



La Société

For nature, history and science in Guernsey



Chris Packham - photograph courtesy of Paul Carter.

President's Report

Dear Member,

I mentioned in the last newsletter that we were investigating the possibility of bringing over a well-known environmental personality and I'm absolutely delighted to announce that Chris Packham (pictured above) will be coming to Guernsey on 13th and 14th May to stage his latest performance, "Pictures from the Edge of the World" at St James. Chris is one of the UK's leading naturalists and wildlife TV presenters, inspiring audiences young and old to take notice of, get involved with and care for our natural environment. He has a passionate love of nature and the courage, determination and ability to campaign for and protect our wildlife. He is also a prolific writer and respected wildlife photographer.

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Chris's new show is designed for impact. Challenging conventional ideas about where beauty is found, what makes good photography and art, and what it is for. Everyone is tempted by glamour, the big, the brash and the beautiful. But Chris champions the underdog and pushes back at familiarity breeding contempt; for him humble everyday creatures are just as alluring.

We are announcing this event to our members first via this newsletter which will enable you to book the best seats before it is widely advertised. Members can take advantage of discounted ticket prices, at just £14 for adults or £10 for children under 12. If you have friends or relatives who would like to attend, they can sign up for membership in order to take advantage of the discounted prices. Ticket prices for non-members are £21 and £14 respectively. *Please note: the discounted prices are only for members and cannot be purchased by a member on behalf of non-members.* To book tickets please go to the St. James website at stjames.gg or give their box office a call on 711360 from 4th March onwards.

During 2018 Chris Packham launched a Bioblitz campaign. Chris and his team visited 50 wildlife sites across the UK in just 10 days. We are very pleased to say he will be opening Guernsey's very first Bioblitz event during his visit. A Bioblitz aims to record as many species as possible from a site within a given time scale, usually 24hrs, and it can help to highlight the health of our nature reserves. The event will be open to schools and the general public, but will also call on the expertise of local specialists and amateur recorders. Follow the Biodiversity Partnership Facebook page for more details about the event and how to get involved.

You will notice the newsletter has a new look and I thought I would outline to you how we arrived at this point. Over the last two years, various members of Council and the wider membership have been looking at ways that we can take La

Société forward while at the same time holding on to all the values and strengths that have made us the respected and enduring organisation that we are. The world is changing and the way we communicate is changing rapidly too. To continue to flourish and to be a champion for nature, history and science in Guernsey we need to continually attract new members and discover new ways of engaging with islanders.

Under the previous President, Andrew Casebow, the 'Way Forward' group was set up and some work was done. This included the formation of "Nature Guernsey" bringing together all the natural history sections of La Société to put on events each year with a broad environmental theme. New logos were considered at the time but Council members felt that they did not encapsulate who we are sufficiently well. So, after taking over the reins in March last year, I set up a new working group made up of members of Council and Ordinary Members to take another look at both the way we present ourselves to the wider public and to consider, amongst other things, what we might offer to our Members. The new logo replaces a myriad of styles, fonts and designs that have built up over the years, including the 'seal' which has in fact only been in use for the last 40 or so years. The new main design is one of a 'family' of logos which can be used for different parts and different sections of La Société, but which are all instantly recognisable as part of the same organisation. As part of the package we will be launching a new website which will be much more up to date and informative for users as well as much easier for us to maintain. Whilst we are moving more into the electronic world in our communications, we will happily continue to provide paper copies of the newsletter and Transactions for all those who prefer to receive them that way. The logo just uses the "La Société" part of the name as that is how we tend to be referred to by most people and organisations already, but we

remain, proudly, La Société Guernesaise and this will be reflected on publications and letterheads and so forth. Council have fully supported these changes and we hope you like them too.

We recently sent out a survey and I'd like to thank those of you who have already completed it – at the time of writing we have had over 250 responses. If we don't have an e-mail address for you, there should be a paper copy of the survey enclosed with this newsletter. We really value your input to help guide us to improve how we operate and what we offer.

