



COMMUNIQUE

The Newsletter of **LA SOCIÉTÉ GUERNESIAISE**

Guernsey's Local Research, Natural History and Conservation Society



Annual General Meeting

The AGM will be held at 7.30 pm on Tuesday 24 March at La Trelade Hotel for the purpose of transacting the following business:

- To hear the report of the President, Mrs Pat Costen.
- To receive the annual statement of accounts.
- To elect the officers and members of the council.
There will be 3 vacancies for Council members as Mrs J. Grange, L. Curtis and J. Nicolle retire after serving their term of office. Nominations for these, supported by a seconder, should be sent to the Secretary to reach her by Monday 9 March.
- To appoint auditors.
- To award Honorary Membership.
- To approve raising the corporate subscription rate to £200.
- 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 reach the Secretary by Monday 9 March.
- To receive the annual report and accounts from Guernsey Environmental Services Limited.

A full agenda together with minutes of the last AGM and a copy of the 2008 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 Saturday 7 March.

Subscriptions

Members are reminded that subscriptions were due on 1 January. Your membership card is enclosed whether you have paid your subscription or not. The changeover from standing order to direct debit has not been easy and we are aware that some banks have made duplicate payments, which will involve a great deal of work in making repayments where appropriate. Please ensure your subscription has been paid for 2009 in the correct amount, which is as follows:

	Guernsey, Sark and Alderney	Jersey, UK and overseas
Single	£19	£16
Double / family	£26	£19
Student (junior)	£5	£5
Corporate	£100	£100

Transactions 2007

Every member of La Société is entitled to a copy of the Report and Transactions, which is the society's annual journal. The 2007 Transactions were published in November and many members have already collected their copies from the Headquarters at Candie. Some have also been delivered to members' homes by volunteer members of La Société. Unfortunately it has not been possible to deliver all the uncollected 2007 Transactions.

Therefore if you have not received your 2007 copy of the Transactions it is available for collection at the headquarters at Candie when the office is open on Saturday, Tuesday and Thursday mornings.

The journal contains the reports of the various study sections. For example, the Ornithology Section report contains five pages recording the changing status of birds in Guernsey and special notes on the rarities sighted during the year. The Archaeology Section report contains reports of three excavations, including the first one on Jethou, which is illustrated with colour photographs.

There are articles on individual topics written mainly by local authors. Mr. Geoffrey Rowland, the Bailiff of Guernsey, has written a fascinating account of two of his predecessor Bailiffs who served as Presidents of La Société: Sir Edgar MacCulloch, our first president, and Sir Havilland de Sausmarez, who had a distinguished career as a judge in the Far East before he returned to Guernsey. Mr Rowland, as our present Bailiff, brings to his article a unique insight into the responsibilities and influential roles of his predecessors.

Tim Sparks, from the Centre for Ecology and Hydrology at Monks Wood, has analysed the impact of climate change on Guernsey's wildlife and cultivated flowers, much of the data coming from Nigel Jee's detailed records. Many flowers are flowering earlier as average spring temperatures increase.

Richard Hocart has written an account of the management of the estate of St. George in the Castel parish, based mainly on the daily journal kept by Jean Guille between 1714 and 1721. Guille was not a farmer who worked his own land in the traditional Guernsey way. He cultivated a small area around his house, but most of the land was leased to tenants and the terms of some of the tenancies are quite unusual and of considerable historical interest.

Continued on p.3

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	Vacant		
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 Guernésiaise	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
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Transactions 2007 ... continued.

Jamie Hooper, the Land Management and Conservation Officer, describes the work carried out on our nature reserves to maintain and improve them. Jamie is also Managing Director of La Société's company, Environment Guernsey, which carries out conservation work on a contract basis, and the company's 2007 annual report also appears in the Transactions.

Whatever your own particular interest you should find something in the Transactions to interest you, and you may well be inspired to read something outside your normal range of interests.

President's Report

The Information Centre

Work on the information boards is continuing, with Section Secretaries submitting text and photographs to Charles David who then produces posters ready for mounting. Charles himself has already written and produced several posters relating to our nature reserves. In the meantime, the tearoom end of the Centre, run by Joy Goldsmith, has become a popular venue for members and non-members alike. Customers enjoy Joy's delicious homemade cakes and are then able to view and purchase our books and cards.

Internet Sales and the Introduction of Direct Debit payment

Book sales have increased as a result of the introduction of sales on our website and sincere thanks are due to Phil Atkinson for setting up the facility and to Lawney Martin for processing the purchases. The introduction of payment of subscriptions by direct debit has proved to be time-consuming and vexatious. Although it will cut down on work once it is firmly established, Lawney, Peter Budwin and May Teagle have devoted many hours to processing the system. At the time of writing there is a large backlog of double payments - whereby the banks don't simultaneously stop cancelled standing orders at the time of starting up direct debits - which the team is struggling to sort out, for which I extend our profound gratitude.

