



COMMUNIQUE

The Newsletter of **LA SOCIÉTÉ GUERNESIAISE**

Autumn 2010 Issue No.73

Guernsey's Local Research, Natural History and Conservation Society

Christmas Luncheon

Sunday 12 December

We have arranged our Christmas lunch this year at the Hotel de Havelet, at 12.45 pm at a cost of £15.50 per person, including tip to staff, but excluding drinks. The menu is on the enclosed sheet. Please send your cheque, payable to La Société Guernesiaise, along with the names of those attending and their menu choices, to the Secretary by 1 December. There will be no seating plan.



Important News Regarding Subscriptions

At the AGM last March, it was decided that the subscriptions would be raised from 1 January 2011. The overseas single and double/family rates are to be merged to one new rate of £20. Anyone paying by cash, cheque or Standing Order should make the appropriate change. Members paying by Direct Debit need to nothing as the correct subscription will be collected. The rates will be:

- Local single - £22
- Local double/family - £30
- Overseas (single, double/family) - £20
- Students - £5
- Corporate - £200
- Single Life - £300
- Double Life - £400

Collection of Annual Transactions Saturday 4 December

The Annual Transactions for 2009 will be available for collection on or after Saturday 4 December, for those who elected to have a printed version. They can be collected from La Société HQ at Candie between 10.00 am and 12.30 pm, or from Les Sablons Interpretation Centre between 10.00 am and 5.00 pm. Please note that they will remain at these locations until 28 February. Any not collected by that date will be delivered in due course.

Electronic copy of Annual Transactions

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

New Christmas Card

La Société has printed a new Christmas card of Herons in the snow and this will be available from Candie HQ and Les Sablon from the beginning of November.

Publication

Richard Hocart's book "Guernsey's Countryside: an Introduction to the History of the Rural Landscape" will be available from 2 October from La Société at Candie and Les Sablons (price £9.50; £8.75 for members) and via the website.

Old mobile telephones

La Société is now able to recycle mobile phones. This initiative helps protect the environment and reduces the use of limited resources. Any money raised will be used for local conservation purposes. If you have an old phone you no longer use, you can pop it through the letterbox at Candie, or take it along to Les Sablons Interpretation Centre.

President's Report

Marie de Garis MBE

Past-President of La Société Marie de Garis died on 10 August aged 100. I, Bill and Doreen Gallienne and many other members joined her family and friends at her funeral which was a celebration of a truly wonderful Guernsey life.

Bill had been working with her on a revision of her *Dictounnaire Angllais-Guernesiaais* until a very short time before her death and while there is regret that she didn't live to see its publication we do know how very pleased she was to advise Bill and to know that her native language for which she worked so hard would be continued through the dictionary. Her son Jean also worked with Bill and will continue to do so.

My own fondest memory of Marie was manning La Société stall with her at the West Show and listening to her speak in Guernsey French to her many friends. She told me that the Guernsey French of St Pierre du Bois and Torteval was the purest because the people of those parishes had been almost all farmers and fishermen and were less likely to mix with the English and French coming into St Peter Port and St Sampsons. Her family generously requested that donations in lieu of flowers be given to La Société towards publication of her dictionary. A sum of more than £2,000 has been received to-date and is still rising.

We send her family our condolences and very best wishes. A full obituary will appear in the Transactions.

John Holmes

Another much-loved Société member died recently. John, with his wife Pat, could always be relied upon to help out whenever help was needed, particularly on our stalls at the shows and at our Annual Sale where they, together with Peter and Janet Castle and Bar and Geoff Kendall ran 'Plants' with cheerful good humour for many many years.

Council

We are delighted that Jurat Claire Le Pelley has agreed to join Council as an Ordinary Member.

