



La Société

For nature, history and science in Guernsey



Dartford-Warbler - Pleinmont, 2007. Photo courtesy of Barry Wells.

President's Report

As always, time flies by and next month will see the end of my two-year term as President of La Société. It has been truly enjoyable and a great privilege to work with the many people on Council and in the wider membership who make La Société the vibrant and beneficial organisation that it is. With Council's support, I will be proposing Donna Francis as the new President at the Annual General Meeting next month. Donna was in charge of the RSPB locally for 10 years until stepping down last year. She has a keen interest in many of the areas covered by La Société and I have every confidence that she will be an excellent custodian. The AGM will be held on Wednesday 18th March at 7.30pm in the Frossard Theatre. After the formalities, Barry Wells will be giving a presentation entitled **40 years of Guernsey Birding - A retrospective**. This will encompass a look back at the birds we have lost and those we have gained, and the reasons for those changes, as well as looking at the technological improvements in the way we birdwatch today. I do hope you are able to come along.

I am delighted to announce that La Société has applied for and been awarded a significant grant from the Guernsey Communication Foundation for us to employ an Education and Conservation Leader. The successful candidate will take primary school children on field trips and help them learn about the natural world. They will also organise corporate and volunteer work parties during the week to undertake conservation work both on our reserves and on public land. The grant will cover all of the salary for the first two years and three-quarters of it for the third year. The aim is to look for alternate sources of funding to enable this role to be sustainable in the long term.

An advertisement for the position will appear soon. We are immensely grateful to the Community Foundation for this fantastic opportunity to introduce nature conservation to many more islanders of all ages. It is also an opportunity to share the many skills and resources we have in La Société with a wider audience.

Two of the many events held over the past few months stood out for me. The first was a presentation held at Les Côtils by the Pesticide Free Forum. Many perspectives were aired, including by local farmer James Watts, and local ecologist Miranda Bane, who is currently based in the UK. If you missed the event, the website of the Pesticide Action Network has a handy page on Gardening Without Pesticides. Barry Wells writes in more detail about this valuable initiative in the following pages.

The second event was a short film shown in our theatre which beautifully captured the regeneration of a native New Zealand forest. Entitled 'Fools and Dreamers', it is available on YouTube and is well worth half an hour of your time.

After the success and popularity of Chris Packham's visit last year, this May we will be bringing over naturalist and TV presenter, Nick Baker. More details later in this newsletter. An up to date list of our events is always available on our website www.societe.org.gg.

As I write, we are in the process of acquiring further land at Pleinmont from longstanding member, Vic Froome. Vic is selling this important land to us to protect and conserve it for biodiversity and for future generations at a very advantageous price and I thank him for his generosity. Thank you also to you as a Member. Membership subscriptions, as well as legacies, enable us to make these land purchases and to maintain them into the future.

Thanks also go to Ogier LLP Guernsey for their donation of £1500 to the Bat Section and to Waitrose for their donation of £500 to the Marine Biology Section.

If you'd like to get more involved with La Société, we currently have several vacancies for volunteers. After putting in many years of work establishing, managing and promoting the Conservation Herd, Julia Henney is stepping down and is looking for someone to take over from her. If you are interested in managing the steers and the volunteers of the Conservation Herd project or getting involved in other ways, please email Julia Henney at conservationherd@societe.org.gg.

I would like to thank David Le Conte for his meticulous work as our Archivist for the last four years. He too is stepping down and later in this newsletter you will find details about the position should you feel this is something you might like to take on.

Finally, the Juniors are in need of an enthusiastic leader. The post would involve liaising with Nature Guernsey and other section Secretaries to arrange weekend outings/events suitable for children throughout the year.

If you think you can assist with any of these voluntary roles, or would just like more information or a chat, Kate Lee, our secretary, is available Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday mornings at Candie and she would be delighted to hear from you. Alternatively you can email Kate at secretary@societe.org.gg.