Onto other matters: a triangular-shaped wet meadow has been purchased by La Société at Le Coutanchez. This adjoins our other fields in this area and will make it one of our largest reserves. Many of you will have known Julian Medland who sadly passed away in 2017. He was the Ornithological Section Secretary for many years, a life member and latterly a director of Environment Guernsey. His family have made a generous donation to enable the purchase this field and Council have agreed it will be named "Medland Meadow". We are very grateful for this gift which will provide a lasting memorial to Julian and which will help preserve the biodiversity of our island which was so important to him.

As some of you will have seen from the report in the Guernsey Press, last month I was delighted to present the 2018 Griff Caldwell bursary, worth £1,000, to Pieter Durman. Pieter was educated at the Grammar School and Sixth Form Centre and is now reading Natural Sciences at Cambridge University. He plans to use the money to fund field trips. We wish him the very best with his studies. The bursary was set up to run for five years so 2019 will be the last year. If you, or anyone you know, is planning on studying Biological or Environmental Science in 2019 details on how to apply are on the website www.societe.org,gg

The closing date is 31st May 2019.

I'm pleased to announce that Charlie Le Marquand will be reviving our dormant Zoology Section. Whilst Guernsey may not be able to boast herds of zebra roaming the wilds of St Saviours, we do, nevertheless, have interesting fauna resident in the island as the recent surveys of the giant Guernsey vole revealed. Charlie has just returned to the island following her completion of an MRes in Ecology, Evolution and Conservation at Imperial College London and a BSc Hons in Zoology at Swansea University. She is excited to be taking on the position of Zoology Section Secretary, and the first meeting will be on Saturday 16th March at 2.30pm in the Section room at Candie. Charlie hopes that the section will be able to contribute to environmental projects on the island. Elsewhere in this newsletter you will find an article about work that Charlie has done locally with hedgehogs. This now only leaves the History section without an active presence. We know that there are many people both within and without La Société who are extremely interested in the history of our island. If you would consider being involved in reforming the History section please contact our secretary Kate Lee.

At a recent Council meeting, Roy Bisson proposed that The Victor Hugo in Guernsey Society become an associated organisation. Council agreed to this request. There will be an article about the Victor Hugo Society in the May newsletter.

Last year La Société entered into an agreement with Sue Daly from Sark for her new book *Marine Life of the Channel Islands*. It is a spectacular book full of vibrant colour plates showing the amazing variety of marine life that inhabits our waters and I can recommend it highly. It is available from bookshops on the island as well as direct from the office at Candie. We were delighted to be able to help Sue get this book

published by pledging to buy a fixed number of copies upfront. Sue will be doing a talk on Saturday 27th April at 11.30am entitled “*A Dive around the Channel Islands (without getting wet!)*” in the Frossard Theatre. We expect this talk to be very popular so to avoid us having to turn people away at the door, please could you reserve seats with Kate Lee (secretary@societe.org.gg or 725093). Should you reserve a seat but are subsequently unable to attend, please also let us know. The talk is free to members with a suggested donation of £5 for non-member adults.

In the second half of March, the theatre will be closed for a few weeks while the carpet and seating is replaced. As you will know, we share the use of the theatre with the Museum. The Museum will be paying for this work for which we thank them.

The AGM takes place on Tuesday 12th March in the Frossard Theatre at 7.30pm. We hope you are able to come along. After the formalities, Laura Bampton will be giving a presentation on the work of the Marine Biology Section.

Finally, I would like to extend my thanks on behalf of Council to Colin Spicer and Vanessa Crispini-Adams, who have stepped down from their roles on Council recently, for all their hard work and enthusiasm.

Yvonne Burford

AGM 2019

The AGM will be held at Candie in the Frossard Theatre on Tuesday 12th March beginning at 7.30pm for the purpose of transacting the following business:

- (a) To hear the report of the President, Yvonne Burford.
- (b) To receive the annual statement of accounts.
- (c) To elect the officers and members of the Council. Two Ordinary Members of Council are eligible for re-election, Rodney Collenette and Alex Herschel. Vanessa-Crispini Adams has stepped down due to other commitments.
If any member wishes to propose an Ordinary Member for a seat on Council kindly send the candidates CV to the Secretary at Candie together with the names of the proposer and seconder by Wednesday 27th February 2019.
- (d) To appoint accountants.
- (e) To approve the Subscription rate increases. There will be a proposal at the AGM to increase local single and joint/family membership rates from 2020 to take account of the cost of living since the last increase in 2014.