World Heritage Status

A few months ago we were approached by the Société Jersiaise, asking for our support in an application to obtain World Heritage status for the whole of the Channel Islands based largely, but not exclusively, on our fortifications. The States of Jersey commissioned a report by Ms Kate Clark entitled 'Valuing the Heritage of the Channel Islands. An Initial Assessment against World Heritage Site Criteria and Public Value Criteria.' This can be viewed in Reports in the Education, Sport and Culture section of the Jersey website www.gov.je. A printed copy can be viewed at the Candie Headquarters. Bill Gallienne, Past-President, and Secretary of the History and Philology Section (who considers such recognition long overdue) will represent La Société. Because the report places emphasis on our archaeological remains, Tanya Walls, Secretary of the Archaeological Section, will work with Bill. A meeting with the societies of Jersey, Alderney and Sark is planned in the near future.

Pat Costen

Annual Sale Report

A biting northerly wind ensured that we didn't have to compete with the beach for customer attention! Volunteers arrived early to set up the stalls. We had to request extra tables when Denise Thoumine, Charles David and Alan Ritchie of the Nature Conservation Section kept asking for more, for the enormous quantity of books that had been sent in.

Edith Le Patourel was unable to run her usual tea and biscuits service due to a prior commitment, but Dorothy and David Le Conte stepped in and created a delightful 'Café in the Corner' with a vase of flowers on each table. Vanessa Crispini-Adams of the Climate Change Section was at a wedding but had ensured that a large quantity of bric-à-brac was available to be sold by Mike Bairds, John Cook and Ann Seebeck. Over on 'Cakes', Julia Peet and Lawney Martin watched their goods disappear at the customary speed, while Nancy Ogier and the Bird Section did sterling work on the bottle stall. Outside, Rhiannon Cook and Jenny Grange of the Botany Section, assisted by the appropriately named Hazel Hill and Hazel Gray, sold enough plants and shrubs to fill a garden.

After expenses - including a Sunday Trading Licence - we made £1,019.94. Sincere thanks to Lesley Le Page, Principal of Blanchelande College, for allowing us to use the premises, and to Jacques the caretaker and his wife Chantal whose help was invaluable. Thanks also to all those who donated goods for sale. At the end of the sale, all remaining books were collected by Brenda Noyon of International Book Aid. This charity distributes books to Third World countries. Unsold plants were given to the NCCPG for their big Spring Sale at Sausmarez Manor.

Section Reports

Archaeology

The first excavation phase of the Herm Project went ahead in September. The Project is led by Professor Chris Scarre of Durham University and there was opportunity for local archaeologists to join the team of students who came across. Four trenches were opened, three on known prehistoric monuments and one on the site of an interesting result from the geophysics survey earlier in the year. The main dolmen at Roberts Cross and one of the dolmens on the Grand Monceau had small trenches dug alongside to look for evidence of a covering mound and to examine the neolithic land surface which would be sealed beneath such a mound. A larger trench was put in near to the cist on the Common. This site is associated with an arc of stones and a circular feature discovered and excavated by Lukis in the 19th century, but these had been partly re-buried and had become very overgrown. The arc of stones was identified and on excavation turned out to be a low wall. The circular feature comprised a similar low wall enclosing an area which appears to have been used for ritual purposes; Lukis had found charcoal and layers of white pebbles, some of this material was discovered in the back-fill. The extent of the wall and its relationship to the nearby cist is not clear and it is likely that there will be more work here next year. The fourth trench, also on the Common, revealed the Neolithic land surface and large quantities of pottery and flint debris. It is thought that the sand covering the northern part of Herm and Guernsey built up in



Herm Common

the medieval period and sealed the prehistoric land surface beneath it.

Towards the end of the Herm excavations, Professor Scarre kindly gave a lecture for La Société. He discussed the results of the excavations in Jethou in 2007 and some preliminary thoughts about the Herm work. The next phase of the Herm Project will take place later this year and it is planned that there will be a Société fieldtrip to visit the site whilst the work is in progress.

There was an exciting discovery at King's Road just before Christmas. Many of you will be aware that an Iron Age settlement and burial site was discovered during work on Acorn House school in the 1980s. A housing development on adjacent land has revealed more of this site and evidence of a round house and several stone-lined burials have been discovered. The most recent discovery has been five more burials. There are no traces of the bodies surviving as a consequence of the acid soil conditions, but other material has been preserved. One grave contained a bronze bracelet, another a possible iron brooch and a third an iron sword still contained in its scabbard and accompanied by an iron shield boss. The iron objects actually survive as corrosion products and have the capacity to preserve traces of organic materials such as wood, textile and bone within their matrix. They will



King's Road

be taken to a specialist in the UK where they will be X-rayed, examined and conserved. This is likely to reveal much more about their original design and manufacture.

Finally a request to farmers and landowners who may be ploughing fields: the Archaeology Section is looking for opportunities to fieldwalk and would be grateful for any opportunity to examine the surface of recently ploughed fields. The process involves a systematic walk across the field and the collection of surface finds. Over time the accumulation of information from fieldwalking builds a picture of past human activity across the Island. If you can help please contact Tanya Walls on 727614.

