



COMMUNIQUÉ

The Newsletter of LA SOCIÉTÉ GUERNESIAISE

Autumn 2009 Issue No.70

Guernsey's Local Research, Natural History and Conservation Society

Diary Dates

Saturday 7 November at 8.00 pm at the Princess Royal Centre for Performing Arts. To celebrate the bi-centenary of the birth of Charles Darwin and the 150th anniversary of the publication of his seminal work "Origin of Species", La Société Guernesiaise is honoured to present, in the presence of the Bailiff Sir Geoffrey Rowland and Lady Rowland, a lecture by Professor Nick Day CBE FRS entitled 'Darwin, evolution and environmental catastrophe'. Free to members of La Société Guernesiaise by ticket only. Tickets will be available for collection from Candie HQ and Les Sablons Interpretation Centre from Saturday 11 October.

Monday 23 November at 8.00 pm at the Frossard Centre, Candie Gardens "One shilling weekly: 350 years of The Royal Society" - Lecture by Keith Moore, Chief Librarian and Archivist, The Royal Society. See details on page 7. Please see Section entries for their events, and the website.

Apology. We wish to give sincere apologiese to those who attended for a walk at L'Ancresse on 6 September. Unfortunately, owing to crossed lines, the leader did not turn up.

Christmas Luncheon

Sunday 13 December

We have arranged our Christmas lunch this year at the Peninsula Hotel, at 12.45 pm. The bar will be available for drinks from 12.15 pm. There will be a help-yourself buffet with a large choice, including vegetarian. The price is £19 per head, including a tip to the staff, but excluding drinks. Please send your cheque, made payable to La Société Guernesiaise, for £19 per person, to the Secretary. There will be no seating plan.

Collection of Annual Transactions Saturday 21 November

The Annual Transactions for 2008 will be available to those local members who elected to have a printed version between 10.00 am and 4.00 pm on Saturday 21 November. Members may collect their copy at either Candie HQ or Les Sablons, L'Erée, where teas, coffees and delicious home-made cakes will be for sale. Christmas cards, books and small gifts will also be for sale. As usual, a copy for overseas members who elected to receive a printed version will be mailed around that time. Collection can also be made on any day thereafter from Les Sablons, or between 10.00 am and 11.30 am on Tuesdays, Thursdays or Saturdays from Candie HQ.

Electronic copy of Annual Transactions

Members who elected to receive an electronic copy of the Transactions will be sent an e-mail with a password and instructions on how to access the file on the internet.

Christmas Cards & New Postcards

La Société's own Christmas cards and notelets are always available from the Candie HQ and from Les Sablons. This year we have printed six new postcards featuring stunning photographs of a Marsh Harrier, a Spoonbill, a Snowy Owl, a Glanville Fritillary, a Southern Marsh Orchid and a Heath Spotted Orchid, all taken on our reserves. These cost 20p each and are also available at the Candie HQ and Les Sablons.

President's Report

Bailiff Sir Geoffrey and Lady Rowland

On behalf of the Council and members of La Société I was delighted to send congratulations to Sir Geoffrey and Lady Diana Rowland on the award of Sir Geoffrey's knighthood. Members number 2602 and 2603, they joined La Société in 1976. In 2007 Sir Geoffrey gave an address at our 125th anniversary dinner, in which he spoke of two previous Bailiffs who had been Presidents, Sir Edgar MacCulloch and Sir Havilland de Sausmarez. This address was subsequently expanded to produce a paper which was published in the Transactions. (Report and Transactions 2007 pp224-239.)

Sir Geoffrey and Lady Rowland have kindly agreed to be our guests at the forthcoming Darwin Lecture.

The Darwin Lecture

La Société Guernesiaise will commemorate the 200th anniversary of the birth of Charles Darwin and the 150th anniversary of the publication of his seminal work, 'Origin of Species'. On 7th November (as close as we could get to The Origin of Species publication date of 24th November) Professor Nick Day CBE FRS will give a lecture entitiled: 'Darwin, Evolution and Environmental Catastrophe' at the Princess Royal Centre for Performing Arts at 8pm. This event will be free to members, and tickets will be available for collection from Candie HQ from Saturday 10th October. Please do come along and make this a successful occasion. Drinks will be served in the foyer from 7.15pm.