The proposed changes will be: local single membership from £25 to £28 and local joint/family membership from £30 to £34. Single life membership will increase to £360 and joint life membership to £480.

(f) To consider any other matters or propositions affecting La Société. Any member who wishes to make a proposal at the AGM should submit it in writing, supported by a seconder to the Secretary to reach her by Wednesday 27th February 2019.

A full agenda together with the minutes of the last meeting and a copy of the 2018 accounts will be available to all members who attend the AGM. Details of nominations for Members of Council and all proposals for discussion will be displayed on the Noticeboard at Candie from Thursday 28th February 2019.

After the AGM there will be a short break, during which refreshments will be served. Then there will be a presentation on ormers by Laura Bampton, Section Secretary of Marine Biology, entitled “The Ear of the Sea”.

2017 Transactions

The 2017 Transactions are now available for collection from Candie. The picture on the front cover is of a Hawfinch. The office is open on a Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday morning between 10am and 11.30am – parking is easier on a Saturday morning.

We have many uncollected Transactions for 2014, 2015 and 2016. If you are unable to get to Candie to collect kindly let us know. 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

New Publication

December 2018 saw the publication of an important new book on Guernsey’s history written by independent local academic and Société member, Dr Rose-Marie Crossan. Based on extensive original research, “A Women’s History of Guernsey” is the first scholarly treatment of this subject in a Guernsey context, and it is aimed at both an international and Channel Island audience.

The book is now available online and from local bookshops (hardback: £16.00; paperback £8.00). We also have a few copies for sale at Candie, kindly donated by the author along with other titles by Marie “Guernsey, 1814 – 1914: Migration and Modernisation” and “Poverty and Welfare in Guernsey, 1850’s -1950’s”.

Plant Heritage Events 2019 - Open to Non-Members

Tuesday 12th March, 7pm at Les Cotils - a lecture by Nick Bailey, a regular presenter on Gardeners World and Chelsea award winning designer entitled “365 Days of Colour in Your Garden”. Free to Plant Heritage members. Non-members £7 on the door. Contact Tattie Thompson e-mail kdt@cwgsy.net

Saturday 13th April, 9am to 12 noon, Plant Heritage Plant stall at the Sausmarez Manor Farmers Market in St Martin’s.

Section Reports

Archaeology

The most interesting discovery this winter was that of a human skeleton on the Islet of La Chapelle Dom Hue. This tiny islet lies between Perelle Bay and the L'Eree Headland and is cut off on the higher tides. In 2017 we excavated the remains of a medieval building here, this is thought to have been either a small chapel or a hermit's cell. During this excavation we also discovered the remains of a porpoise which had been placed in a carefully dug pit - resembling a human grave. However the porpoise appears to have been butchered and it is known that they were a delicacy in the medieval period, it has recently been radiocarbon dated to AD 1416 – 1490, a date which fits well with that of the building. More can be read about this excavation in the 2017 Transactions and it will eventually be fully published there.

The Section regularly visit La Chapelle Dom Hue to monitor erosion and check for finds, in March last year we were surprised to discover a human toe bone and then later in the year a second one; it seemed likely that there was a burial gradually eroding out. The decision was made to carry out a small excavation to see if this was the case and, if so, to remove the remains. Left in situ the skeleton was likely to erode out by degrees which would have been undesirable for many reasons.



Excavation of the body on the smaller section of Chapelle Dom Hue - photograph courtesy of Philip de Jersey

Initially we thought the burial was likely to be associated with the building – and was perhaps even of Dom Hue himself - but as we uncovered more of the remains this seemed increasingly unlikely. The body had been placed east/west, as is expected for a Christian burial, but the position was unusual, the arms and legs were splayed out and the hands were entirely missing. It had also been clothed, ten buttons were found in and around the torso and the well-preserved condition of the feet suggested it had probably been wearing shoes. Our working theory is that this is someone who had drowned and been washed up on the islet, the hands and lower portion of the left arm may have been removed by predators. The body had been deliberately buried, but may have been bloated and rather unpleasant which would explain the unusual position of the limbs and the fact that it had not been taken to a churchyard.



