



COMMUNIQUE

The Newsletter of **LA SOCIÉTÉ GUERNESIAISE**

Summer Issue 2012 No.78

Guernsey's Local Research, Natural History and Conservation Society

Diary Dates

Wednesday 11 April at 7.30pm:

Half a Century of Astronomy, by Dr David Falla FRAS.

Frossard Centre, Candie Gardens. Entrance free.

The past half-century has been a Golden Age for astronomy. The development of new branches of the science, together with the invention of innovative observational techniques, has led to a great advancement in our knowledge of the Universe. David will describe the remarkable discoveries, including some rare events, that have excited amateurs as well as professional astronomers.

Friday 20 April at 7.30pm:

The Apollo Film Archive, by Professor Christopher Riley.

Frossard Centre, Candie Gardens. Entrance £5.00, including access to the Museum exhibition From the Earth to the Solar System, and a glass of wine.

Chris Riley has worked with NASA's substantial film archive over the past 12 years. He will discuss the history of the archive, its preservation and curation. His talk will be illustrated with a selection of film clips which illustrate how he has used the footage in the numerous documentary films in which he has been involved in creating from this rich collection.

This event has been kindly supported by Aurigny, and by The Robus Group.

Thursday 26 April at 8.30pm: Observatory Open Evening

The Observatory will be open for telescopic viewings of the Moon, Venus, Mars, Saturn, and other celestial objects. There will also be talks and slide shows. Entry free, donations welcome. Park at La Houquette School, and follow the signs 100 metres up the road.

Wednesday 2 May at 7.30pm:

Guernsey Astronomers, Past and Present, by David Le Conte FRAS.

Frossard Centre, Candie Gardens. Entrance free.

Guernseymen have made their mark in astronomy over the past 200 years. David will relate some of their remarkable achievements, talk about his own experience of working in the 1960s space programme, the history of the Guernsey's astronomical society, and the development of the Guernsey Observatory.

These events celebrate the 40th anniversary of the Astronomy Section, and are being presented in association with a stunning exhibition of NASA photographs From the Earth to the Solar System at the Guernsey Museum and Art Gallery. The exhibition will run daily, 10am to 4pm, from 31 March to 13 May.

AGM

The AGM took place on Wednesday 21 March.

Two new Council members were appointed: Adrian Nicolle, who has served on Council in the past, and Jessica Jennings, who has nominated La Société as her chosen charity when engaging in a sponsored cycle ride through Vietnam and Cambodia, and retiring member Judith Keen was re-elected.

The President said La Société continued to manage the island's reserves through the hard work of its company Guernsey Environmental Services Limited, and with the help of many volunteers.

Charles David had worked tirelessly on the Habitat Survey in Guernsey and in Jersey. Richard Hocart had once again achieved a fascinating Transactions & Report.

Lawney Martin and May Teagle will be retiring at the end of June after 18 years in office, and will be replaced by Kate Lee and Denise Thoumine.

It seems that the Family History Section has now secured new premises to house their computers and records and will have parking available.

Honorary Membership was awarded to Richard Hocart, who has ably edited the annual Transactions for 25 years, written several books and undertaken much academic work on behalf of the society.

Annual Transactions

Members who elected to receive a paper copy of the Transactions for 2010 are reminded that they should be collected as soon as possible from Candie HQ.

Archaeology

Archaeological work at the west end of the airport has finally come to an end and by the time this Communiqué appears our site will probably have been excavated away. We spent a final few days there at the end of February and - as often happens - made some important finds at the last minute. The pictures show a stone-lined channel, parts of which had been heated to an intensity which fired the surrounding soil almost as hard as pottery. This feature appears to be medieval in date and may be part of a furnace. There was also a fine sherd of Iron Age pottery found in a ditch running roughly north-south; being large and little-worn it probably fell into the ditch during the period that it was silting up and was protected from the damage of later ploughing. Very little Iron Age material has been recovered from this site - it has mostly

been Neolithic and Bronze Age. The airport developers are keeping us informed of the phasing of their work and so we are able to keep a watching brief. The area of our archaeological trenches will have the topsoil removed prior to any landscaping so there will be some opportunity to look at the space between our trenches. The fields opposite to the airport entrance, where the concrete plant is to be established, have already had the topsoil stripped (it will be reinstated once the fields are no longer required) and we were able to examine this area, but very little material was recovered.

Other work this winter included a condition survey of the graves at the historic Cimetière des Frères in St Peter Port and a report on this is currently being prepared. As you may have heard, the Town Constables have proposed that this cemetery (which has been kept locked for around 30 years) should be re-opened, but as an amenity space with most of the graves cleared away. Most of the graves have a box superstructure above a brick vault and we have examined all 132. The inscriptions were meticulously deciphered by David Kreckeler in the 1980's and can be read in the Société Guernesiaise publication *The Brothers Burial Ground 1719-1948* (2008). The cemetery contains individuals of local historic interest as well as ancestors of many local families and we hope that this initiative will lead to restoration of the cemetery, so that it can ultimately be re-opened to the public.

Finally - but continuing on the cemetery theme - a water cable laid recently in the Castel Churchyard resulted in the collection of several buckets of Roman tile, brick and cement. It has long been known that there are the remains of a Roman building at this church and it is likely that it stood either on the site of the medieval church, or close by. All this material now needs to be cleaned and examined.

If you are interested in archaeology and would like to know more about the work of the Section and the Museum Archaeology Group please contact the Section Secretary for more information. You can get actively involved and/or simply receive our regular newsletters about archaeology and forthcoming events.

Tanya Walls



Astronomy

The year 2012 has started well. Our members meet regularly each Tuesday evening. We use the telescopes if the sky is clear, but if not we discuss an astronomy topic or two over a cup of coffee.