Thursday 26 February at 8.00 pm in the Frossard Theatre - Dr Jason Monaghan will give a talk entitled "Excavations at the Nunnery, Alderney, 2008". There will be a short film and talk about the excavation on the postulated Roman fort, followed by a short film on the Archaeology Group's visit to the Humps in 2008.

Tuesday 17 March 17 at 8.00 pm in the Frossard Theatre - Dr Philip de Jersey will give a talk entitled "An Introduction to Celtic Coinage or how the Celts learned to stop worrying and love Rome."

Botany

We were not blessed with good weather for the last three meetings of 2008. In October we met at Doyle Monument in cold drizzly conditions but enjoyed the Pot Purslane which Norma Guppy had found in the lane near her home. On the way to La Bouvee Lane, we looked at some Spurge species and noted the site of Early Purple Orchid on National Trust land nearby. Near the water-trough we were pleased to find Greater Celandine, Wavy Bittercress and various ferns still flourishing. Down the shady path were many lower plants and the silver leaves of Yellow Archangel, a garden escape. In a damp corner above Marble Bay were Golden Saxifrage, a scented Liverwort and a splendid old Hornbeam just as they were 25 years ago! We returned via a short cut and identified several galls on English Oak.

The November outing at La Coudré Mill site was cancelled because of persistent heavy rain. Plants of interest seen in the area the previous week included Common Toadflax, the hybrid Guernsey Fern, Maidenhair Spleenwort and the rare, blood-veined form of Wood Dock. Another garden escape *Persicaria capitata*, originally from Himalaya, was in full flower.

In December we met at Saumarez Park in bright but cold conditions. We were surprised and delighted to welcome our oldest section member Madeleine Sims, aged 96! She and her daughter Mary have been attending the outings since March 1974 when they were first started by Patience Ryan. We concentrated on the collection of conifers planted in the Park and familiarised ourselves with the characteristics of True Cypresses, Spruces, Firs, Pines, Cedars, Monkey Puzzle, Douglas Fir and Coast Redwood. Several of these species delighted us with their fragrant leaves, as well as their various cones and barks.

On Sunday morning, 7 December, several children, with their parents, attended our Junior Section meeting. Ten trees of interest were selected for study and various leaves, fruits and pieces of bark were collected. Information and project sheets were issued as well as details of useful introductory books to



Greater Celandine

the subject. Their enthusiasm and parental support were much appreciated.

The annual Botany Supper – organised by Edith Le Patourel - is always held at the end of January followed by the indoor AGM in February.

Having agreed to 'caretake' the Section in the short term after Bridget's tragic death, Rhi and Jennie are standing down as joint Section Secretaries as they are both too committed elsewhere. We are very grateful for all the support and fun we have enjoyed with you all and hope to meet you occasionally. The monthly meetings will still take place as Hazel Hill, with other members, will organise new venues. Details will be available in March onwards from Hazel. Tel 244879.

The meeting in March will be another tree session at Saumarez Park using the back car park entering from Ruelle de Saumarez PG15 G1 at 2.15 pm.

Rhi Cook and Jennie Grange



The Guernsey Fern

Entomology

There will be a meeting of the Section at 7.30pm on Wednesday 25 February at Candie. We will discuss where the Section should meet this season and look at specimens and photographs of interesting insects we found last year. Anybody interested in insects is welcome to attend.



Longhorn Beetle

Among the interesting finds last year were two large and impressive species of Longhorn Beetles whose larvae mine in wood. One of these was introduced from China via Holland in imported saplings and could be an important pest. It is shiny black with white dots. The other is brown with yellow markings and blue and black antennae and probably came from Eastern Europe in imported timber, pallets or packing cases.

Charles David

Family History

Forthcoming meetings:

18 February – a talk by Liz Walton "Guernsey in the First World War".

18 March – a talk by Brian de Jersey "Memories of a Tradesman in Guernsey"

20 May – "Saumarez Park and its Environs" with Gillian Lenfestey. Meet at 7.00pm in the Saumarez Park children's playground.

17 June – "St Peter Port" – a walk with Sylvia Brouard, meeting at 7.00pm at the Liberation Day Monument. Members £3, non-members £5.

22 July – "An introduction to St Peter's Church" with Bill Gallienne. Meet at 7.00pm.

21 October – Tennerfest – venue to be decided.

18 November – a talk by Gillian Lenfestey: "Thomas de la Rue, printer and publisher" followed by the AGM.

All meetings are held at La Société's HQ at Candie commencing at 7.45pm unless otherwise stated. All welcome.

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

Edith Le Patourel

Geology

Wednesday 4 February at 8.00pm, at Candie, we will be investigating quarry maps to work out how best to catalogue the quarries prior to carrying out a geological survey.