The skeleton in situ. Scale is 1m - photograph courtesy of Philip de Jersey.

There is more to do, but the analysis so far has revealed that this was a young man, no older than late 20's. The buttons have been sent away for specialist conservation and initial reports show that there are six of leather, a large flat copper alloy one and three of horn with copper alloy loops. A portion of textile has survived attached to one of the buttons and this is probably wool. Once the conservation is complete we will seek specialist identification of the buttons and it should be possible to say what kinds of garments they were from. We will also get a radiocarbon date for the skeleton.

The three types of button found on the body. Two examples of the leather buttons are shown to the left; in the centre is a horn button with wire loop attached; and on the right the large copper alloy button, with a small piece of textile which was found with it, probably from a woollen garment - photograph courtesy of Philip de Jersey.



It is intriguing indeed that such a tiny islet, in such a remote location, should have been the source of so much interesting archaeology – in addition to the discoveries described above, many thousands of prehistoric struck flints have also been collected there. We should be able to say more about the burial on the islet once all the analysis has been completed, but perhaps he was a sailor, washed overboard or shipwrecked off this dangerous piece of coast.

Forthcoming Event

On Wednesday 13th March at 19:30pm there will be a talk by Jersey geologist Dr John Renouf entitled “Tectonic, Climatic and Sea-Level Processes in Relationship to Archaeological and Historical Habitation/Occupation of the Landscape” in the Frossard Theatre, Candie.

Tanya Walls

Astronomy

The autumn and winter months of 2018 have been quite eventful. On October 4th, as part of the Guernsey Photographic Festival, we were invited to view images taken of Mars by NASA’s orbiter and put together in a photographic exploration by the famous French artist Xavier Barral.

The evening was conducted by Jean-Christophe Godet and as previously arranged a speaker from La Société Guernesiate Astronomy Section was to give a talk on the science aspect of Mars. I agreed to do this as it is my favourite subject and thoroughly enjoyed myself.

November 1st was our half term open evening and in line with La Société’s new look ‘Nature Guernsey,’ our Secretary Colin Spicer arranged for the inclusion of the Entomology Section and the Bat group, with members of the Pollinator Project available for information. As it was also Halloween, night flyers were used to encourage children of all ages to attend. With lighted pumpkin lanterns decorating the observatory and long queues to look through the telescopes, the evening was a huge success, thanks largely to Colin.

In October the Channel Islands group of professional Engineers invited us to the Princess Royal Theatre, where they had asked Professor Mikhail from St Andrews University to talk on the contrast between The Earth and Venus. This was a very enjoyable and informative evening.

Our Imaging section held a course on Astro Photography for twelve enthusiasts during October and November. Jean Dean ran the course and with good weather it was all very successful.

Colin arranged for our traditional Christmas meal this year at the Moores Hotel. An excellent choice of venue.

Our AGM was held on January 22nd with David Le Conte in the chair. The majority of committee members were happy to remain in their positions. Elaine Mahy confirmed her position as Activities co-ordinator. Jean Dean will organize the Open Days and Kieran Phillips will join Matt Skillet and Owain Catton on IT.

It was agreed that Jean Dean would arrange viewing and imaging sessions, weather permitting, on the last Saturday of each month.

Colin Spicer gave notice before the meeting that he would no longer continue as Secretary or as Treasurer, a position he also held.

Peter Langford agreed to take on the position of Treasurer.

But no-one was forthcoming for the position as Secretary. This position was not filled at the AGM.

It is unfortunate that Colin has decided to resign as he was a strong supporter of the Nature Guernsey initiative by La Société. Colin on a number of occasions invited other Sections to our Observatory Open Evenings. The Halloween evening for example was a huge success where the Bat and Moth sections brought in huge crowds.

On January 29th Elaine Mahy gave us an excellent technical talk on how she successfully photographed the eclipsed red moon, in spite of cloud and the early hours of the morning.



