

COMMUNIQUE

The Newsletter of **LA SOCIÉTÉ GUERNESIAISE**

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Guernsey's Local Research, Natural History and Conservation Society

SUBSCRIPTIONS FOR 2018

Subscription rates remain unchanged for 2018 as follows:

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Standing Orders and Direct Debits will be taken in January 2018. For those paying by cash, cheque or Paypal (via the Website) please note that your 2018 Subscription will be due on January 1st 2018.

A few of our members are still paying by Standing Order at out of date rates. If you are paying by Standing Order then kindly instruct your bank to pay the correct amount as shown above. We do understand that some of our long-standing members may experience difficulties in submitting the correct amount but Council has regretfully decided that due to high printing and postage costs, these members will no longer receive a copy of the annual Transactions. If you would prefer to switch to paying by Direct Debit for 2018 then kindly e-mail secretary@societe.org.gg for a Direct Debit form which will be processed in time for January 2018.

2015 TRANSACTIONS

Please note the 2015 Transactions (photo of the Victor Hugo statue on the front cover) are available for collection from Candie. The office is open on a Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday morning between 10am and 11.30am – parking is easier on a Saturday morning. If you no longer wish to receive the Transactions or would prefer to receive them electronically via our website kindly

e-mail secretary@societe.org.gg

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

I have just returned from a splendid Inter-Island Environment Meeting, which was held in Sark this year. The organisers really excelled themselves and it must rank as one of the very best meetings that I have attended. The meeting enjoys continuing sponsorship from The Insurance Corporation and, additionally this year, it was sponsored by the Noble Trust and by Adventure Sark.

These annual meetings attract over 70 participants from each of the Channel Islands as well as regular attendance from the Isle of Man, the RSPB in Exeter, the Isle of Wight and members of the UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum. One of the great benefits of the annual 2 day meeting is that it brings together many of the people working in wildlife conservation throughout the Channel Islands and beyond, providing short presentations of the work being undertaken but also providing plenty of time for people to meet colleagues and discuss future possible developments and working together.

The broad theme of this years meeting was 'habitat management' which is vital for preserving wildlife species. Guernsey speakers included Julia Henney who spoke about the use of cattle and La Société's 'Herd' in habitat management, and Vic Froome who updated us on the use of web-cams in education and the rejuvenation project at Le Guet Pine Forest, Cobo.

One of the highlights of the meeting were the site visits. There were led walks to Eperquie Landing, Gouliot Headland and a 'wet valley' walk at Creux Belet. Adventure Sark led a wonderful visit to the Gouliot Caves. We were kitted out in wetsuits and walked around the headland and down the 'Chimney' into the caves (not for the faint hearted). The caves were comprehensively explored and we marvelled at the multicoloured anemones, sponges, and sea-squirts, in this protected 'Ramsar' site. If you have a chance to go I would thoroughly recommend the experience and the staff of Adventure Sark, who led this extraordinary trip.



Beadlet anemones and barnacles in the Gouliot caves – photo courtesy of Laura Bampton



Snakelocks anemones in the Gouliot Caves – photo courtesy of Laura Bampton

Last Friday evening (22nd September) Dr George McGavin gave a talk to an open meeting at the Performing Arts Centre on 'Tales from Television – Bringing the Natural World to your Living Room'. This was a fascinating tour through George's many years of working in television, on Natural History programmes and on the BBC One Show. It followed George's amazing Bug-World' talk that he gave at St James last year. It did not disappoint and left us wishing that there was more time in the evening. Although George does not charge us for speaking there are considerable costs (travel, accommodation and hire of venue) involved and we are very grateful to Collenette Jones Limited for sponsoring this event.

The day after last year's 'Bug – World' talk George McGavin and his wife Lois walked along the cliff footpath from Le Gouffre to St Peter Port. George was ecstatic and said that he thought it must be one of the 'Top 10' walks in the world. This is some accolade.

Aimée Golden has been awarded this years' Griff Caldwell Bursary. This is the 3rd year that a bursary of £1000 has been awarded. The first year it went to a 1st Year student at Brighton University, last year to a Post-Graduate Student studying at Edinburgh University, and this year it has been awarded to Aimee who is undertaking an Open University Science Degree whilst living here in Guernsey. I am delighted that the bursary is being awarded to some really deserving students on a wide range of different environmental science courses.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT (CONT)

Jessi Jennings, who has done so much in recent years to invigorate the Marine Biology Section, is leaving for a new post in New Zealand in early November. We are truly grateful to Jessi for all the work that she has undertaken and wish her well in the future. Laura Bampton, who was awarded last year's Griff Caldwell Bursary will take over as the Marine Biology Section's new secretary.

I would also like to thank Frank Dowding who has been standing in for Peter Langford as Astronomy Section Secretary.

Lots of other things have been happening in La Société in recent months, but I have run out of space to tell you about them.