Les Sablons

Our landlord at Les Sablons, Eric Ozanne, died on 3 August, just a few weeks after we renewed our lease. Our future there is uncertain but Eric indicated in his will that La Société should have first refusal when the property is sold. Wide consultation will take place before any decisions are made about what would be, for us, a very new departure. It is worth remembering though, the opposition that Griff Caldwell met many years ago when he first proposed the purchase of land.

In the meantime Eric's family is happy for us to continue there until the execution of his will is concluded.

Pat Costen

Diary Dates

Wednesday 20 October at 8.00 pm at the Frossard Centre, Candie Gardens

What's the point of the Royal Society? A modern perspective – a lecture by Professor Nicholas Day, CBE, FRS this, the third and final lecture in the Guernsey Heroes of the Royal Society programme, will be given by Guernsey's only living Fellow of the Royal Society. Professor Day will describe the structure, function, and work of Britain's national academy of science in supporting scientific disciplines, applying scientific knowledge to business, promoting informed debate, and influencing public policy with evidence-based advice. Through a series of publications and workshops, often in conjunction with its international counterparts, the Society provides authoritative syntheses of the current state of knowledge for many of the pressing issues of the day, ranging from climate change to the storage of radioactive waste. These make an important contribution to the scientific basis for government action.

Professor Day is distinguished for his wide-ranging and influential work in quantitative epidemiology, especially of cancer. He was for many years Professor of Epidemiology at Cambridge, Director of the Institute of Public Health, and Director of the Medical Research Council Unit of Biostatistics. He has authored or edited eleven books, and published some 500 papers in the scientific literature. He was elected as a Fellow of the Royal Society in 2004, and is a Council Member of La Société Guernesiaise.

Tuesday 8 February at 8:00pm at the Frossard Centre, Candie Gardens

Richard Hocart will give an illustrated talk on The Guilles of St. George in the Eighteenth Century. Drawing on the extensive family records now available at the Island Archives and the Priaulx Libray he will explore the lives and opinions of John Guille, father and son, and will look at their election as jurats of the Royal Court, their farming activities, their changes to the estate, and their commercial ventures ranging from privateering to rope-making and property interests as far afield as Cumberland.

Annual Sale

The Annual Sale took place at 2.00 pm on Sunday 23 May at Blanchelande College, Les Vauxbelets, by kind permission of Mrs Lesley Le Page. It was on a gloriously hot day when there were various other goings-on, and few people came, but we still managed to raise £820. Thank you to all who gave their goods and their time.

SECTION NEWS

Archaeology

As most of you will know, Bob Burns died at his home in France on 12 May. During the 1970s and 1980s Bob was the driving force behind the development of archaeology in the island. Excavations he directed - such as the Tranquesous, King's Road and the Plaiderie - put Guernsey on the archaeological map. As well as a natural skill at excavation and an extraordinary knowledge of ceramics, mostly self-taught, Bob's greatest ability was perhaps in communicating the importance of the archaeology he was doing to the public, and of course to his volunteers. Bob was the first Curator of Archaeology at Guernsey Museum.

Currently we are in the middle of the 'digging season' and there is a lot to report: excavations are continuing west of the airport and we have recently extended our trench to investigate the course of a Bronze Age ditch. A lot of flint and some good sized pieces of Bronze Age pottery are being found, including a couple of decorated pieces. A hearth has been discovered but it does not appear to be associated with a building: perhaps it was made by people spending a brief period at the site, or associated with an industrial process. Samples taken from the hearth should provide dating evidence and may indicate what it was used for.



Bronze Age site at the west end of the airport.

In May we carried out further excavations in a garden on King's Road. Two more Iron Age graves were found, but as was the case with the others, no human remains survive. One grave was stone lined and contained four bronze rings. The other was very small, probably that of a new-born child or a very young infant, and had been marked by a headstone. This stone had fallen forward over the grave and beneath were two rings, one of bronze and the other either degraded bronze or possibly tin. There were also three tiny pierced beads, possibly jet. These objects are currently being examined and conserved by Esther Cameron in Oxford. In addition, objects excavated in December 2008 have now been conserved and returned to Guernsey. There is a sword corroded into its iron scabbard, which is a metre in length but broken into two pieces. Traces of organic material indicate that it had horn on the hilt and that the scabbard had been wrapped in textile.