Eclipsed Red Moon - photograph courtesy of Elaine Mahy.

We continue with Group Visits as we call them, where school children, Social Clubs, Scouts and anyone wishing to spend an hour or so with us as a group. This is proving very successful under Elaine's leadership.

Frank Dowding.

Bat Section

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

Contact Charles Hurford bats@societe.org.gg for details of the next Bat Section meeting at Candie. New members are always welcome.

Botany Walks

All walks meet at 2pm for a 2:15pm start.

Saturday 2nd March, La Garenne d'Anneville, meet at the entrance. Perry's guide page 9, F3. Very limited parking, please share lifts or use public transport if you can.

Saturday 6th April, Le Catiaroc. Please be advised there are some steep slopes so please wear suitable footwear. Meet in car park Perry's guide page 12, D4.

Saturday 4th May, Gélé Road Reserve, please meet in the coastal car park Perry's guide page 14, A3 for the walk to the reserve.

For further enquiries about the monthly Botany walks please contact Anna Cleal by e-mail:

botany@societe.org.gg

Please join the Botany Section's 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.

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1310943042297921/>

Entomology

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

Family History

The Russels at Les Cotils - Please note that we are now back on our winter opening times of 10am until 12 noon on the 1st and 3rd Saturday of each month. Everyone is welcome so if you have a friend or relative who would like help on how to research or advice with any problems we are happy to help.

If you have any of you have a family story or article you want put into the next Journal, please send it to researchenquiries@hotmail.co.uk

Events

Saturday 9th March, 11am, Frossard Theatre, Candie - Brian de Jersey will present a power point slide show of old photographs of Guernsey.

Saturday 15th May, 7.45pm, Frossard Theatre, Candie – a talk by May Way entitled “My life at Grandes Rocques Hotel”.

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

Maria van der Tang

Geology

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

Historic Buildings - Events

Saturday 23rd February, 7.30pm, Frossard Theatre, Candie - a talk by John McCormack entitled “Guernsey in the Mediterranean; Unexpected Comparisons Abroad”.

Saturday 9th March, 7.30pm, Frossard Theatre, Candie – a talk by John McCormack entitled “The sourcing of Materials for Traditional Buildings”.

Saturday 23rd March, 7.30pm, Section Room, Candie – a talk by John McCormack entitled “An Evening Remembering Richard Shackle and his Channel Island work”.

Saturday 6th April, 7.30pm, La Villette Hotel – a talk by John McCormack entitled “The Development of Channel Island Pigsties”.

Saturday 4th May, 2.30pm – a visit to La Rocque Balan, Vale, by kind invitation of Dr. and Mrs. Toynton

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

Junior Section

The next Nature Guernsey Family Event will be held on Sunday 12th May in the afternoon at the Colin Best Nature Reserve. More details to follow.

La Société Conservation Herd

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.

Marine Biology

The green ormer (*Haliotis tuberculata*) is one of our most iconic marine species, and is of huge cultural importance in Guernsey. It has long been considered a delicacy, and the practice of ormering is still extremely popular. The species has a wide range, including the Mediterranean and North East Atlantic, from Senegal to Alderney. The Channel Islands mark the northernmost extent of the green ormer’s range, setting us apart from the rest of the British Isles.

The green ormer, *Haliotis tuberculata* - photograph courtesy of Laura Bampton.



Project Ormer

As a consequence of the ormer's cultural and ecological importance, Société Jersiaise Marine Biology Section set up "Project Ormer" at the start of 2017. This project aims to estimate the size of Jersey's ormer population, as well as gaining further data on the ecology, biology, and behaviour of the species. During 2017, 100 sites were surveyed in Jersey, and over 200 ormers tagged. The project continued throughout 2018, with several hundred more ormers being tagged. A first thorough project report is expected sometime in 2019.

Project Ormer presented an ideal opportunity to co-ordinate research across the Channel Islands, and La Société Guernesaise Marine Biology Section has recently begun tagging ormers here in Guernsey.

How does it work?