Wednesday 4 March at 8.00pm, at Candie - Alan Howell, the senior curator of the Guernsey Museum, will give an overview

of the collections and describe the ongoing work to improve their documentation and ultimately their public access.

Wednesday 15 April - a look at the layered St Peter Port Gabbro at Spur Point as detailed in our Rocks and Scenery book. Meet at car park at south end of Bulwer Avenue at 7pm.

Wednesday 20 May - a visit to look at the rocks on which Castle Cornet is built. Meet at the Castle Emplacement at 7pm.

Wednesday 17 June - we will take a look at the raised beaches in the caves at the rear of Moulin Huet bay. Meet at Moulin Huet car park at 7.00pm.

Andy Dorey

Juniors

Forthcoming meetings

31 January - Archaeology Workshop – Ancient Pottery with Ms Tanya Walls, Secretary of the Archaeology Section. This is a chance to learn about, and handle, prehistoric pottery, and to have a go at making your own pot. 2.00pm – 4.00pm at Guernsey Museum, Candie Gardens.

28 February - Guernsey French with Mr Bill Gallienne, Secretary of the History and Philology Section. 2.00pm – 3.00 pm at Frossard Centre, Candie Gardens.

28 March - Phenology – the study of the times of naturally occurring phenomena – with Dr Andrew Casebow, Secretary of the Climate Change Section. Time and place to be advised.

18 April - Bird identification with Mrs Nancy Ogier, Secretary of the Ornithology Section. 2.00pm at the Frossard Centre, Candie Gardens, and afterwards in the Gardens.

The May event is not yet arranged and is to be advised later on.

28 June - Emptying of moth traps at La Société Information Centre, Les Sablons, L'Érée at 10.00am. This will be part of a programme organised with Butterfly Conservation to promote their Moth Count project. A presentation by Zoe Randle of Butterfly Conservation on Friday 26 June at 7.30pm at the Frossard Centre will be followed by the emptying of moth traps at Blanchelande at 10.00am the following morning. Both will be open to the general public and members of the Junior Section will be welcome to attend. The Sunday morning session will be tailored to the juniors alone. Please note: The moth traps do not kill the moths.

The Astronomy Section meeting which was cancelled will take place as soon as the Observatory roof is repaired.

Pat Costen

Marine Biology & Zoology

For details please telephone Charles David on 238978.

Nature Conservation

At the end of April, the Section looked at the natural history of the three islands off Port Soif. It was interesting to compare the differences in the flora of each islet. Two had proper

coastal grassland and the third was mostly vertical rock faces giving a view of Jethou to our surprise.

In May, we visited an area of grassland at Portinfer. We looked at a partially in-filled quarry and Charles David commented that when he was young it was one of the best quarries for aquatic plants and invertebrates. We then walked up the Hougue and looked at the sand dune grassland where we saw Hairy Rock Cress, which is very rare in the Island. This area is unmanaged and is gradually being taken over by scrub.

In June, we were back at Port Soif looking at the Bee Orchids, Pyramidal Orchids and Sea Kale. The Pyramidal Orchids were spectacular this year. On the way back to the cars, we found one Bee Orchid and several Pyramidal Orchids at the north end of Portinfer. The Sea Kale both in the middle of Portinfer Bay and at the north end had their crowns buried under the shingle (during the storm in the spring) and their leaves were fighting their way out. As a result, they have not flowered this year.

In July, some of the Section members went to Herm for the day. We landed at the harbour and walked southbound past Rosaire steps and along the cliffs. On the south cliffs, we saw rafts of newly fledged Herring Gulls and Lesser Black-backed Gulls on the water. Fulmars were seen on the east cliff breeding on a ledge. Walking along we looked at an islet, which was dominated with breeding Common Terns. As we walked towards Shell Beach, we looked at the 'cloud' of lavender-blue Sea Holly. At the top of the beach, we had a welcome stop for lunch. We then walked over the common, met up briefly with members of the Archaeology Section, and looked at the cists they had cleared. Afterwards we made our way on to the beach and walked along the sand to the harbour.

Our last outing was to the Colin Best Nature Reserve on a cold and windy evening in August. We looked at the salt marsh and the brackish dourt and because it was an extremely high tide and rough weather, we watched the seaweed flowing in through the pipe that goes under the shingle bank.

In September Pat Costen lead an outing to the Creux Mahie. Whilst she and Charles seemed to leap down the cliff to the cave below the rest of us were following very cautiousl, sometimes on our seats! We looked around the large cave for signs of bats but didn't see anything. Afterwards we sat outside and waited for dusk and saw a few pipistrelles above us. We then climbed up the cliff to some benches at the top where we looked at the nearly full moon and the lighthouse off Jersey and Les Roches Douvres flashing on and off.

In the October and November meetings at Candie Adrian Nicolle showed us a film of some Norfolk and Pitcairn Islands, and Charles David showed slides of insects to be found in the garden. Both evenings were interesting and educational.