Amanda Bennett, Chief Librarian of the Priaulx Library, has kindly agreed to provide a display of their Darwin books. Osmond de Beauvoir Priaulx was a friend of Charles Darwin's brother Erasmus, and it is most likely that he would have met, and probably dined with, the great man, though no documentary evidence exists to support this. It would, however, account for the significant number of Darwin books, including some first editions, in the library. The Priaulx's 'Origin of Species' is a second edition. The entire first edition sold out on publication day, but the second edition was ready by the following January. Incidentally La Société Guernesiaise was founded the very year that Darwin died.

Rodney Collenette

Well-known member Rodney Collenette strayed into the Candie headquarters in June and was asked if he might stand not only as an Ordinary member of Council but also as prospective Vice-President. We were delighted that, after some reflection, he agreed to both. He was duly proposed and seconded at the July Council meeting and will be Council's nomination for Vice-President at the next AGM.

Rodney, who has sat on Council before, brings to La Société his wide knowledge of the island on which he was born and also of the finance industry from which he has recently retired.

Les Sablons Interpretation Centre

At Richard Hocart's suggestion we put a Visitor Book in the centre and, judging by the comments, the display has been a resounding success, though it has to be said that several of the comments relate to the 'wonderful cakes'! Sincere thanks to Joy Goldsmith and her team for selling our goods, and for making a visit to the centre such a culinary delight.

Pat Costen

Annual Sale

The Annual Sale took place on Sunday 17th May at Blanchelande Girls' School, Les Vauxbelets. Tables were put in position and by 10 am members began arriving to set up. Denise Thoumine and Lucy de Carteret, neither of them tall ladies, began staggering in with huge boxes of books, followed by Adrian Nicolle, Charles David and Jane Gilmour. Outside, John and Rhi Cook, clad for the promised rain and cold in full wet weather gear, began to display the huge quantity of stunning plants, assisted by stalwart botanist Hazel Grey.

Back inside the hall, Lawney Martin and Julia Peet got set to receive the masses of cakes, bread and garden produce, while over in the corner, Edith Le Patourel set up her tea shop where customers later enjoyed a cup of tea and Guernsey gâche. Raffle prizes poured in and Jean Brown, Anne Seebeck and Mary Simmons of the Bird Section began to display and number them.

Then came the bric-à-brac. Vanessa Crispini-Adams brought in boxes of it, while members added more throughout the morning. Together with a quantity unsold last year, there was a very large amount, and most of it was good quality merchandise for which we were most grateful. Sadly, a great deal of it wasn't, and while one man's rubbish may be another's treasure, it's hard to imagine anyone believing that Vanessa and Tanya Walls could extend their selling skills to, for example, a half empty bottle of shampoo!

By 2 o'clock a queue had formed and selling began. By 4 o'clock it was all pretty well over and we had raised, after deductions for Blanchelande and a Sunday trading licence, £1,210 – over £600 an hour!

Very sincere thanks to all the members who worked so hard and to those who donated the goods and then spent money at this, our major fund-raising event of the year, at which the most members are gathered at any one time.

Particular thanks to the nurseries and garden centres that donate a truly amazing amount of plants each

Mr R Evison of Guernsey Clemetis Mrs Scott of Channel Island Plants Ltd Dominic Barnes of Dell Nursery Mr and Mrs Tayler of Earlswood Garden Centre Mr and Mrs Eddy of Kings Mills Garden Centre Fred Bell at Le Friquet Garden Centre Mr D H Falla MBE of North Brook Nurseries Bob Payne of Guernsey Gardens Special thanks also to Jacques and Chantal, caretakers at Blanchelande, for their help.