Teams of volunteers head out on low tides, and search for ormers. When an ormer is found, it is measured, photographed, and its location is accurately recorded. The rock under which the ormer lives is also measured and photographed. Most importantly, each ormer found is tagged. Each tag has a unique code on it, so that individual ormers may be identified if found again.

In future, each tagging site will be revisited to try and rediscover previously tagged ormers. These ormers can then be re-measured and their new locations recorded, to give an idea of ormer growth rates and movements.

What if I find a tagged ormer?

Although we would prefer that any tagged ormers found are left in the wild so that this research can continue, it is very important to note that Project Ormer is not intended to stop people from ormering - provided all regulations that govern the practice are followed! We would very much appreciate your assistance if you find a tagged ormer, by taking the following steps. The tagged ormer's location should be recorded as accurately as possible, ideally using GPS. The ormer should be photographed from several different angles and if the ormer is gathered, the shell should be kept so that it may be collected by the Marine Biology Section and accurately measured (it can then be returned if you wish to keep the shell). Finally, please contact the Marine Biology Section (marinebiology@societe.org.gg) to provide us with this information. In return, we may be able to tell you something about the ormer you have found.



Each tag has a unique code on it, so individual ormers may be identified if they are found again – photograph courtesy of Laura Bampton.

How can I find out more?

E-mail marinebiology@societe.org.gg if you're interested in getting involved - there will be plenty more tagging sessions coming up. Head to <http://www.biologicalrecordscentre.gov.gg/project-ormer/> or <http://www.jerseycoast.co.uk/project-ormer.html> to find out more about the project, or visit gov.gg/fishing to see details of regulations and best-practice concerning ormering.

Next Ormer Tagging Event

I've been looking at the tide tables, and the next good weekend for ormer tagging will be Saturday 23rd February. Unfortunately I am off-island, but it would be great if a group of you could still go out. The meeting point would be Portelet kiosk again, and the aim would be to survey the area between Fort Grey and where we called it a day last time. I will provide a map for those of you who weren't there last time. Low-tide is at 3:49pm, so I would propose meeting around 2:30pm. You can contact me on the Marine Biology e-mail above.

Laura Bampton

Natural History


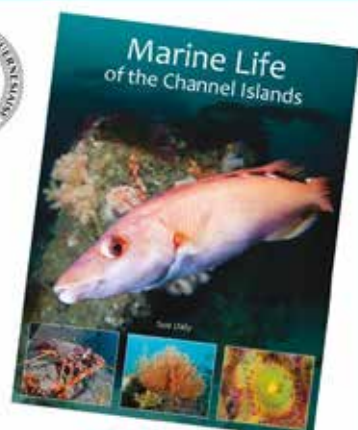
Events

Monday 15th April - Icart Headland - please meet at 6.30pm in the car park, Perry's 30B5. Purpose - to view recent work carried out by ACLMS to prepare the land for the Conservation Herd. This will be followed by a bite to eat at Saints Bay Hotel to make up for missing our Tennerfest last years. Partners welcome.

Contact Lesley Bourgaize
e-mail lbourgaize@cwgsy.net

Marine Life of the Channel Islands

A new book by Sue Daly

Price £20

Available from La Société Guernesaise, Candie

Open Tuesdays, Thursdays & Saturdays 10-11.30am

Call secretary Kate Lee on 715093 to arrange other collection times

The perfect guide to the intriguing underwater world of the Channel Islands, beautifully illustrated with photographs showing over four hundred species in its natural habitat. (Softback 288 pages)

Ornithology

The focus for this issue is seabirds.

It was reported in the Communiqué notes for Autumn 2018, that the Royal Tern appeared to have left Guernsey for the south coast of England. So, the news of its return on 16th January, together with photographs, was very well received by local bird watchers. There have been several sightings in its old haunts: Belle Grève Bay, Houmet Paradis, L'Ancre Bay, Chouet and Les Ammareurs.

Winter is a good time of year to look seawards. There have been good sightings of Black-throated Diver and Great Northern Diver. Great Crested Grebe can usually be observed around Salerie Corner and Belle Grève Bay in the colder months. This year was no exception, with three individuals sighted early in the month at Perelle and another three opposite the Red Lion. Red-necked Grebe, Slavonian Grebe and Black-necked Grebe have also been seen.