Please keep supporting La Société as your membership and efforts are so necessary. I shall be standing down as President at the AGM next March as I will have completed my 2 years in the role (in fact almost 3 years as I was Acting President for several months after Pat Costen's illness and very untimely death), so my time has come. Please let Kate Lee, Secretary, know if you would like to stand or if you would like to nominate someone to stand as President or Vice President, or in any of the other management roles in La Société kindly **e-mail secretary@societe.org.gg**

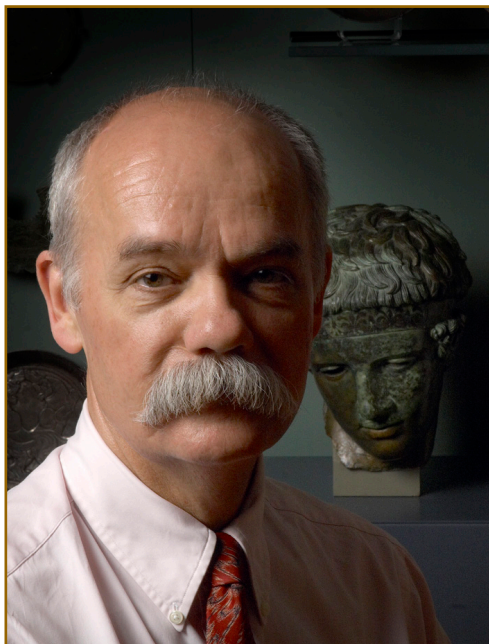
Andrew Casebow

TALKS

Archaeology Talk by Dr Jason Monaghan entitled "Bodies, Bracelets and Brooches - surprising finds from Alderney" in the Frossard Theatre, Candie at 8pm on Tuesday 14th November at 8pm. Free Entry. All welcome.

Mark Norman Head of Conservation, Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford from 1999 – 2016 will give a talk entitled "It is surprising that things can be preserved even as well as they are" - 7 millennia of collections care in the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford on Saturday 25th November, 1pm in the Frossard Theatre, Candie.

Mark's presentation will chart the development of the Ashmolean and its world class collections from its founding in the seventeenth century to the present day and how the conservator's role has evolved over the past 100 years from one of traditional craft-based restoration and repair to today's question-led, scientifically informed and minimal approach.



Mark Norman - © Ashmolean Museum

Members free, non-members £5 payable on the door. Please note we are unable to take bookings so kindly arrive early to avoid disappointment.

BIOGRAPHY

Born into a farming family in St Saviour's, Mark Norman trained at the Institute of Archaeology, University College London. He then worked in Bristol Museum where he was involved in archaeological fieldwork and a major redisplay of their extensive Egyptian collections. In 1985, he moved to Oxford when he was appointed Chief Conservator in the Department of Antiquities in the Ashmolean, a teaching and research department of the University but also the world's oldest public museum. Here his focus shifted to the conservation of collections from the Ancient World, building on fieldwork experience gained in Iran and Greece. In 1999 he was appointed Head of Conservation, the first such post in the Ashmolean's long history, leading a multi-disciplinary team of 13 conservators until his retirement in 2016.

As a critical part of their practical work, he and his team worked closely with curatorial and scientific colleagues to develop a deeper understanding of the collections and their care through examination and analysis. They were also involved in all of the Ashmolean's capital projects over the past 25 years, culminating in the award winning £65 million Ashmolean development in 2009 and the redisplay of the Egypt and Nubia and Greek Galleries in 2011.

NEW DIGITAL PUBLICATION

"Guernsey Natural Tree & Shrub Guide" by Andrew Lee and endorsed by La Société.
Please see the link below.

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/8mx113t0xha1ijb/AAAnPE-GWRsF-Fi8oWsMlpj0a?dl=0>

My thanks go to Jane Gilmour of the Guernsey Biological Records Centre for her help and advice with the guide, and for lending the guide an aura of credibility through her involvement with it.

The guide includes information in two main respects:

Firstly, the trees and shrubs of Guernsey from an *ecological* perspective including, among others, their Guernsey native status, site preferences, companion planting, maps and, most interesting for me, their wildlife value. The latter includes the number of insect species that trees host, which is most telling in the comparison of native and non-native trees.

The second part of the guide is information useful for practical *amenity* planting such as size, crown shape, cultivars, allergy potential, root invasiveness, and tolerances to paving, pollution and salt. This section can also be of use to homeowners. There is an idea for a mixed wildlife friendly hedge, which would generally be composed of one half Hawthorn and the rest a mixture of five other species from a choice of ten or eleven, for example Dog-rose and Crab Apple.

This dual approach should hopefully make the guide a useful tool not only for scientists but also landscape gardeners, managers, landowners, homeowners, parish constables and architects. In addition a few different versions of the guide have been made, to allow for printing and compatibility.

My main regret is that the '*Guernsey natural tree & shrub guide*' is only a computer file, though this was borne out of necessity rather than personal choice. Also the guide's cold, factual style is not necessarily what people might expect. Still, the hope is that the guide can provide a rational focus around which people can choose to plant more ecologically, with a care for the island's community of wildlife rather than the purely horticultural motives of form, colour, plant health and winning competitions. Also that more people will come to realise the true value of native plants over non-native ones.

NEW DIGITAL PUBLICATION (CONT)

The guide was born out of a wish to reverse the trend of the replacement of Guernsey's *native* plant life with *non-native* plants and the ensuing loss of natural vitality and biodiversity. Guernsey has a declining and particularly low proportion of large native trees such as English oak and Ash (the causes of which hardly need repeating), and there is no reason to believe that the future won't also bring a decline in smaller scrub species such as Grey Willow, Elder and Hawthorn. Herbs are faring little better, with an ever increasing number of invasive garden plants which are not being dealt with. The recent sudden increase in Montbretia around the island has caused me personal grief in many fruitless hours of trying to remove it.