SECTION NEWS Family History



Our summer outdoor meetings began in May with "Saumarez Park and its Environs", a walk/talk with Gillian Lenfestey, in which she spoke on the development of the house and park and the historic profile of the Saumarez family.

Once again, in June, we welcomed Sylvia Brouard who gave the members a walk/talk around town covering people who had lived in the various buildings, and the uses to which the buildings had been put.

In July "An Introduction to St Peter's Church" was the title given to his walk/talk by Bill Gallienne, who gave the history of this church, consecrated in 1167, and built on a spot hallowed by pagans.

The winter programme starts with the Annual Dinner on Wednesday 21 October. Those members wishing to attend are asked to contact the Section Secretary, Edith Le Patourel, on 721566, so that when the Tennerfest menus are published she will send them out.

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 7.45 pm 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

Juniors

Zoë Randle of Butterfly Conservation made her second visit to the island at the end of June to promote Moths Count, and on Sunday 28th June the juniors had a session emptying moth traps at Les Sablons Interpretation Centre. Julia Peet brought along some Emperor Moth caterpillars to show to the children, and Tim Peet, Rich Austin and David Wedd from Alderney showed the children the huge variety of species caught in the traps. Of particular interest were the large hawk moths. All the moths were later released.



Tim Peet, David Wedd and Rich Austin show the juniors an impressive collection of moths from the traps.

Future Meetings

Saturday 26th September - Herm Visit

This will include:

A visit with Tanya Walls to the archaeological excavations where a team from Durham University led by Professor Chris Scarre will be investigating the buried prehistoric landscape in the north of the island;

A look at some of the wild flowers - by the end of the session the children should be able to identify ten different plants;

And an insect hunt. We hope to see several different species of butterfly.

Catch the 10.30 am boat to Herm.

The fares for the juniors will be paid by our sponsors, **Yorkshire Guernsey**.

October: Geology November: Astronomy

Check the website for details.



Gabriel Haynes with a Poplar Hawk moth.

Archaeology



Prehistoric pit at Airport site

This is a very busy time for Guernsey's archaeology. Since the spring we have been excavating in fields to the west of the airport, and during the summer and autumn there have been research digs at L'Erée and in Sark, Herm and Alderney. In July the Guernsey Museum hosted a series of events for the 'Festival of Archaeology' and particular thanks go to Section members who helped to make these so successful.

In June Professor Barry Cunliffe returned to Sark with his team. They excavated a mound in the north-west of the island, which has proved to be a prehistoric cairn. More details will be available when the results of the work are written up.

In August members of the Section joined the Alderney Society for a dig at the Nunnery, Longis Common, directed by Jason Monaghan. Three trenches were opened to further investigation of the suspected Roman fort. On the eastern side, a trial trench begun in 2002 was extended to reveal the foundations of the eastern wall and one of its buttresses. The postulated return of this wall within the Nunnery was confirmed by a second trench. The main trench within the Nunnery itself revealed that, as expected, this wall continued below the modern courtyard. Good dating evidence remained elusive, but the massive nature of the revealed wall would be appropriate for a Roman public building. With walls over 2 metres thick, further research is needed to confirm whether this could be the central tower of the postulated fort. The excavation will be published in the Alderney Society

At the time of writing the excavation at L'Erée headland is under way. Last year Dr Fraser Sturt and Dr Duncan Garrow began their project to locate the site of Neolithic (c5000-2500BC) settlement on the headland. Their first trench was in the field above the small beach, and some evidence of prehistoric activity was found; this year they are digging to the south-east and have already located the buried prehistoric land surface in several places.

This autumn there is also the second phase of Professor Chris Scarre's Herm Project. This will build

on last year's work: the prehistoric cist and low wall on the Common will be examined further and a number of trenches are to be dug where geophysical survey has identified buried features. Professor Scarre will give a tour of the excavations on 19 September.