The Section meets at 8.00pm at Candie HQ on the third Monday of every month during the winter, except for December when there is no meeting.

Contact Denise Thoumine on 723003 for details.

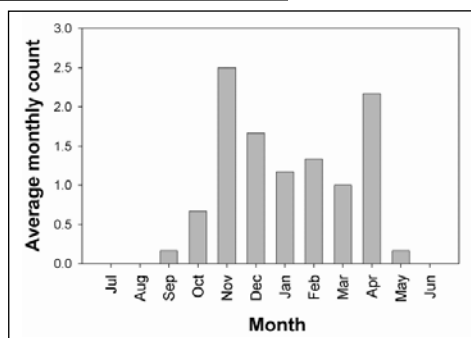
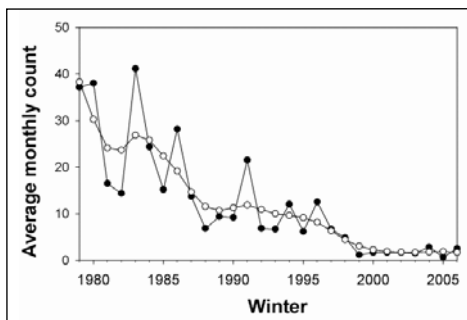
Ornithology

At the time of writing we are experiencing very cold temperatures compared with those we have become used to in recent years. This has been illustrated by a number of

obvious bird movements heading from frozen mainland Europe to the relatively mild climate of our island.

Section members have been monitoring the growing number of Lapwings that have taken up temporary residence predominantly on the grassland boundaries of the airport. By New Years Day the flock exceeded 150 birds, which is not a great number compared with the thousands that used to over-winter island-wide 30 or more years ago, but significant compared with recent winters.

Other birds that have been noted by our members are the increase of Song Thrushes, Redwing and crests. All of these are unfortunately not helped greatly by putting food out as thrushes and Redwings are predominantly ground feeding birds. They are after worms that are often deeper down in cold weather, or worse, locked in by frozen soil. Fallen apples in orchards can be useful supplements, and apples can be cut in half and impaled on twigs. These are often eaten by desperate thrushes, and regularly by Blackcaps which are a frequent over wintering species of warbler. Firecrests and Goldcrests however have to work even harder to stay alive in cold weather. They live solely on insects, and because of their large surface area relative to their weight lose heat rapidly, and have to work hard to maintain fat levels.



New Years Day not only signals a new year, but also means that we birders start a new list of birds. A number of our members were out individually on what was a bitterly cold day, endeavouring to see how many species could be found on what is a short day. Looking over the sea wall opposite the Grande Mare Hotel at high tide I was rewarded with the view of two Purple Sandpipers on roost site. What was so remarkable about that you ask? The Ornithological Section has for years been campaigning for dog walking to be banned at the Richmond end of Vazon, and there are signs asking people to consider walking elsewhere. In spite of this people are still choosing to let their dogs run free.

This is a prime feeding ground for all species of waders, including the purple sandpiper. Wader counts have been carried out for many years now, and this has provided us with incontrovertible evidence that waders are in trouble in

Guernsey, and in particular the purple sandpiper. As you can see on the graph (taken from the La Société Guernesiasse website) their numbers have crashed by 91% over the last 20 years. The main reason for this is public disturbance. If we were chased out of a restaurant every time we sat down for a meal it wouldn't be long before we gave the place a wide berth. The same is happening to our waders.

We as a Section would like to appeal to all La Société members to please bear in mind the very real impact disturbance is having on our precious wildlife. If you have friends with dogs would you be kind enough point out to them the great service they would be doing; if they do choose to walk their dogs along this stretch of coastline to use a lead and help to increase a fragile population of birds.

On Saturday 10 January, at Lihou Island, attention was focussed on the sighting by the Sea Fisheries Officer of what he thought was a Snowy Owl. The last one seen was at Le Hanius back in the nineties. A small group from our Section had gone to Alderney for the day in the hope of seeing the Snowy Owl that had been there for a number of weeks. It was while they were there studying that bird that the call came that there was also one on Lihou! A small number of birders managed to get a view of the bird before it was forced on to rocks offshore, and confirmed that it was a female bird.

Sunday morning saw about 25 Section members gathered in the Lihou Causeway car park waiting for the tide to drop enough for them to cross over. The warden of Lihou confirmed later that the owl flew off as soon as the first ormerers hit shore. An hour was spent looking over the entire island to see if it had flown back, but to no avail. Finally we would be pleased to welcome you to our monthly Section meeting that takes place on the first Thursday of each month at Candie HQ. Here we cover subjects as diverse as "what has been seen this month" to debating policies that are impacting the environment of the island, or just enjoying tea and cake and a stunning slide show of members' birding experiences locally or further afield.

Rod Ferbrache

Guernsey Conservation Volunteers

2008 was another very successful year for the Guernsey Conservation Volunteers. The Group continues to attract new members and our total number of members is increasing year on year. At the end of 2008 the total number of members was 42. This high number of members had an effect on the man hours worked last year and they hit a fantastic 1400 hours!