Sadly, it should be admitted that Guernsey's ecosystem, although not in utter ruin, is almost certainly damaged beyond any hope of full remediation, to a degree in excess of the regional norm of Britain, France or even Jersey. This is a truth better accepted than evaded.

This does not mean that there is no point in trying to repair the damage. Guernsey's ecosystem can still be given a life beyond its present trajectory, and safeguarded for future generations for hundreds of years IF action is taken. An ambitious but reasonable long-term goal might be to restore the island to what it might have been now had the German Occupation not felled so many native trees, and had the remediation of the late 40s and early 50s not introduced so many non-native trees as well as used Hottentot Fig to cover up German fortifications, that plant now having destroyed so much of Guernsey's cliff grassland.

But such remedial action would also have a most beneficial effect on society. A truth known by society but not acted upon leaves society more sterile; a society that acts upon a known lie leaves it more monstrous; but a society that acts upon truth absorbs into itself something of true life. The truth here would be a feeling within society for the true value of Nature, one which should naturally overflow into the act of caring for it. Such a society would have transformed itself into a better society. Just as caring for a Human Being or even a sick pet can release loving soul forces, so can an activity of care for Nature change society.

A societal movement to choose native plants wherever possible would be a start. (With the commercial forces of the gardening industry involved this would not be straight forward.) If not, then Nature will slowly die on the island. Only garden escapes will remain and we will only meet true Nature on holiday in other parts of the world.

Andrew Lee

BOOK LAUNCH

Tuesday 7th November 2017, 7pm, Guille-Allès Library. Book Launch: "Zoffany's Daughter: Love and treachery on a small island" by Stephen Foster.

The intriguing and largely-forgotten story of Cecilia Horne, daughter of the famous painter Johan Zoffany, who was imprisoned in Guernsey in 1825 for child abduction. The author, Australian historian Stephen Foster, with help from the Guernsey History in Action Company, will give a taste of the story – followed by refreshments, and the opportunity to buy copies of the book, signed by the author, at a special launch discount. Entrance is free, but booking is essential – call the Guille-Alles Library on **720392** or email **ga@library.gg** to reserve your place.

SECTION REPORTS

Archaeology: Excavation at La Chapelle Dom Hue

La Chapelle Dom Hue is a small islet in Perelle Bay, it is just 20 metres across and roughly circular, a natural causeway links it to Guernsey, this covers completely on higher tides. On the islet are the remains of a building and in 1894 these were excavated by James Carey. He uncovered parts of the south and west walls of the building and also some of the floor; finding 'a quantity of bones and fragments' and the skull of what he thought was small deer (TSG 1894, pp335-336). There are no historic references to the islet, so there is only the name of the islet and folklore to suggest the original purpose of the building. It is medieval, this is shown by the Normandy Gritty Ware (NGW) pottery which erodes from the edges of the islet; this pottery was in use from the 11th - 15th centuries. 'Chapelle' suggests the building may have been a small chapel, perhaps associated with the Priory of Lihou just over a kilometre away by sea. In Guernsey folklore the islet was the site of a hermit's cell and a priest stayed here to pray and thereby counter the evil influences of the witches who met at Le Trepiéd on Le Catiaroc headland.



Map courtesy of Digimap

At the end of August the Archaeology Section began an excavation to explore what is left of the building and hopefully to find out its function. Our trench was sited to include the visible remains of the building and to make a transect through the islet. We expected that, being battered by weather and sea, the islet would have a thin soil and the building might have been built straight onto the bedrock. We quickly discovered that the archaeological deposits are actually quite deep, just over a metre at the maximum depth and that several courses of substantially built walls survive (up to one metre in height). The inside of the building was filled with rubble from the collapsed upper walls. 4.6 metres of the west wall and 4 metres of the south wall have been uncovered, this is enough to show it was a rectangular building and orientated east- west. This orientation means it could have been ecclesiastical. However, like Carey, we have been unable to find any trace of the north and east walls and it appears that the rest of the building, perhaps as much as half of it, has been lost to the sea. The walls were carefully built and clay bonded, at their base was a seal of sticky marine clay with shelly lime mortar on top of it. We did not find this mortar across the floor, but it survives in patches and it is likely that it originally covered the entire floor, at least in the part of the building surviving. 1.8 metres west of the building, and running parallel to it, is a second, less substantial wall, perhaps for a lean-to or small enclosure.



The excavation viewed from the south-east - photo courtesy of Philip de Jersey

The finds from the site are still being processed, but it is already clear that we have a good collection of NGW pottery, including diagnostic rim sherds which will give a good idea of the date of the building. There is also a large quantity of flint and a small amount of prehistoric pottery, so it was a site used in prehistory too - it would not have been an islet at that time, but a hillock on the Guernsey coast. The most unusual find was made north-west of the building below a rocky outcrop. Here a pit had been carefully cut down from the medieval ground surface, it was clearly defined because the soil filling it was darker than that around it and the shape was suggestive of a grave cut. On excavation we discovered that it was indeed a grave, of sorts, but not for a human, the remains in the pit were those of a porpoise or dolphin. It is still to be properly identified and examined, but it is likely that it had been butchered and it is known that 'porpoys' was a delicacy in the medieval period. But why carefully bury the remains when the beach is so close and it could have been disposed of in the sea? Was this reverence, or did someone eat something they weren't supposed to and were hiding the evidence? North-east of the islet a large pond forms at a certain states of the tide, this is reminiscent of the fish-traps off the coast of Lihou Island and perhaps this is exactly what the pond was. The porpoise may have become stranded as the tide fell and was perhaps caught and eaten by the occupant of the islet.