The ongoing excavation west of the airport has proved intriguing. There is a series of ditches with different orientations; a couple of these are medieval but the rest appear to be Bronze Age in date. The dating evidence is provided by flints and sherds of pottery. Part of a deeply rutted track has been discovered - also thought to be Bronze Age - the forerunner to the Route de Plaisance perhaps? The most mysterious feature is a pit containing a thick deposit of burnt material, once hot enough to have scorched the surrounding gravel. The pit is connected to a deep, narrow channel which runs down towards a spring head. The purpose of this feature is not known, although it may have been used for a process involving water. The pit contents will be analysed, so perhaps that will help to solve the mystery. This excavation has offered plenty of opportunities for Section members to get involved in the digging and the processing of the finds.



Prehistoric pit at Airport site

There will be a talk describing this year's excavations by States Archaeologist Philip de Jersey on Tuesday 24 November at 8.00 pm in the Frossard Theatre.

Tanya Walls

Ornithology



It was promised this summer's weather would be better than the previous two or three; however you don't need me to tell you that it seems to have failed miserably. Hardly two good days strung together, let alone a month or two of summer. Now as you read this, the evenings are rapidly drawing in, and thoughts of those days on the beach already a disappearing memory. We as a section though can look back on the past season with a deep sense of satisfaction, amazement, and a feeling that maybe things are on the change.

It started as previously reported with not one, not two, but three Snowy Owls in the Bailiwick. That alone was unprecedented for the Channel Islands. Then on 20 March one of our members reported a Fan-Tailed Warbler (Zitting Cisticola) in the scrub adjacent to the Rovers football pitch at Port Soif. The next day it was confirmed that there were two present there. They were still there on the section's Bird Race day in May, and entered the record books as a first for race day. Yet just like Usain Bolt, they weren't satisfied with just one record, they were seen carrying food, and so became the first breeding Fan-Tailed Warblers in Guernsey.

It was the briefest of visits, no more than about thirty seconds, but I was chuffed to bits to be home when a Great Spotted Woodpecker popped into the garden to have a quick look around. They hate flying over water and so that seems to have stymied their setting up in Guernsey in any sizable numbers. Sightings though have grown in recent years, and Mark Lawlor had been seeing two birds regularly in the Le Vauquiedor area, and had heard the sound of young birds calling. Breeding was confirmed when he reported observing food being carried to the nest hole. As far as we can gather, this was another first breeding record for Guernsey, and with perhaps more trees in existence than have been seen in years, we can only hope that this is just the beginning.

Both the Woodpecker and the Fan-Tailed Warbler can be elusive, the former for its habit of always being on the wrong side of a tree, and the latter because of its diminutive size. However, our next record-breaker cannot be accused of either of these attributes. La Claire Mare Reserve, adjacent to the Colin Best Nature Reserve, has always played host to visiting Marsh Harriers, who are either overwintering, or are on passage. This year, however, things were different. Not a month went by without regular reports of Harriers being present. In July Paul Hillion was successful in photographing two recently-fledged juvenile Harriers at the reserve. Jersey has had breeding Marsh Harriers at St Ouens for a number of years, so one can only speculate if the ones that successfully bred at La Claire Mare this year were from this population.

What these three amazing records prove to us is that if we provide and protect the right habitats, nature can, and will, do the rest.

Common Buzzards too are a recent breeding species in Guernsey, and they have bred again this year, as have the Little Egrets on Crevichon. The colony could have as many as 12 pairs now and are showing resilience in such a challenging habitat.

Also-rans have been Grey, and White Wagtails, both very scarce breeders. Sand Martins again were successful near the Lihou headland, and it would be good to see these communal breeders expanding their holes along the mini cliff.

So we may not have had the summer we were promised, but for me this more than makes up for any disappointment the weather may have brought. The thought of all these birds doing so well bodes well for next year, and the warm glow that gives me will outlive my sun tan!

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 Museum.

Rod Ferbrache

Guernsey Conservation Volunteers

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.