An iron shield boss was recovered from the same grave; this had been crushed flat and broken into many pieces. It has now been restored to its original curved form and during conservation an iron knife or razor was discovered beneath it. The razor may have been in a boxwood container lined with sheep's wool, since traces of both were found on it. The shield boss also has traces of wood, probably lime, within it, and that was presumably the wood used for the shield.



The hearth at the airport site

There will be opportunity to find out more about this exciting site on Thursday 11 November when Dr Philip de Jersey will give a lecture on 'The Iron Age in the Channel Islands' at 8.00pm in the Frossard Centre.

In June Dr George Nash of Bristol University brought a small team to Guernsey to begin an examination of the Late Neolithic grave in Delancey Park. They dug a series of test pits to assess the survival of undisturbed archaeological deposits. The results indicate that there is surviving archaeology, and next June Dr Nash will return to carry out an area excavation and may also reinstate some of the collapsed stones.

The Archaeology Section visited the site and Dr Nash gave a talk on their findings. It is likely that the monument was a 'gallery grave'. This is a type well-known in north-west France and comprises a passage built of megalithic stones which was sometimes covered with an earthen mound.

Professor Barry Cunliffe returned to Sark in July for a further season of work, this time concentrating on a mound incorporated into a field boundary on the western side of the island. This appears to be yet another prehistoric monument; the mound built of rubble (partly comprising beach stones - no mean feat in Sark) with some upright stones set within it. The Section joined that of the Société Jersiaise for a joint visit to the site.

The August Bank Holiday weekend saw a further season of digging at The Nunnery in Alderney. This work was led by Guernsey Museum Director Dr Jason Monaghan and involved Section volunteers and members of the Alderney Society. This year the foundations of a stone tower of possible Roman date were excavated.

Jason will be giving a lecture entitled "Excavations at the Nunnery, Alderney 2009-10" on Thursday 14 October (8.00 pm at the Frossard Centre).

Currently the second season of work at L'Érée is under way. This is directed by Dr Duncan Garrow and Dr Fraser Sturt and they are examining the evidence for Early Neolithic and Bronze Age settlement on the headland. Volunteers from the Section have been helping with this. Also about to begin is Professor Chris Scarre's work in Herm. There is opportunity for the Section to get involved and hopefully there will also be a visit to the site towards the end of September.

Tanya Walls

Entomology

The Entomology Section will meet with the Botany and Nature Conservation Sections for their monthly outings in 2010. Please see these Sections for times and places.

Family History

20 October – annual dinner. Venue and menu to be decided. Members will be informed.

17 November – a talk by Brian de Jersey “When the Abbot and the Duke of Normandy first met”. This will be followed by the Section AGM.

All meetings are held in the Frossard Centre, Candie, beginning 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

In May I gave an indoor talk about bats and some of the moths likely to be seen at a combined moth and bat evening a week later at the Dell Nursery on National Moth night. It was very cold and there were few moths, but Rich Austin had brought along some interesting (live) specimens in pots. The juniors, armed with bat detectors, soon found a group of pipistrelles hunting in one particular part of the nursery. In June, Sylvia Brouard took us on a tour of the Guet where I for one, who thought I knew the Guet quite well, discovered that I didn't know it at all. We had a most interesting and informative meeting.



In July Charles David led a small but enthusiastic group bug-hunting at Mont Herault where we also visited La Souffleur – a first for all except Charles!

There was no August meeting, but in early September Tanya Walls organised another archaeology session at L'Erée headland with Dr Duncan Garrow of Southampton University who is leading the team excavating the Neolithic site there again this year. The weather was abysmal, but the juniors were given an excellent explanation of the site and nearby dolmen and then were able to clean some of the items found by the team the day before.