The Porpoise "grave" - photo courtesy of Philip de Jersey

When the clocks change each year towards the end of March, it brings about a change at the observatory. With the evenings becoming lighter the groups of people wishing to visit us tails off until the Autumn and we accept the fact that viewing will be later or perhaps 'not this evening'. It is however a time to freshen up the place. Get some painting done and sort out what we need and what we can do without.

Credit this year has to go to certain members of our newly formed imaging group. I have never ever seen our observatory looking so smart and our outside shed so tidy that we can actually get in there and look around. We have to thank for this Jean Dean, Elaine Mahy and Jim English. Others along with our regular members I know have also helped including Roger who keeps the grass looking so good. It is essential that the area is tidy as it is mainly dark when people arrive and our risk assessment, although very detailed, relies on our care.

Referring back to our imaging group, their pictures have enhanced our Open Evenings and have been a further attraction when the weather has not been on our side.

We have held our Open Evenings on Thursdays throughout the School Summer holidays. Each has been successful. We have not been able to use the large telescopes very often due to cloud cover, but on occasions we had good views of Jupiter and Saturn along with the Moon, Galaxies and Nebulae. Jason Hill, David Le Conte, Paul Gavey and Geoff Falla have held the attention of everyone with their knowledge of astronomy on these Evenings.

For the last six months I have been standing in as Secretary for Peter Langford, who we are all looking forward to a full recovery. It was Peter that formalized the idea of a talk/discussion on Tuesday members evenings in the event of the weather not being suitable for viewing. This has worked exceptionally well and in Peter's absence the list sequence has been taken over by Colin Spicer. We have had many interesting evenings for example, Imaging, Newton's Laws of Motion, Globular Clusters and Saturn's moons to mention just a few. Colin Spicer incidentally will be the next Secretary to stand in for Peter.

Saturday 12th August was the date of our barbecue this year. It is a tradition that we have enjoyed for many years. We coincide the barbecue with the Perseids, the best meteor shower of the year. Everyone brings their own food with some to share and when all is cleared away we settle down to watch the show. This year it was cloudy, two years ago it rained heavily, but last year was good. The tradition will go on.

This year David Le Conte witnessed the Great American eclipse in the United States and has promised to tell us all about it on one of our talk/discussion evenings.

On Thursday 28th September we all thoroughly enjoyed an excellent talk at the Frossard Theatre Candie Gardens, entitled 'Mysteries of the Solar System' by the Emeritus of Astronomy David Hughes at the University of Sheffield. We are now looking forward to welcoming our next group of visitors i.e. scouts, Schools and Social clubs etc who tend to make bookings after the clocks change in October. We are also including an Open Evening on Thursday 26th October at 6 pm. These evenings are greatly assisted by the kind permission of La Hougette School for our use of their car park.

Frank Dowding Acting Secretary

See the Stars with Large Telescopes

Visitors are welcome at Guernsey's Astronomical Observatory on the following date:

Thursday 26th October at 6.30pm

Visitors will be shown how the telescopes operate with viewing if clear and given illustrated talks on space related subjects. Donations are welcomed and assist with running and maintenance costs. **We suggest adults £2, children £1.**

The Observatory is in La Rue du Lorier, St Pierre-du-Bois. Perry's Guide reference 21 E3. Parking is available at La Houquette School, Rue des Paysans. From the school go 100 yards up the road, then left onto Rue du Lorier, then immediately right, behind a large bunker. The road is dark, so a torch is advisable.

For further information and directions see www.astronomy.org.gg or call **Frank Dowding on 255215.**

The Great American Eclipse – A personal view

The eclipse of the century, at least for the USA, was predicted to be seen by more people than any previous total solar eclipse. The narrow (65 mile) band of totality extended clear across the country from Oregon to South Carolina, and the partial eclipse phases were visible from almost every state. My planning for it started two years previously, the date of 21 August 2017 being fixed in my mind. It coincided with an invitation to my wife and me to join friends at their time share in the Colorado Rockies, so the natural place to head for a good observing spot was just a three-hour drive away in Wyoming. By coincidence, one of the towns in the path of totality was named Guernsey, after a Charles Guernsey who had operated a cattle ranch there from 1880 to 1926. It seemed an appropriate place to make our base.

So the day before the eclipse we headed north along Interstate Highway 25, heeding the many warnings of major traffic problems. Some 100,000 people were expected to drive to Wyoming from Colorado for the event. When we arrived we found it a bit surreal seeing many Guernsey signs for shops, hotels, offices and the Guernsey State Park. We met the Mayor and delighted him with a presentation of our island flag.

The next day turned out to be perfectly clear, with not a cloud in the sky. I headed some 15 miles north on Route 270, close to the centre line of the eclipse, where the total phase would be longer (still a mere 2 min 28 sec). There were wide open spaces, so one could stop virtually anywhere, but I chose an animal sanctuary where many others had gathered.