NCCPG

Mon 5 October at Les Cotils at 7.30pm Laura Ponsonby will give a lecture on "A Taste of India - its Buildings and Plants"

Sat 10 October - Sat 24 October 10th Anniversary NCCPG Nerine Festival in the lower glasshouse, Candie Gardens

Wed 18 November at Les Cotils at 7.30pm Chris Smith of Pennard Plants will give a lecture on "Heritage Vegetables"

Entry to all lectures £3 to non - NCCPG members.

WEA Guernsey

The 2009/10 WEA Guernsey brochure is now available at libraries, post offices, shops and other outlets. It lists a range of courses for adults, some held during weekdays, some in the evening, and some at weekends. The subjects include: languages, arts and crafts, local interest, environment, wine and cookery, health, and general interest, as well as the annual Raymond Falla Memorial Lecture.

Interesting new courses include: How our Island Government Works (a series of presentations by States Departments), a new series of one-day craft workshops, and Calligraphy. Several courses introduced in recent years have proved so popular that they are being repeated, with some changes of format and content. They include: Growing your own food, the identification of fish, a look inside Guernsey's media, Guernsey's special traditions (landscape, the entrepôt trade, folklore and beliefs, the Guernsey militia, and the evolution of Guernsey architecture), and complementary therapies. This year's extreme travels course includes accounts of unusual journeys in Africa, China, Madagascar, Rajasthan, Zimbabwe and Antarctica. Old favourites continue, including: a number of courses in French and Italian, patchwork, drawing, embroidery, Guernsey bonnets, wine appreciation, yoga, Scottish country dancing, and astronomy. New historical walks will be held in St Martin's, St Peter Port and the Forest. The very popular Economic viewpoints course will focus on the financial working of the States and new Guernsey industries. The philosophy course, entitled The Sovereignty of the Good, addresses ethical issues raised in Iris Murdoch's book of this name, especially relevant in today's climate of banking and political scandals.

Full details of all courses may are also listed on the Association's web site: www.wea.org.gg.

David Le Conte

Bat Group

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

Le Cercle Français

15 October at 8.00 pm in the Frossard Theatre. To commemorate the centenary year of the death of Denys Corbet, poet and painter, an evening devoted to Corbet and other writers of Guernsey Norman-French. French will be the main language used in this presentation, though not exclusively so. Further details in the media nearer the time. Any enquiries to Geoffrey Mahy, tel. 263029.

Butterfly Conservation Moths Count



At the end of June, Zoë Randle of Butterfly Conservation came over to give a presentation on their Moths Count project. She had been here last year to speak to the moth recorders; this time she came to speak to the general public. An evening presentation at the Frossard Theatre was followed by a well-attended moth trap emptying session at Blanchelande. Sincere thanks to Rich Austin, Mark Lawlor, Peter Costen and Trevor Bourgaise for bringing their traps and to David Wedd, who travelled down from Alderney to add to the considerable gathered expertise in identifying the moths. Zoë was joined this time by Les Hill, Moths Count database manager, who was able to discuss some mapping problems with Charles David. He was also able to give an invaluable tutorial to Mark Lawlor and Peter Costen on the use of Mapmate software thus enabling Mark, in particular, to produce some incredibly detailed distribution maps for the entire Bailiwick.

Pat Costen

Guernsey Heroes of the Royal Society

The Royal Society was established in 1660 and rapidly became an international centre for gathering and disseminating ideas - about science, technology and medicine, but many other disciplines too. Election as a Fellow of the Society was, and still is, a high honour, recognising outstanding scientific achievement.

The Friends of the Priaulx Library, in association with La Société Guernesiaise and WEA Guernsey, are participating in the Society's 350th anniversary celebrations with a series of lectures, an exhibition, and other activities. Under the general heading Guernsey heroes of the Royal Society, it will focus on the lives, research and achievements of Guernseymen who have been Fellows of the Society. The project leader is David Le Conte, Past President of La Société.

The first lecture will be given at 8.00 pm on Monday, 23 November 2009 by the Royal Society's Chief Librarian and Archivist, Keith Moore, at La Société's headquarters at Candie Gardens. Entitled "One shilling weekly: 350 years of The Royal Society" the talk will outline how Fellows of the Royal Society changed the modern world by communicating the results of observation and experiment through the organisation.