Future meetings

October	A visit to the Creux Mahie cave with Andy Dorey
November	An indoor meeting with Charles David with the microscopes
December	No meeting
January	To be advised
February	An indoor meeting with Sylvia Brouard who will talk about the German Occupation

Pat Costen

Ornithology

It hardly seems possible that here we are looking back on another summer that promised much, but seemed to deliver little - at least weather-wise. However, as a section things have continued apace.

Our annual Bird race took place the first weekend of May. This year there were three teams out before the crack of dawn. I think the first team out hit the road at the unearthly hour of 04:00! Our team wasn't very far behind. The weather wasn't brilliant, and this was reflected in totals seen on the day. However the Sultans of String once again took top spot with a total in the high eighties which was good going when considering the conditions.

It was due to the research carried out by the winning team prior to the race day that found them the nesting site of the Long-eared Owls at Chouet. These birds gave hours of delight to many dozens of people, who would sit in their cars each evening and wait for the owls to emerge. They were being seen until the end of July when I was fortunate in being invited by a friend of mine to go and photograph the Long-eared Owls that, by then, had taken up residence in their garden, and were even bathing in their paddling pool each mid-morning. Three youngsters fledged successfully.



Picture taken by Rod Ferbrache

Ornithology -Continued

The Marsh Harriers at the La Claire Mare reserve have also had a successful breeding season with two young birds fledged. They have provided good photo opportunities for our section photographers, and have featured in a very successful exhibition that was held recently at Oatlands courtesy of Paul Hillion and Chris Bale. These guys have also been recognised recently on the extremely popular website Birdguides.com by being awarded "Photo of the week" for a couple of their pictures.

One bird to hit the headlines was a Peregrine Falcon. The female bird had been found hopping along with its feathers appearing to be covered by a substance that resembled lime, which is often used on sticks to trap birds. Having managed to capture the bird, she was shipped out to the Hawk Conservancy Trust's specialist bird of prey hospital in Andover. It was while she was receiving treatment here that closer investigation revealed that in fact the substance was gull vomit! No doubt she was predated by gulls and they defended themselves in the only way they knew how. The good news is that following treatment she was successfully released back into the wild, and hopefully will in future give gulls a wider berth.

Autumn has begun, and this signals the time when our section members spend as many hours in the field as is possible. There are birds on the move from every point on the compass. On 19 August news was spreading that three Black Storks were seen flying over Lilyvale. This was the first sighting of this species in 40 years, so most section members were very keen to add these birds to their Guernsey List.

In spite of their immense size they did make it hard for them to be tracked. Reports came from La Grande Mare, Beaucamp, and Rue Mainguy, and the birds were finally seen rising and heading northwards out to sea, leaving behind a number of frustrated and disappointed section members.

12 September saw a few of us members on the 5th green of L'Ancrese golf course. Why? Because sitting on the green was a Buff-breasted Sandpiper. What is so special about this? Well, this thrush-sized bird had just dropped in from the USA! This is what autumn is all about. From north, south, east and west the birds arrive, and we need to be out there.

If you want to learn more, then why not join us at the lecture theatre at Candie the first Thursday of each month at 8pm.

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

NCCPG Nerine Festival in the Lower Glasshouse, Candie Gardens
Saturday 9 October 2.30-4.00 pm, and Sunday 10th - Saturday 23rd 10.00 am – 4.00 pm.
Lots of nerines will be for sale. Entry free.

Tuesday 9 Nov at 7.30 pm at Les Cotils: Troy Smith will give an illustrated lecture on "The National Trust Garden at Bodnant, North Wales". Entry £3 to non-NCCPG members.

Parish Pumps

My interest is in old hand-operated water pumps. I run the website www.villagepumps.org.uk, and maintain the National Register of Village Pumps, currently listing over 2,600 locations.