People prepared their tripods, cameras and telescopes covered with special solar filters. Eyes were similarly protected by eclipse glasses, essential during the long partial eclipse phases. Precisely at 10.23 Mountain Daylight Time there was 'first contact', the Moon appearing to take a tiny bite out of the Sun. Gradually the eclipse progressed, taking 1 hour 20 mins before 'second contact' marking the beginning of totality. I was busy during this period taking pictures every 5 minutes. I used a single lens reflex camera with a 500 mm mirror lens, and set it low to the ground to minimise any shaking of the tripod.

ASTRONOMY (CONT)

As the eclipse progressed it got noticeably darker and cooler. The animals, mostly horses, had been kept indoors in case they were spooked by the event. Cattle in the next field, however, continued to graze, quite oblivious to what was happening.

Just before second contact I removed the camera filter. Eclipse glasses were set aside, it being quite safe to observe the brief total phase with the naked eye and optical devices. Exposures were rapidly changed in order to capture the glorious sight of the fully eclipse Sun, with its stunning corona – the Sun's outer atmosphere.

In the meantime sky watchers all over the area were treated to the sudden dramatic fall of darkness, the wonderful spectacle of the Moon's globe surrounded by radiant light, the appearance of brilliant Venus, and the vision of sunset colours extending all around the horizon – A never-to-be-forgotten sight which most had never before experienced. This was the fourth time I had seen a total solar eclipse, but it was undoubtedly the best.



American Eclipse – photo courtesy of David Le Conte with processing by Jean Dean.

All too soon totality was over, 'third contact' was upon us, and the Moon started slowly uncovering the Sun. Less than an hour and a half later the Sun regained its full power. People exchanged excited comments about what they had seen, and then headed for home, the promised traffic jams materialising in abundance and slowing vehicles to a halt. The eclipse, meanwhile, continued its 2,000 mile per hour race across the country to give millions of others the awe-inspiring experience we had just witnessed.

David Le Conte

BAT SECTION

During June and July female bats collect together in nursery roosts to give birth and raise their young. The Bat Section carried out its annual nursery roost surveys at six known nursery roost sites on the Island during this time and recorded a slight increase in colony size at two of the sites, the largest of which was recorded as having a mixed colony of approximately 100 Common Pipistrelle and Grey Long-eared. The Bat Section records how many bats emerge from the roosts to forage at sunset and the data is shared with The Bat Conservation Trust in the UK and the Biological Record Centre in Guernsey.

During September, bats will be concentrating on building up fat stores for the coming months and mating season begins, with the males using special calls to attract females.

The Bat Section has acquired its new Song Meter SM4BAT-FS Bat Recorder for bat and site surveys that require static monitoring, especially at remote sites. The new bat recorder will enable the Bat Section to continue to record and analysis the different species of bats in Guernsey, together with their bat detectors, which are devices for making ultrasonic sounds audible to humans. A special thank you goes to those who left donations to La Société Guernesiaise in memory of Pat Costen as some of these funds were used to purchase the new bat recorder.

During the summer, DNA analysis was carried out on bat droppings from a bat being rehabilitated and the species was confirmed as a Natterer's Bat.

Earlier this month, the Bat Section's two bat recorders were placed at a roost site and the data analysed has confirmed that Greater Horseshoe Bats are in Guernsey. The Bat Section has a small amount of evidence that they were here last Autumn for a few days and this is the only record of this species in Guernsey since the 1960s. We are yet to see this species so emergence surveys will be the next step.

The Bat Section's two bat carers, who rehabilitate injured bats, have been very busy over the last few months and have successfully rehabilitated and released numerous Common Pipistrelle and Grey Long-eared back to their habitats. A special thank you goes to the Guernsey Prison for making the Bat Section's new bat rehabilitation boxes.

If you find an injured bat you should contact Aimée Golden directly on 07911 713115 or the GSPCA, who will contact the Bat Section.

The next Bat Section meeting will be held on Wednesday 1st November 2017 at the Section Room at Candie Gardens at 7:45pm and new members are welcome. **E-mail address** bats@societe.org.gg

BOTANY

Events

Saturday 7th October – meet in the back car park Saumarez Park for nature trail – Perry's Guide page 15, G1.

Saturday 4th November – Vale Pond and Common – pg6,B5.

Saturday 9th December – meet at the bowls green in Cambridge Park – pg1, H3.

Please join the Botany Section's new Facebook page where you will find details of the monthly walks and recent plant photos. Once you have joined you can add your own images – please see <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1310943042297921/>

For further enquiries about the monthly Botany walks please contact Anna Cleal by e-mail: botany@societe.org.gg

ENTOMOLOGY

Contact Trevor Bourgaize e-mail entomology@societe.org.gg

FAMILY HISTORY

It is thirty years since the section was formed and to celebrate this an afternoon tea was held at the Copenhagen restaurant at Hotel de Havelet.

The team that mans the section room at the Russels, Les Cotils for research had a successful summer welcoming members and non-members who take advantage of the opening on the first and third Saturdays of the month for their research.

Sylvia Brouard took members on a walk around Town In June. The title of this walk/talk was "Celts and Romans".

Events

Friday 13th October - Annual dinner at La Grande Mare Hotel.