GCV carried out 38 work parties in 2008 which is more than in previous years. Our first work party of the was at La Garenne Nature Reserve where we cut back brambles from around young trees.

The rest of work parties for this quarter are:

10.00am Saturday 14 February - Jardin de Lorette, Capelles - cutting back bindweed and brambles

10.00am Saturday 14 March - Fort Pezeries - removing Hottentot Fig

10.00am Saturday 28 March - Ron Short Walk, Talbot Valley - maintenance work

10.00am Saturday 11 April - Fort Pezeries - removing Hottentot Fig

Although we are very pleased with the number of members in GCV we would always welcome more! If you would like to come along to a work party, or just find out more about the group, please contact Angela Salmon on 721163 or through the GCV website www.gcv.org.uk.

Bat Group

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

La Société Sercquaise

In the run-up to election day (10 December) and since, Sark has received more media coverage than is normal over three years. In the welter of conflicting views and predictions it would be foolish to offer a 'Société view' of the future. As members would hope, the society is in vigorous health and the autumn months saw some notable achievements as well as steady progress in development of our resources.

First, though, we must note with great sadness the death of Roy Sangan in Guernsey. In recent years Roy and Pam spent a month in Sark two or three times a year, dropping into the Centre almost daily with discoveries and observations. His generous knowledge and contagious enthusiasm will be remembered affectionately by many islanders.

In August our centenary exhibition of The Book of Sark was visited by about 800 people and was the result of a happy collaboration with the the Toplis family. The society can take some credit for the fact that the trustees of the New Island Hall are planning to designate a 'William Toplis Room', and to acquire two more copies of paintings in the Guernsey collection ('Gouliot Rocks' and 'Souffleur').

Sue Daly and Jo Birch attended the inter-island meeting of the UKOTCF at the Guernsey Museum on 19 September, organized by Charles David. Invasive species, the seabird breeding season, a wildlife law for Sark and tidal power were all discussed; the afternoon was spent on field trips in Guernsey, which was particularly interesting for the Sark visitors.

Our Beach Clean-up on 21 September resulted in about 30kgs of rubbish in 3 very large bin bags - only Grand Grève was cleaned officially but it is hoped to do more next year.

The Candie Toplis exhibition (18 October to the end of the year) was prefaced by an impressive display of Sark archaeology - from the Lukis Collection and from our own recent finds. A dozen Roman and Iron Age coins were shown, together with the glass bead and six-holed stone disc from the June excavation.

It is a nice surprise to find ourselves lending artefacts to other museums, this time to Christ's College in Cambridge, in connection with the bicentenary of Charles Darwin's birth. Darwin's undergraduate room has been furnished as he had it in the 1820s, including bird skins: specimens of water rail, little bittern, corncrake, barn owl and kestrel have been lent from our Rountree collection. The room at Christ's will be open to the public throughout 2009.

In November Sue Daly premiered four new wildlife films at the Island Hall, "Wild Reef", "Wild Guernsey", "Nights" and "Quarry" and showed her latest photographic work at the Centre. The walls of our Room were covered with fish and sea creatures, butterflies and flowery landscapes.

In December three members featured on a BBC Radio 4 programme on Sark in "Open Country" on 27 December and repeated on 1st January: Jan Guy, Phil Perrée and Sue Daly.

Jo Birch

Friends of the Priaux Library

At 7.30pm on **Tuesday 17 February** at the Frossard Centre, Candie Gardens, Dr Scot McKendrick, a leading expert in the world of manuscripts, and Head of Western Manuscripts at the British Library, London, will give a talk about Flemish Manuscripts at the British Library, and the Priaux Library's own Flemish manuscript, a very valuable Book of Hours, with illuminated miniatures, dating from 1470 - 80. The talk is free to Friends, but all are welcome. Non-Friends may either join on the night at a subscription of £10 for 2009, or pay an admission charge of £5.

Meteorology Report

Summary of Weather Sept-Dec 2008

The first week of September gave a taste of autumn with windy, wet and rather cool weather. After this, high pressure took control bringing much drier conditions for the rest of the month, although there was no sign of real post-summer warmth. From the 12th-23rd there was no measurable rain, a good amount of sunshine and mainly light winds.

Unsettled weather returned for early October with strong winds and rain, however, no gales were recorded at this time. A brief "Indian Summer" followed before more changeable conditions returned. The last week brought a notable chill, with the joint second lowest temperature in October being recorded on the 28th at 3.9°C. There were also some heavy bursts of rain or hail; the most significant in the early hours of the 29th brought flooding to the east and north of the Island, disrupting the early commute.

The first 10 days of November brought more wet weather, but it did become milder again. Drier conditions followed, thanks to a large area of high pressure. Its position to the west of the British Isles, though, accounted for a large amount of cloud, so that we had little sunshine. This lack of sunshine persisted as wet weather returned for the last few days. It also became much colder again as the wind swung first into the north and then around to the east.