We have already had a number of group visits involving young people from Primary Schools, Scouts and Brownies and a visit from the Junior section. In most visits we enjoyed clear skies, but on the cloudy nights our new overhead projector has proved invaluable. It is so encouraging to hear so many questions from children of all ages. A favourite is to watch and hear the sound effects of the shuttle taking off.

This is our fortieth year. We became affiliated to La Société Guernesiaise in 1972 with our then secretary Dr David Falla. To celebrate this milestone we have joined forces with the Guernsey Museum and Art Gallery. David Le Conte has been assisting Jason Monaghan in putting together a stunning exhibition created by NASA.

David has also been extremely busy on behalf of our section arranging three high profile talks during April and May, the details of which are included in this Communiqué. We also have an Observatory open evening on 26 April at 8.30 pm.

Frank Dowding

Botany

You will receive a monthly newsletter, either by post or email.

Please send a cheque to Soc. Guernesiaise Botany Section with your details to Jean and Gavin Sampson, The Ferrers, 1 Milton Gardens, Rue Cauchée, St Martin, Guernsey GY4 6NU, tel: 234430, email: gavsampson@cwgsy.net. Send your name, address, postcode and telephone number, and your email address if you wish to receive your newsletter that way.

Entomology

The Entomology Section will meet with the Botany and Nature Conservation Sections for their monthly outings in 2012. Please see these Sections for times and places.

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.

Family History

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

Edith Le Patourel

Ornithology

The 'birding' year got off to a good start with, among other species, the welcome sighting of a male Dartford Warbler at Pleinmont and more recently a female. We hope there are more and that they will return this year as a breeding species. Their habitat of choice is gorse/heathland, one which we must encourage everyone to preserve and manage correctly.

We were pleased too, that the States, to replace habitat lost near the airport redevelopment, started work on restoring the saltmarsh at the Colin Best Nature Reserve at L'Erée.

Knowing the numbers of birds on our island is important as they are top of the nature chain, and any problems they are encountering means there are problems in the environment which supports them, us and all the creatures and plants on which we depend. To this end, Phil Alexander, our British Trust for Ornithology representative, is presently co-ordinating a five year local count. This needs volunteers to walk a square kilometre four times a year counting every bird seen. If you feel able to help please call Phil.

If you are unable to walk very far or commit to that scheme perhaps you could count birds in your garden to help the BTO with their Garden Birdwatch which is ongoing. Phil can help you with how to go about it and may be called on 726173, or join us at Candie on the first Thursday of each month at 8pm.

Nancy Ogier



WEA Guernsey

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

NCCPG

Sat 14 April 9.00am - 12 noon NCCPG Plant Stall at Sausmarez Manor Farmers Market. Lots of tempting & unusual plants for sale.

Wed 18 April at 7.30pm at Les Cotils, Joy Larckom will give a talk on 'Oriental Vegetables & Travels in China'. Joy is responsible for introducing many oriental vegetables to our tables. Drinks beforehand. Tickets £7.50 from the Guernsey Info Centre. Tel 723552.

Bank Holiday Monday 4 June at 10.00am at Sausmarez Manor: NCCPG Giant Plant Sale. A plantoholic's paradise!

The Guernsey Botanical Trust

Volunteers meet at the garden on Wednesday afternoons and Saturday mornings throughout the year, all welcome.

Juniors

New members are always welcome. **Pat Costen**
Email patcosten@cwgsy.net or tel. 264500.

Nature Conservation

If you are interested in being involved please contact Jane Gilmour on 700024.

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.

Environmental Offsetting Project on the Colin Best Nature Reserve

As part of the Airport Pavements Project, Guernsey Environmental Services Limited was recently commissioned by the Public Services Department (PSD) to examine the viability of carrying out a programme of environmental offsetting. The aim was to compensate for the ecological impacts of the work on the runway by creating or enhancing habitats

in other areas. One of the accepted recommendations was the removal of spoil and subsequent restoration of the historical field levels on the Colin Best Nature Reserve.

This work, funded by PSD, is still in progress but the early signs are very promising. It is expected that the area

will become saltmarsh over coming months, which will consolidate the limited extent of this locally rare habitat. There will also be additional benefits in terms of reduced flood risk during storm events. A full report on the project will follow in autumn.

Officers and Council Members

Officers:

President	Rodney Colletette	249021	president@societe.org.gg
Vice President	vacant		
Secretary	Lawney Martin	237853	secretary@societe.org.gg
Honorary Treasurer	Peter Budwin	716134	treasurer@societe.org.gg
Membership Secretary	May Teagle	724835	
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Reserves Committee Chairman	Jane Gilmour	700024	
Land Management & Conservation Officer	Jamie Hooper	266924	
Volunteer Co ordinator Reserves	Anthony Stagg	722351	
Librarians	Jean & Gavin Sampson	234430	

Section Secretaries:

Archaeology	Tanya Walls	727614	archaeology@societe.org.gg
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Geology and Geography	Andrew Dorey	252123	
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History & Philology	Bill Gallienne	265529	history@societe.org.gg
Junior	Pat Costen	264500	
Marine Biology & Zoology	Vacant		
Nature Conservation	Denise Thoumine	723003	
Ornithology	Vic Froome	254841	ornithology@societe.org.gg

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 Priaux 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 Guernesaise	Hazel Tomlinson	255891	
Guernsey Meteorological Observatory	Martin Crozier	237766	
WEA	David Le Conte	264847	
The Guernsey Botanical Trust	Linda Marsh	07781 121076	

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

J. Hooper (co-opted), Miss J. Gilmour (co-opted), Mrs S. Brouard, Ms J. Keen, R.B. de la Rue, M. Deane, R. Lord, Miss J. Jennings, and A. Nicolle. 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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