Wednesday 22nd November - Gillian Lenfestey (Mrs Davies) talk on 'Cemeteries of the Town and parish of St Peter Port' followed by the A.G.M.

Meetings are held at the Frossard Theatre, Candie, St Peter Port starting at 7.45 p.m. unless otherwise stated.

Section room at the Russels, Les Cotils open for research first and third Saturday of the month, 10.00 a.m. to noon. Non- members welcome.

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

Alternatively e-mail Maria van der Tang researchenquiries@hotmail.co.uk

GEOLOGY

Contact Andy Dorey Tel 252123 or e-mail: andydorey3@gmail.com

HISTORIC BUILDINGS

The interface between archaeology and standing buildings is always interesting and often extremely puzzling, as the recent efforts of local archaeologists on La Chapelle Dom Hue have demonstrated; now, perhaps, we should be adding Marine Biology as an associated discipline! Either fourteenth-century hermits kept pet porpoises or they attempted to give them a Christian burial when they got stranded. Who knows? At least it is clear that all aspects of antiquarian and scientific study can be most productive when they remain under the umbrella of an overarching academic organisation such as La Société.

Folklore and tradition had a hard time of it during the twentieth century, when it was fashionable to believe that all wisdom handed down was rubbish unless it could be proved by scientific methods alone. For some time now, I have decided to adopt exactly the opposite approach, and I try to give some credence to everything until it is proved false. So in Alderney, the fortlet of 'The Nunnery', standing to full height, and demonstrably Roman because of its form, materials and building techniques, was not widely accepted as such until archaeologists found the right design of potsherds and suchlike nicely stratified alongside. Here, antiquarians had actually won the first round by several decades! But here, too, the site, according to local tradition, of Alderney's original town, Jason Monaghan's digs have

HISTORIC BUILDINGS (CONT)

been able to demonstrate that there are indeed even earlier Roman layers of occupation underlying the fortlet. One hopes that his future work will not only be able to show when that occupation began, but when it finished.

This is because the extraordinarily good state of preservation of 'The Nunnery' also needs explanation. Was it kept in working order, as guardian of a safe and important anchorage for international shipping, long after this part of the Roman Empire had metamorphosed itself from Lugdunensis Secunda into part of a Mérovingian Frankish kingdom, following the defeat of Syagrius at Soissons in 486? Will there be gold tremisses from Nantes, or examples of pottery from North Africa or Spain, such as have turned up at Tintagel? It would make good sense, for the crews of galleys need to be fed and watered on shore daily, and on our Section's trip to Brittany this year, we examined just the sort of facilities that had been provided, in a safe anchorage, and for such ships. At Hogolo, near Plestin-les-Grèves, was an ample bath-house provided for their convenience, perched on a slope above the estuary and clearly not serving any villa, vicus or town. Well, in the Alderney museum is the only flue-tile from the walls of a Roman bath-house ever found in the Channel Islands. Was this also from such an establishment? And did 'The Nunnery's' settlement here last until the Vikings disrupted everything; until a feudal reorganisation in the eleventh century; or until blown sand overwhelmed it at some stage?



The Roman Baths at Hogolo – photo courtesy of John McCormack

There are plenty of puzzles left to investigate here in Guernsey, too, which the examination of local buildings alone cannot explain. Why is there so much Roman brick in the Castel church? Was the very name 'Castel' an important clue to a Roman past? Julien Deshayes, our friend and colleague in Valognes, has drawn attention to the 'Chastel Mont Haguez' mentioned in the 'Roman de Rou' by the Jersey poet Wace in the twelfth century at the estuary of the Saire in the Clos du Cotentin, and, incidentally, to its association with the family that came to be known as de Havilland. At our church, do we have a Roman fort centred on an even older pagan shrine, such as Jeremy K. Knight ('The End of Antiquity' 1999) has shown were often sited on boundaries for the encouragement of trade, power, and the dispensing of justice? Was it later the site of a rural church resulting from fourth-century evangelisation by that Roman soldier turned bishop, St. Martin of Tours, or by Victricius, metropolitan bishop of Rouen, his friend and fellow-evangelist of the countryside: they were together in Vienne at a pivotal moment in church history. Only excavation is likely to produce any further clues.

HISTORIC BUILDINGS (CONT)

Whatever the antique beginnings of the Castel Church, its later medieval development has created even more puzzles. Why is there, on its south-eastern gable, a buttress intact at the top but rebuilt at the bottom? This is not a natural thing to find, but an explanation must begin with a blocked doorway partly overlapped by its rebuilt base. Interestingly, this doorway was not an external doorway, but once opened into some vanished building (as demonstrable from its chamfered surround, facing into the church, and its door rebate facing outside and hence impossible to secure from intruders). Did it lead into a sacristy, a treasury, a vestry, or what? This too cries out for the services of archaeologists.