Some time ago Guernsey Museum provided me with a digest of the 1972 study by Eric W. Sharp, "The Public Pumps of Old Guernsey", Transactions of La Société Guernesiaise, which was invaluable when my wife and I spent a week in Guernsey in April.

I soon discovered that St. Peter Port is a pump-hunter's paradise, and it took some very determined pavement-pounding to visit each of your 20 recorded parish pumps. The authorities have clearly gone to some trouble to spruce them up and in one case, at least, to re-instate the Mount Durand pump. Strangely, though, the pump in Doyle Rd has been overlooked during the refurbishment process and is in a dreadful state. The humble pump at Clos St. Jean is quite different from any others in the town, and carries the dedication

"DONATED BY Mr. & M's. C CARR 1986". Can anybody provide any background to this please?

I found most of the registered pumps in Guernsey during the week, including the earliest dated one (1804) at Le Grais Lane, St. Andrew, but had to admit defeat in Vale after getting completely lost in the maze of little lanes. I also discovered 14 unrecorded pumps, which are all featured on my website, and here are some examples:



In lower Mount Durand, St Peter Port, an old lead tank from a pump has been recycled as a decorative feature in the end of a wall.

Parish Pumps continued



On Route des Paysans, St Pierre Du Bois, a pump carries the words "J. Tostevin", "MRBL", and "1870".



The Folk & Costume Museum in Saumarez Park was a real find: they have three hand pumps on display and the curator, Paul Le Pelley.

The standard St Peter Port pump design has no externally visible clues, but some others in the island carry makers' trademarks. Lee, Howl & Co., of Tipton, Staffs, was one of the foremost 19th century pump makers and employed a small flag as their trademark. These can be found on pumps in Forest Road, Forest; La Villette, St Martin; and on La Route de Pleinmont, Rue des Tielles and Rue des Villains, Torteval.

Joseph Evans of Wolverhampton - probably the largest of the pump manufacturers - used a lion rampant as their trademark from the late 1800s. You can see an example of this on the pump on Rue du Belle, Torteval.

A small pump in a garden on La Motte, St Martin, is also a Joseph Evans, but its trademark pre-dates their use of a lion. The large cast iron pump at the bottom of Park St, St Peter Port, was made by George Smith & Co., of Glasgow, a company famous for its high quality ornamental ironwork.



At "La Pompe" in St Martin, a wooden-boxed lead pump carries a maker's name on its tap - "Llewellins & James, Bristol"

Many houses and farms in Guernsey still have their domestic pumps and it would take far more than a week to catalogue them all - so I leave that to anybody who lives locally and who might just like to carry out a survey! Do please get in touch with me via my website if you can provide any further information, or if there's anything I can help you with.

Dick Williams, Cheltenham, Glos

Guernsey Museum and Art Gallery

Guernsey Museum & Art Gallery is to be progressively redisplayed between 2011 and 2013. The Museums Director is keen to receive the thoughts of members of La Société as to what they would most like to see on display. A questionnaire is available from the front desk of the museum and is also on the Museums website www.museums.gov.gg.



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Environment Guernsey is the wholly owned company of La Société Guernesiaise
We manage La Société's nature reserves and undertake numerous land management contracts for various States of Guernsey Departments, the National Trust and private individuals.
We also run the Guernsey Biological Records Centre and provide an environmental consultancy service.

For all aspects of conservation advice and contracting, please contact us.