Black Throated Diver – photograph courtesy of Anthony Loaring.

Six species of Gull were recorded in January 2019, including Common Gull which is not common in Guernsey. It is worth noting here that many Herring Gull and other local Gull species have been ringed and there is a website where ring codes can be recorded and, with luck, it is possible to follow an individual's history. The more sightings that are recorded, the more detailed a picture can be built up. One Great Black-backed Gull was recently photographed at Rocquaine. His ring code revealed that he was ringed in June 2016 near Le Havre. There have been other sightings of the same bird near Cherbourg, Chouet, West Bexington in Dorset and again in Guernsey. If you are able to note down any gull ring codes, they can be recorded online at birdrings.digimap.gg



Common Gull – photograph courtesy of Anthony Loaring.

We have a wealth of sea life around our shores so it was very sad to read in the local news very recently that in the Gannet colonies around Alderney, 80% of the nests had plastic material in them. It is heart-breaking to see photographs of individual birds with their feet tangled up in plastic mesh. It is not unreasonable to assume that many of the Gannet chicks this year will be offered some plastic as food by their parents. Last week, a national paper reported that all 50 marine mammals that had been washed up recently in the UK had micro plastics in their gut. It's good to see that La Société encourages its members to take part in beach cleans and organises several such events each year.

There are many keen birdwatchers of all levels in Guernsey and many already belong to La Société. However, some of the indoor meetings for this section have been poorly attended in recent years. Chris Mourant puts in a lot of work as Secretary, helping to organise outdoor meetings in the summer, including a boat trip around Jethou and the Humps. Anyone who is new to La Société is very welcome: meetings are held on the first Thursday of every month. Details are on our website: guernseybirds.org.gg which also has lots of information about local birding.

Julie Davis

Forthcoming Event

Thursday 7th March, Ornithology talk entitled "Osprey's Home and Away" by Paul Stammers. 7.30pm in the Harry Bound Room at Les Cotils. Free to Société Members, £5 to non-members payable on the door.

Zoology

Charlie Le Marquand has just returned to the island following her completion of an MRes in Ecology, Evolution and Conservation at Imperial College London and a BSc Hons in Zoology at Swansea University.

She is excited to be taking on the position of Zoology Section Secretary and hopes that the section will be able to contribute to environmental projects on the island.

The first section meeting will be held on Saturday 16th March at 2.30pm in the Section room at the Candie office to introduce Charlie and discuss plans for the section.

Please e-mail zoology@societe.org.gg if you hope to attend the meeting or if you would like to be put on the Section mailing list.

Guernsey Hedgehog Survey

In the summer of 2016 I undertook a study of Guernsey's hedgehogs as part of my university degree in Zoology. I wanted to look at their distribution on the island and investigate any habitat preferences they may have.

What makes Guernsey hedgehogs interesting is that here they do not have any particular land predators. In the UK badgers are intraguild predators of hedgehogs. This means that as well as eating them they also compete with them for food such as earthworms and other insects.

My project had two parts: to complete fieldwork, using non-invasive hedgehog footprint tunnels, and to collect records of hedgehog sightings from islanders.

The hedgehog tunnels were placed in two different habitat types: pastureland and the dune grassland of L'Ancrese Common. James Watts of Meadow Court Farm and the Vale Commons Council very kindly allowed me to use their land.



Tunnels were checked for footprints every morning that they were out to top up food, check there was still enough charcoal paste and to put in fresh paper if there were any footprints - photograph courtesy of Ross Le Marquand.

I sampled for four weeks, two weeks per site, alternating location each week. I had ten tunnels, which were placed in the same spot for both sampling periods. I chose edges of habitat, for example where path meets gorse, because hedgehogs have been reported to use edges to navigate and so were more likely to find the tunnels.

Inside them were two pieces of A4 paper at either end, followed by strips of charcoal paste with hedgehog food in the centre. The hedgehogs would enter, tread on the paste to get to the food, and leave footprints on their way back out.



Hog prints – photograph courtesy of Charlie Le Marquand.