However, another puzzle inside the church has at last been solved, again by our French trips. This involves a hexagonal pillar now forming part of the chancel arcade, but not the right height for its present position, superior in quality to surrounding pillars and arches, and of a different stone. Octagonal pillars are common enough, especially in the fifteenth century, but hexagonal ones are unknown, and anyway the corbelling on the pillar resembles more the sort of detailed carving on fireplaces. After years of bemusement, it was not until the Section visited la Chapelle de Kerfons, near Lannion, that instant enlightenment dawned. There, free-standing inside the sanctuary was an exact replica of 'our' pillar, just one size smaller, supporting a group of statues. The most likely explanation of what has happened at the Castel is that it, too, was a really expensive gift, meant to support statuary, dating from round about 1500. In style, its carving greatly resembles a fireplace lintel now in the church porch, engraved with 'T' 'H' for Thomas Henry, who was rector in the 1490s; this came from the medieval Castel Rectory that he probably built. His relative, Pierre Henry, added the quasi-fortified wing to La Haye du Puits a generation later, and it is most likely that the statue pillar was given by this family, who managed to find a way of preserving it from destruction by Calvinists at the Reformation.

Solutions to such problems can thus be seen as coming, very often, not only from intensive study of one's own discipline, in one's own little island, but from a multi-disciplined approach embracing different countries, and especially France, where we traded, warred, and of which we were, for long periods, politically and ecclesiastically part.

John McCormack.

Please see our website www.societe.org.gg for details of the many talks and events this Section organises.

Any queries can be sent to John McCormack mrjam@cwgsy.net

JUNIOR SECTION

The Junior Section will be attending the Astronomy Observatory Open evening on Thursday 26th October. Please meet in the La Hougette School car park at 6.15pm. If the weather is suitable there will be a moth trap set up and bat detectors.

For details of Autumn Junior events please contact Chris Maurant Tel. 07911 130415 or e-mail chris.maurant@yahoo.co.uk

LA SOCIÉTÉ CONSERVATION HERD

2017 has been another successful season for the Conservation Herd. After grazing L'Ancrese Common for the first time in April this year, we moved the steers down to Port Soif Common to continue Operation Skylark.

This has been the third year we have grazed Port Soif common and we are already seeing a big change in the grassland. So much so, we only grazed it for two weeks this season. The thick thatch of coarse grasses that had begun to dominate the grassland since grazing was lost are now becoming less vigorous. This summer there were swathes of dodder (*Cuscuta epithymum*) and patches of short, species rich dune grassland establishing.

By mid summer the Herd moved to another new grazing patch, this time the wet grassland at the north of Vazon Bay. This grassland was previously cut for hay by a local farmer, but as the nutrient load in the soil decreased and the hay crop declined it was time to change the management from hay cutting to grazing and the Herd were invited in.



A steer at Vazon – photo courtesy of Julia Henney

They spent over six weeks grazing at Vazon and have now been moved to the Bridget Ozanne Orchid Meadows. Whilst the six big steers were hard at work, our two young animals were busy learning their trade and all about electric fences. They also made an appearance to the West Show, winning a rosette in their class.

For details of how you can help with the Herd please e-mail Julia Henney - conservationherd@societe.org.gg or join us on Facebook at La Société Conservation Herd.



Julia Henney with steer Number 10 who was awarded 2nd place in his category at the West Show – photo courtesy of Donna Francis.

MARINE BIOLOGY

The Marine Biology Section (MBS) has been busy busy busy this year, with a wide variety of events and surveys, including beach cleans, seaweed and habitat surveys, rock pooling, snorkeling, as well as social events to promote the Section and La Société in general.



MBS snorkeling event at Rocquaine - Photo courtesy of Jessi Jennings.

As well as regular Section events, we have attended and taken part in a number of environmental events and forums to help promote environmental awareness and management and encourage education. Examples of this include the Seabird & Marine Mammal Forum, hosted annually by Agriculture, Countryside and Land Management Services, States of Guernsey, as well as the annual Inter-Island Environment Meeting which was in Sark this year. For full details of all of the events the Section has organised, run and attended, check out the 2017 Transaction Report which will be available next year.

However, the main event this year (at least for me anyway) has been the change of Section Secretary. I have run the MBS for about 5 years, and have loved every minute of it, so it does make me sad to step down. However, we have an amazing new person taking over, Laura Bampton, who has already done so much for the Section and La Société. Many of our Section members will have already met Laura, and we are so glad that such an enthusiastic, passionate individual will continue the Section. Keep an eye out for the interesting things the Section will do and achieve under Laura's direction!



Laura Bampton: new Marine Biology Section Secretary. Photo courtesy of Jessi Jennings.

All of the MBS public events are put up on the La Société website under the SECTIONS area, and on the La Société Facebook page. If you would like to be included in the Marine Biology Section's mailing list to find out more about our events etc., or would like to become more involved, please email marinebiology@societe.org.gg.

Linked Event

The Marine section will be at the third annual Bean Jar Jamboree and Nature Festival on Saturday 14th October in the grounds of Les Cotils between 12-5 pm. As well as promoting the protection of our local marine environment we will be collaborating with a community art project being created by the art departments of Elizabeth and Ladies' College using litter collected from local beaches during this year's great Channel Island Beach Watch event run by the Marine Conservation Society. All are welcome to join in the creative process.

NATURAL HISTORY

For our outdoor meetings this year, the Natural History Section decided to make regular monthly visits to 2 contrasting Société reserves and to record what was seen. The reserves which we choose were land at Pleinmont which is owned or managed by La Société, and Le Grand Pré, which is managed by La Société. Unfortunately due to a variety of reasons, not all the planned visits went ahead, but each reserve was visited at least 4 times between May and September, and records were sent to the GBRC.