Overall the autumn was the coldest since 1993, the dullest since 2004 and the wettest since 2000.

The cold and wet weather that had arrived late on in November continued through early December. We had our only gale for this part of the year on the morning of the 5th, with hail showers being blown through rapidly on the breeze. A sharp change took place around mid-month with high pressure becoming dominant. This had the effect of stopping

the rain almost completely. There was some drizzle on a few days, but from the 17th onwards there was no measurable rain. The early part of this period saw temperatures pick up, but over Christmas an easterly flow developed, pulling in much colder air from the continent. There was no rain at all from Boxing Day onwards and plenty of sunshine, but we saw frosty weather on the last three nights.

The year of 2008 proved to be the coolest since 1996, with only one month in the last five having temperatures above normal. This was also the wettest year since 2002, while sunshine was higher than usual. Since the mid-nineties we have had sunnier weather generally, than was experienced during most of the preceding 30 years or so.

A hundred years of Greenwich time

By David Le Conte

In the last issue of *Communiqué* I wrote about the transmission of the Greenwich time signal to Guernsey in the 1870s. It was, however, not until many years later that GMT became the legal time in the island. This article traces the course of how GMT became generally acceptable to the public throughout the country before being officially accepted here exactly a hundred years ago this year.

The legal acceptance of GMT followed a long way behind its popular acceptance, and this was due largely to its widespread distribution by electric telegraph, and the needs of railway operators and travellers.

The use of local time (ie time dependant on local longitude, rather than that of a time zone meridian) was fine before the advent of long-distance communication and rapid transportation. Clocks could simply be set by comparison with sundials, due account being taken of the 'equation of time' (apparent variations in solar movement, which were published in annual almanacs) if real accuracy was needed.

But local time could cause confusion, as each town kept its own time, and this became more significant as railway travel became the norm. Different time systems applied to different sections of the same railway line. Railway time-tables appeared to show that east-bound trains were faster than west-bound ones, even though the travel time was the same in both directions. Some down trains adhered to London time, while up trains went by local time. Trains could be missed because the railway station ran on one time system while the town used another. More importantly there were safety considerations: lack of time standardisation could result in trains attempting to use the same tracks at the same times, with potentially dire consequences.

As early as 1840 the Great Western Railway had coordinated clocks at its stations to indicate London time, rather than local time. Other railways followed suit, and one unsuccessfully petitioned Parliament to introduce a uniform time system throughout the country.

The distribution of Greenwich time by telegraph throughout the country, however, helped establish it as the nation's standard time. It was, of course, relatively easy to run telegraph cables along railway lines, and rapid communication

and accurate standard time at railway stations was essential. By 1855 almost all public clocks conformed to this standard. By the 1870s Greenwich time signals were being sent through the Post Office's Central Telegraph Office in London to over 600 offices, including the principal railway termini. Many redistributed the signal so that most of the post office and railway clocks in the country were regulated in this manner.

In the intervening period the duality, indeed multiplicity of time standards and the absence of a legal time caused other problems. Clocks in English towns, for example, could show times as much as 22 minutes later than those in London. A court case in 1858 was decided in the absence of the defendant (finding against him), because the case was commenced by Greenwich time, as shown by the Court clock, while the defendant appeared at the local time shown by the town clock. This led to an appeal in which the decision of the lower court was overturned, it being established that legal time in Britain was local time, not Greenwich time.

Despite the fact that more and more town clocks showed Greenwich time, and its consequent use by the general public, legal time in Britain remained local time until 1880, when the Statutes (Definition of Time) Act was passed "to remove doubts as to the meaning of Expressions relative to Time...".

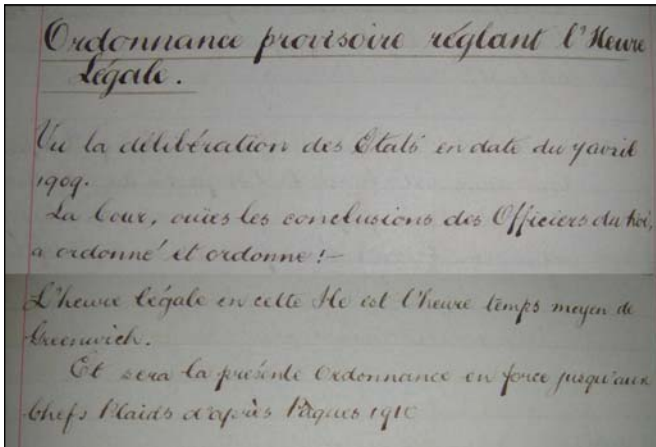
This was followed in 1884 by the international adoption of Greenwich as the prime meridian from which longitudes were measured, and reflected the general use over the previous century of that meridian by nautical charts, at least for international waters (coastal charts and inland maps tending to use a variety of national meridians).