The tunnels detected hedgehogs for all four weeks of the study, however there were more instances of hedgehog detection in dune grassland habitat than there were in pastureland. The first week at pastureland I detected hedgehogs 4% of the time, and in the second week 18%. On the dune grassland, the first week I detected hedgehogs 42% of the time and in the second week 52%.

This suggests hedgehogs prefer dune grassland habitat, which might be due to a more diverse range of plant species on offer, which attracts more insects. It was also interesting that for both locations the second week detected hedgehogs more often. This could mean repetition will improve the probability that the tunnels will detect hedgehog presence.

The second part was using hedgehog sightings reported to me by members of the public to plot a distribution map of hedgehogs in Guernsey. Islanders were incredibly helpful and sent in lots of records. I had 365 sightings for 2016 and these were reasonably spread out across the island, although more were found in the north and east of Guernsey.

I would like to thank everyone who sent in hedgehog records, it was such a big help and the second part of my project would not have been possible without islander sightings. I was amazed at how much interest there was in the project and it was great to be able to make Guernsey, and the unique environment our island offers, part of my work.

I will be giving a talk on this project on Saturday 20th April at 11am in the Frossard Theatre, Candie so do come along to find out more.

Charlie Le Marquand

Guernsey Biological Records Centre News by Elizabeth Sweet

2018 was a busy and exciting year for the Guernsey Biological Record Centre (GBRC)! In May we migrated to a new database mapping programme, DistmapsPro. This incorporates all the features of the original Distmaps but within ArcGIS Pro. The Record Centre's focus is the collection, management and interpretation of wildlife data to support the conservation, understanding and enjoyment of local biodiversity and we can now do this using the latest mapping technology.

Jane Gilmour began enjoying a well earned retirement at the end of June and I was appointed as the new manager towards the end of year. Growing up in Guernsey is a naturalist's paradise and led me to read Geology at Edinburgh. I completed my MSc. in Palaeobiology at Bristol before briefly returning to Guernsey. In 2008 I began working in Polar and Marine Science in Germany at the Alfred Wegener Institute, with a focus on interdisciplinary research, which I hope to apply in my new role. The photograph below was taken during a 3 month research trip to the Southern Ocean and Antarctica aboard RV Polarstern.



Inspecting Summer living quarters for visiting researchers to Neumeyer II

- photograph courtesy of Babette Bontes.

So what kind of records exactly do we want? In a nutshell – all of them! Of particular interest are the normal animals you see. I can almost guarantee people will tell me about a rare bird visiting Guernsey or a rare plant being discovered. The humble hedgehog, rabbit or rat? Not so much. If you'd like to find out more and why I am so interested in common biological records, please do come along to the talk I am giving on Saturday 2nd March 2019 at 11am, Frossard Theatre, Candie.

Our contact details are below and you can submit your records though e-mail or the form on our website:

**Guernsey Biological Records Centre, Old Tobacco Factory, La Ramée, St Peter Port
Guernsey, GY1 2ET**

Email: gsybiorec@cwgsy.net Tel. 01481 715799 www.biologicalrecordscentre.gov.gg

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Guernsey Conservation Volunteers	Angela Salmon	721163
Guernsey Meteorological Observatory	Martin Crozier	237766
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Le Cercle Français	Geoff Mahy	263029
Lé Coumité d'la Culture Guernésiaise	Dr Harry Tomlinson	255891
Guernsey Trees For Life	Andy McCutcheon	07781 110180
Plant Heritage (Guernsey Group)	Tattie Thompson	239444
The Alderney Society & Museum	Karen Hill	823222
The Guernsey Beekeepers' Association	Damian Harris	07911 721785
The Guernsey Botanical Trust	Ivan Le Tissier	07911 719115
The Guernsey Society	Michael Paul	253858
The Victor Hugo in Guernsey Society	Roy Bisson	07781 100296
WEA	Roy Bisson	07781 100296

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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In addition to the Section Secretaries being Council members, other Council members are: Jamie Hooper (co-opted), Helen Litchfield, Roy Bisson, Rodney Collenette, Angela Salmon and Alex Herschel.

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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