Probably the most interesting find recorded at Pleinmont was a bluey grey caterpillar which was seen in good numbers on our August visit. It was decided that these were sawfly larvae, *Monostegia abdominalis*, supposedly an easy species to identify. However these would normally be feeding on Loosestrife or Scarlet Pimpernel, whereas those found at Pleinmont were on Corn Spurrey, so some further investigation may be needed.

The section was able to look at several nests of *Formica pratensis* and found one in a place where a nest had not previously been recorded. The colonies do move from time to time, so this may have been what happened with this nest. We are also monitoring 4 refugia and have so far recorded 1 juvenile slow worm and a white-toothed shrew!

The most interesting find at Le Grande Pré was a moth, *Cosmopterix lienigiella*, which was seen during our June visit. This proved to be a new species for the Channel Islands. Its larvae burrow into the stems of phragmites, so it could be quite common, but may have been overlooked in the past, due to its small size.

We had intended to take an MV moth trap down to the Grande Pré this month to look for Wainscot moths, which also mine into reeds, but so far the weather has been against us. It is hoped to visit the reserves at intervals over the winter and to continue to record anything of interest.

More information about the Section can be found on the Société website or by contacting Lesley on 710737 or email: lbourgaize@cwgsy.net

Pollinator Project

La Société members Barry Wells and Vanessa Crispini-Adams have teamed up to launch Guernsey's first Pollinator Project which aims to raise awareness of this highly important group of insects. They will be working with the general public, schools, business and the States to develop a network of 'Pollinator Patches' throughout Guernsey. They recently received a £1,000 grant from the Co-operative Society Limited Eco Fund to support the launch at the Beanjar Jamboree & Nature Festival on Saturday 14th October at Les Cotils.



The Section at Pleinmont in August
- photo courtesy of Lesley Bourgaize



Sawfly larva, *Monostegia abdominalis*
found at Pleinmont - photo courtesy of
Lesley Bourgaize



Moth, *Cosmopterix lienigiella* found at
Le Grand Pré - photo courtesy of Lesley
Bourgaize

ORNITHOLOGY

This year the section has had a number of outdoor meetings. These have included a bat and moth evening at Saumarez Park, a trip to The Humps off Herm and a visit to Alderney which included a trip to observe the Gannetries on the Garden Rocks, an important world site for gannets. Members also enjoyed a barbecue on Saturday 9th September.

A Pelagic (boat trip to observe seabirds) provided sightings of Black terns and a Wilson's petrel. In August the Royal tern was sighted again after four months, at Paradis. This handsome bird breeds in in the Southern USA, Mexico and the West Indies. It winters in Peru and Argentina. Then on Monday 11th September a Buff-breasted Sandpiper was seen at the Colin Best Nature Reserve. This bird breeds in the far North of America and winters as far South as Argentina. So, as Autumn progresses watch the weather patterns and we may well see more visitors which have been blown across the Atlantic on their migration.

The Bio-diversity strategy is moving forward with there now being a shortlist of applicants for the position of Bio-diversity Education Officer, so hopefully the strategy will be in force by Christmas.

If you have read this article before Monday 18th October please make an effort to attend the important meeting at Candie to discuss a change in the format of La Société which would see at least five Sections form Nature Guernsey, but still hold their own individual meetings.

For more information go to ornithology@societe.org.gg or call Chris on 07911 130415.

He would welcome you to the section. We meet on the first Thursday of each month, usually at Candie at 7.30pm.



LUNCHTIME LANGUAGE LESSONS AT CANDIE MUSEUM

How about learning some Guernesiais? Lessons take place on Tuesday and Wednesday lunchtimes (generally from 12.15pm - 1pm & 1.15pm – 2pm), in La Société's Section Room at Candie Museum and are run as a series of six sessions. All levels are catered for from beginners, elementary, intermediate and 'rememberers' (a class specifically for people who may have spoken the language when they were younger, and who wish to have a go at 're-speaking' their mother tongue. The lessons cost £25 for the 6 week sessions (£20 if you have a Discovery Pass), and are open to all. We also hold one off language workshops and evening lessons if there is demand, please contact:

Josephine.Dowding@gov.gg or janmarquis@suremail.gg

ASSOCIATED GROUPS

Alderney Wildlife Trust	Roland Gauvain	822935
Blue Dolphins Sub-Aqua Club	Jessie Jennings	bluedolphinssac@gmail.com
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The Alderney Society & Museum	The Secretary	823222
The Guernsey Beekeepers' Association	Chris Tomlins	07781 100311
The Guernsey Botanical Trust	Ivan Le Tissier	07911 719115
The Guernsey Society	Michael Paul	253858
WEA	Roy Bisson	256848

LEGACIES AND DONATIONS IN LIEU OF FLOWERS

Members are reminded that it is possible to make La Société a beneficiary of their will. Money or property can be left for general use, or if desired for a specific purpose.

They are also reminded that donations in lieu of flowers can be made in memory of members who have died.

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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.

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Zoology	Vacant		

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

Jamie Hooper (co-opted), Jane Gilmour (co-opted), Helen Litchfield, Roy Bisson, Vanessa Crispini-Adams, Adrian Nicolle, Rodney Collette, Alex Hershel and the Very Rev. John Guille.

Office hours:

Our office at Candie is open to the Public on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday Mornings between 10am and 11.30am.

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