Letter from member Peter Johnson, who lives in St Helena

We don't have any (real) dams on this island as there are several very productive springs which are piped to three very small holding earth dams around the island. The main spring (Chubbs Spring) is about half a mile above Jamestown and has been the town's main water supply for hundreds of years. The stream runs through the middle of town and out to sea near the Castle on the Jamestown foreshore, and was main source and raison d'être for passing ships from the island's discovery in 1502. In those days James Valley was full of fruit trees, especially lemons of course, and veggie patches planted for passing ships to replenish their stocks. There always seems to be a strong flow out of the holding dam which has never failed yet, the reason being that most of the water issues forth below the 800m high Peaks area in the centre of the island, an area of some 20sq kms and about 8-10kms away. Other springs radiate out south, east and west, and so for a population of some 4,000, this has always been more than adequate. We don't have a 'real' dam although there has been talk of damming up one of the many valleys which radiate out from the central peaks. We shan't need to do that though unless we have a substantial increase in population, huge increase in tourism and a lot more agriculture. None of these are likely to happen in the (near) future, even if we get an airport, as I just can't see tourism taking off in the way many people hope. We don't have any beaches and the few roads are all narrow like Guernsey lanes, one hotel, and it is an expensive place to reach even if tourists have plenty of time, which most don't have (and money too!). Some infrastructure, ie, amenities like hotels, restaurants, shops, etc, are easy of course, provided they can be made to pay. We have fine weather all year round, but even with an airport of some sort, flights will, of necessity, be very expensive. Indeed as they are now, to get to Ascension or to Cape Town to catch the ship. Now, if we were a Departement of France, then that might just be a very different matter!

There are both good and bad points to living here, as anywhere else of course. You have to enjoy the good and make the best of the bad as anywhere else. I suppose in some ways, you can compare living on St Helena to living on Sark, that is if Guernsey or the nearest land were some 1,500-1,750 miles away, in any direction! But we do enjoy living here although we moan like everyone else when we experience the bad, like shortage of supplies when the ship is away for some time, waiting for post, etc. Guernsey of the 1950's, I remember, was similar in winter when there was only a couple of ships a week and some things ran out in town, especially if the weather was bad and the ship didn't make it. My parents always complained about that I remember.

But at least we only had to wait a day or two, not weeks as here. However, I don't think I'd like to have lived here 40-50 years ago when donkey transport was the norm and people went round barefoot with their shoes round their necks, only putting them on just outside town.

In St Helena the average wage is only £80 pw, and even a Government Head of Department is only on £12,000 pa.

We do have a National Trust here which has to be subsidised from overseas by DIFID and others. I am into my third year of four as Vice President and have not succeeded in increasing the local membership. No matter how much I try, even though the local subscription is only £2, because people just don't have the spare cash. 22 members at the last count a year ago, of which less than half are 'active' members. We don't have a Transactions, just occasional Newsletters, nor any Sections of course. We are involved in saving the local species of endemic plants most of which are threatened with extinction, 17th-19th c. coastal batteries, many of which are falling into the sea, the Georgian town houses with DIFID and EU support, plus other projects. It's an uphill battle even though we get overseas 'experts' sent over to help for a few weeks, paid for by DIFID and HMG.

With very best wishes to all, (who remember me that is after nearly 20 years!)



This is our view from the veranda, facing west so we have marvellous sunsets. From here we can also see all ships passing just off shore on their way to or from James Bay. The island rose from the seabed some 14 million years ago (we are situated near the Mid Atlantic Ridge) after a long series of underwater eruptions which gradually built up the island.. From the sea bed to the island's highest point above sea level (804m) is some 4,820m, about half the height of Everest. Within a very short distance from the shore the sea bed dives steeply down to the bottom of the ocean. This makes building a harbour virtually impossible once you get 200-300m offshore, mainly owing to the cost and difficulty of working (steepness) at such depths. There are 10 sea mounts which rise like pinnacles from the ocean depths off shore; the closest to the surface of one is only 70m with the depth to its base of 1,500m. The fishing is good around this sea mount only 10km offshore. The area of the island's base is 5,027km, all rather mind boggling statistics I must say.

Officers and Council Members

Officers:

President	Pat Costen	264500	president@societe.org.gg
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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 Priaux 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 Guernesiaise	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, R. Collenette and Jurat Claire Le Pelley. 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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