Some of their projects are so familiar that they have entered the language – others are surprising and not what we would think of as science at all. Fellows' accumulated endeavours are still preserved in their London-based historical collections of archives, books, paintings and museum objects and these will be used to explain why we should be celebrating 350 years of this remarkable organisation.

Keith Moore has specialised in history of science collections for much of his career and has written about many of them. He has been the Royal Society's Librarian since 2005, having worked for other London-based learned societies, including the Wellcome Institute and the Institution of Mechanical Engineers.

The exhibition about the Guernsey Fellows will be held from April to June 2010 at the Priaulx Library. A poster exhibition is also to be offered to schools.

The second talk will be given as the WEA's annual Raymond Falla Memorial Lecture, at 8.00 pm on Thursday, 13 May at Les Côtils Centre. Priaulx Chief Librarian Amanda Bennett and WEA Chairman David Le Conte will describe the lives and work of these outstanding Guernseymen. They cover a broad base of subjects from astronomy to medicine, from geology to naval inventions.

The third and final lecture will be given by the only current Guernsey Fellow of the Royal Society, Professor Nicholas Day, Cambridge epidemiologist and

Guernsey Heroes of the Royal Society continued

Council Member of La Société, in October 2010 at La Société's headquarters. He will describe the Society today, and what it means to be a Fellow. Date to be announced later.

David Le Conte

Website

The Société website can be found at the usual address ww.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.

Eggheads

We have been approached by the BBC to field a team on this popular programme. We tried unsuccessfully to raise one from Council, so it was suggested that we ask members with the necessary expertise to come forward. If you feel that you might be able to challenge the experts on subjects such as Sport, Music, Food and Drink, Arts and Books, Politics, History, Geography & Science and Film & TV do please contact Lawney at societe@cwgsy.net or Tel. 725093.

Subscriptions

The subscription rate will remain unchanged for 2010. We would like to thank those of you who have transferred to Direct Debit. This new system has had a number of teething problems, but we hope they have now been sorted out. We have at last been able to make refunds to members whose payments were made twice. Those who have changed over to DD should please ensure with their bank that their old standing order has been cancelled.

Officers and Council Members

Officers:

President	Pat Costen	264500
Vice-President	Vacant	
Secretary	Lawney Martin	237853
Honorary Treasurer	Peter Budwin	716134
Membership Secretary	May Teagle	724835
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Reserves Committee Chairman	Jane Gilmour	700024
Land Management and		
Conservation Officer	Jamie Hooper	266924
Volunteer Co-ordinator - Reserves	Vanessa Crispini-Adams	238150
Librarians	Jean & Gavin Sampson	234430
Section Secretaries:		
	Tamas Malla	707044
ARCHAEOLOGY	Tanya Walls	727614

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ASTRONOMY	Debby Quertier	725760
BOTANY	Vacant	
CLIMATE CHANGE	Andrew Casebow	722245
ENTOMOLOGY	Charles David	238978
FAMILY HISTORY	Edith Le Patourel	721566
GEOLOGY & GEOGRAPHY	Andrew Dorey	252123
HISTORIC BUILDINGS	John McCormack	720303
HISTORY & PHILOLOGY	Bill Gallienne	265529
MARINE BIOLOGY & ZOOLOGY	Vacant	
NATURE CONSERVATION	Denise Thoumine	723003
ORNITHOLOGY	Nancy Ogier	268191

Associated Groups:

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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 Sercquaise	Jo Birch	832788
National Council for the		
Conservation of Plants Guernsey	Tattie Thompson	239444
Lé Coumité d'la Culture Guernésiaise	Hazel Tomlinson	255891
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, Mrs V. Crispini-Adams, A. Ritchie, N. Day, Miss J. Gilmour, Mrs Judith Keen and R. Collenette.

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 10.00 and 11.30am on Tuesdays, Thursdays & Saturdays.

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