What was happening in Guernsey during this period? Guernsey people clearly adopted Greenwich Time during the second half of the 19th century, and, as we have seen, accurate time signals were being telegraphed here from Greenwich in the 1870s. In 1876 Guernsey was pressed by the Home Office to adopt Greenwich time, and the Town Church clock was advanced by the requisite number of minutes by Mr Le Lacheur, who, as we have seen in the last article, received the Greenwich time signal by electric telegraph.¹

There was, however, still no legal time. In 1898 the States of Jersey passed a law making Greenwich Time the legal time in that island, 18 years after its adoption in Britain. The Guernsey Evening Press stated: "This is a matter in which Guernsey long ago set them a good example. The fact that Guernsey time and Greenwich time mean the same thing has been productive of nothing but good here."² No doubt, Jersey had also, in practice, used Greenwich time long before that date, but the Guernsey Press was in error in suggesting that Greenwich time was already legal here.

In 1904, the Press bemoaned the fact that the Town Church clock was inaccurate: "Since the Town Church clock be maintained at public expense there should be some assurance that the time is Greenwich time, unless Guernsey has a time of its own!" The Weighbridge clock, which, by statute was the time standard used for harbour purposes, and so governed the receipt of produce for shipment, was no better, and neither was the Post Office clock, which dictated the closing time for posting.³

It was not, in fact, until 1909 that Greenwich time was made legal in Guernsey, and even then it was only as a by-product of proposals to introduce daylight saving time. At that date a Bill to introduce daylight saving time in Britain was making its way through Parliament. In Guernsey a public meeting was



The 1909 Ordinance which made Greenwich Mean Time the legal time in Guernsey. (Courtesy, the Greffe)

held, and a committee appointed to lay a requête for similar proposals before the States, the perceived benefits including: "An impetus to manly sports as opposed to twilight loafing", and "Probably a diminished use of the public-house."⁴ The proposals were controversial and were thrown out, as they were in Britain, but the States did agree that "l'heure légale en cette Île est l'heure temps moyen de Greenwich", and that decision became an ordinance.⁵

So, it was exactly a hundred years ago that Guernsey adopted GMT as legal time, 29 years after Britain, and almost the last place in the British Isles to do so. I say "almost" because it appears that GMT may never have been made legal time in Alderney and Sark, although legislation for those islands relating to the introduction of daylight saving time do imply that at times other than the summer Greenwich Time prevails.

David Le Conte

References:

1. Evening Press, 2 April 1909.
2. Evening Press, 12 February 1898.
3. Evening Press, 25 January 1904.
4. Le Règlement du temps de cette île, Billet d'Etat, 7 April 1909, pp208-211, and Resolutions, page xv. Daylight saving time was introduced in 1916.
5. Ordonnance provisoire réglant l'heure légale, Guernesey, 19 April 1909. (The ordinance was made permanent in 1913, and daylight saving time in Guernsey was introduced in 1916.)

David will be presenting an illustrated lecture on this subject at Candie on 3 March at 8.00pm.

Visit by French Group

La Société helped organise a visit to the island by the Association Mycologique du Cotentin on Friday 20 September. About 40 members came to the island by sea from Dielette. Among the many interesting fungi they found at the Reservoir was a new Channel Islands record, the rare species *Asterophora lycoperdoides* which is parasitic on another fungus, Blackening Brittlegill, (*Russula nigricans*).



Asterophora lycoperdoides

The Channel Island Environment (Cienviron) list

The Channel Island Environment (Clenviron) email list has been set-up to share local natural history and wildlife information between all the Channel Islands. This email list will distribute environmental news, which may include notices of meetings and reports of unusual or alien marine and terrestrial species. It may discuss climate change, the establishment of Ramsar sites or historical wildlife reports. All Bailiwick of Guernsey residents who have an interest in nature are welcome to join and contribute to the email list by visiting the following web address:

<http://groups.google.co.uk:80/group/cienviron>

To have full access to the Clenviron email list and to be able to receive and post messages you will need to click "Join this Group" and follow directions to create a Google account if you don't have one already.

Diary Dates

Tuesday 3 March - The emergence of Greenwich Mean Time

Lecture by David Le Conte at 8.00 pm at the Frossard Centre, Candie Gardens

Friday 3 April - The Megalithic Tombs of Brittany in their European Context - Lecture by Dr Michael Hoskin, Cambridge University at 8.00 pm at the Frossard Centre, Candie Gardens

Sunday 17 May the Annual Sale

Will take place at 2.00 pm at Les Vauxbelets, by kind permission of the Principal, Mrs Le Page. More details in the next Communiqué.

Local Books for sale

The Guernsey Biological Records Centre has the following books for sale. A small profit will be returned to La Société:

Marquand, E. 1901. Flora of Guernsey and the Lesser Channel Islands. £80. The definitive flora of the Bailiwick including lower plants, fungi and lichens.

Dobson, F. 1952. Birds of the Channel Islands £20.

Website

The Société website can be found at the usual address www.societe.org.gg

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