make this project a success.



Fishing for goldfish

Saturday 15 November midday – Lihou Island
Saturday 29 November 10am – Home Farm, Castel

If you wish to come along to any of these events or find out more about the Guernsey Conservation Volunteers please contact Angela Salmon via the website - www.gcv.org.uk

WEA

Details of the new WEA courses have been published. There are courses in languages, arts and crafts, local interest, environment, wine and cookery, health, and general interest. New courses this year include Guernsey's special traditions (the Guernsey cow, the tomato, the Golden Guernsey goat, Guernsey French, costume, and food), and a look inside Guernsey's media. La Société members will be teaching courses in nature conservation, astronomy, archaeology, and Guernsey and Jersey houses.

Several popular courses are being repeated, with some changes of format and content. They include growing your own food, the identification of fish, sustainable living, historical walks, economic viewpoints of Guernsey, and individual accounts of extreme travels. This year's philosophy course focuses on the relationship between science and religion.

Leaflets are available at libraries, post offices, some shops, and at the Société headquarters. Full details may also be found at www.wea.org.gg.

David Le Conte

NCCPG

The Nerine Festival Opens on Saturday 11 October
 from 2.30 – 4.00pm, thereafter daily 10.00am – 4.00pm daily until Saturday 25 October. Entry free.

Wed 29 October at 7.30pm at La Trelade Hotel:
 Dr William Baker will give a talk on "Temperate Plants in Tropical Places: a gardener's tour of tropical mountains".
 Entry to non NCCPG members £4

Wed 19 November at 7.30pm at Les Cotils: Felicity Down will give a talk entitled "Gardening in Containers".
 Entry to non NCCPG members £4

Meteorology Report

Summer 2008 in Guernsey Airport

There might have been some hope that this summer would have had markedly better weather than that of 2007. This has not, though, been the case.

May had been warm and wet and there was more rain on 2 June, with 32.4mm (1.28in) falling in 24 hours. The rest of the month, though, was very dry with less than 4mm more being recorded. The dryness was accompanied by plenty of sunshine, with a daily average of 13 hours from 6 – 17 June. Despite these dry and sunny conditions, temperatures were

Here are some details of future GCV events:

Saturday 18 October 10am – Fort Pezeries
Saturday 1 November 10am – L'Eree Shingle Bank

never very high and we only just managed to equal the average temperature for June.

For much of July the weather in the British Isles was dominated by low pressure. This gave a long spell of cloudy, rather cool and breezy conditions. There was rain at some stage on each of the first 11 days, although the total fall was below average. A change in the weather during the last 10 days brought the mean temperature for the month up to normal and a run of sunny days redressed the balance somewhat. From 12 – 30 June only 2.4mm of rain were recorded. This meant that from 3 June to 30 July we had just 6.2mm of rain.

August was notable for an unremitting run of depressions coming into the British Isles from the Atlantic until the Bank Holiday. This ensured that the highest temperature reached at the Airport was a very poor 21.3°C, on the 5th. Only two completely dry days were noted in the first 27, with more than 75mm (3in) of rain during the first two weeks. A brief bit of summer did occur on the 30th, which had unbroken sunshine, following four dull days. This was rapidly followed by a collapse of high pressure, with thundery weather to end the summer. We actually missed the heavy rain, but a continuous display of lightning was visible to the west for a couple of hours early on the 31st.

The summer overall was better than last year, being sunnier and much drier, with the temperature fractionally higher as well. This summer, though, can be noted for spells of windy weather in July and especially in August. This August has been the windiest since 1985 and this aspect of the weather is not always remarked on when the quality of a summer is mentioned. During a hot summer a bit more breeze might give some relief from high temperatures, but in a poor summer higher winds only accentuate the bleakness.

Dave Cunningham

French Trip

On Wednesday 28 May eighteen members set off on the Condor ferry bound for St Malo. The trip had been arranged by Charles David and Terry Ozanne who had been over a few weeks previously to look for interesting places to visit and to plan the itinerary. On arrival, we walked round to St Servan where we spent the first night. After a very enjoyable stroll round the coastal path, in bright sunshine, we had an excellent dinner in a restaurant near to one of our two hotels. The next morning we boarded our two mini-buses, driven by Charles and Terry, and set off for Domfront, in Normandy, where we would spend the next three nights. On the way, we visited the beautiful Mont St Michel, and, after a tour of the abbey, we quickly boarded our buses to avoid a thunder storm. Sunshine interspersed with torrential rain was the weather pattern for the entire trip. After lunch in a lay-by, we drove on to Villedieu les Poêles to visit the truly fascinating bell foundry there.

On arrival in Domfront we checked into the Relais St Michel. Before dinner, some of the group walked up to the original medieval town on top of the hill - visible from the hotel. The following morning the entire group returned to tour this lovely town and with the help of a leaflet from the Tourist Information Centre, we took ourselves on a tour of the ruined castle, Roman remains, town walls and gates and old buildings. In the afternoon in the pouring rain we visited the Parc des Forges de Varenne, 18th Century blast furnaces set in the grounds of a chateau. We then changed our plans and

went on to a remarkable pottery which had been recommended by our hotel owner and was under cover. Several potters lived and worked here and their stunning and very expensive pieces were displayed. There was also a fascinating museum of potting in Normandy. The next day, Saturday, we set off for Suisse Normande where we undertook a most enjoyable 9km circular walk from La Roche d'Oëtre which went down a wild gorge, along a river then back through woods and fields. We found a large number of plants and insects that were unfamiliar to us. After a picnic lunch under the trees, we departed for Fallaize, birthplace of William the Conqueror ('Roi d'Angleterre' on the monument in the Square!) where we explored the castle and surrounding town.

On the final day, the group split into two, and one group, driven by John Nicolle, visited Bayeux. The Tapestry has been remounted and is very easy to view with a full and interesting commentary. Some, who navigated the building better, found an exhibition related to the Tapestry. Others went to explore the Cathedral with its fascinating crypt.

On our return to St Malo, John stopped in Dol de Bretagne and we had time to explore some of this enchanting town. Meanwhile the other group drove first to the cliffs at Carolles and walked down to the sea then had a picnic lunch on the sand dunes at Genêts. Their last stop was at a pebbly beach near St Méloir des Ondes.

Altogether we had a very interesting and enjoyable trip and must thank Charles & Terry for organising it.

Pat Costen

Website

The Société website has now got a completely new format which we hope is more modern, visually attractive and informative than the old one. It should also be much easier to maintain. Phil Atkinson has done all the work and we are very grateful to him. It can be found at the usual address www.societe.org.gg.

Legacies and donations in lieu of flowers

Members are reminded that it is relatively simple to leave money to La Société in a will. All that is required is a codicil to a member's will which can be arranged by an Advocate or Solicitor. 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.

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