I shall be moving on into different things, but whichever way I go, our wonderful natural environment will always be a priority for me, as will my support for La Société and the valuable work it does.

Yvonne Burford

AGM 2020

The AGM will be held at Candie in the Frossard Theatre on Wednesday 18th March beginning at 7.30pm for the purpose of transacting the following business:

- (a) To hear the report of the outgoing President, Yvonne Burford.
- (b) To elect a President. One nomination for President has been received, Donna Francis is proposed by Yvonne Burford and seconded by Barry Wells. Any other nominations for President should be sent to the Secretary, supported by a seconder, to reach her by Thursday 5th March 2020.
- (c) To elect a Vice-President. One nomination for Vice-President has been received, Julia Henney is proposed by Yvonne Burford and seconded by Barry Wells. Any other nominations for Vice-President should be sent to the Secretary, supported by a seconder, to reach her by Thursday 5th March 2020.
- (d) To elect a Treasurer. One nomination for Treasurer has been received. Dave Christopher is proposed by Yvonne Burford and seconded by Barry Wells. Any other nominations for Treasurer should be sent to the Secretary, supported by a seconder, to reach her by Thursday 5th March 2020.
- (e) To receive the annual statement of accounts.
- (f) To elect the officers and members of the Council. Two Ordinary Members of Council are eligible for re-election, Roy Bisson and Alex Herschel. Donna Francis is stepping down. There are two vacancies for Ordinary Members of Council. Two nominations for Ordinary Members have been received. Colin Spicer is proposed by Yvonne Burford and seconded by Barry Wells. Barry Wells has been proposed by Yvonne Burford and seconded by Kate Lee.

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 Thursday 5th March 2020.

- (g) To appoint accountants.
- (h) 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 Thursday 5th March 2020.

A full agenda together with the minutes of the last meeting and a copy of the 2019 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 Friday 6th March 2020.

After the AGM there will be a short break, during which refreshments will be served. Then there will be a presentation by Barry Wells entitled “40 years of Guernsey Birding - a retrospective”.

2018 Transactions

The 2018 Transactions (with an Ivy Bee on the front cover) are now available for collection from Candie on a Tuesday/Thursday or Saturday morning between 10am and 11.30am. As parking at Candie can be difficult on a weekday we are offering Members the chance to collect their Transactions from the Family History Research room at the Russels, Les Cotils. They are open the first and third Saturday of the month between 10am and noon.

If you no longer require Transactions or would prefer to download them from the website kindly email secretary@societe.org.gg. If you are unable to get to Candie or the Russels please advise us.

Upcoming Events

Light, Dark and Living in Antarctica

Illustrated talk by Jo Arendt, PhD, FRCPath, Dr h c, FRSB
Professor Emeritus, University of Surrey

Saturday 7th March 2020 at 11am

Frossard Theatre, Candie Gardens, St Peter Port

Dr Arendt will talk about her research on the importance of light to human health, especially to sleep and circadian rhythms, on the British Antarctic Survey Base of Halley



Booking essential due to limited seating

Email: secretary@societe.org.gg

Free to La Société members
£5 for non-members



La Société

For nature, history and science in Guernsey

THE TANGLED HEDGE

Finding a new kind of aesthetic or learning to be a little less 'tidy'. Thursday 21st May, 7pm at St. James.

La Société's Pollinator Project is delighted to bring Nick Baker to Guernsey. When it comes to presenting wildlife Nick Baker is the total package – an edgy, exciting TV presenter with incredible drive and passion. His experience encompasses expeditions to the wildest parts of the planet in search of weird, bizarre and incredible creatures. Nick is known as an engaging speaker and his passion for his subject shines through.

Nick explores how we change the way we view and value nature and in turn learn to live with nature, lighten our touch and integrate new values into our lives. He'll explore the benefits it can bring to individuals, society and biodiversity and practical ways to go about it. The talk will be illustrated with examples of some of the species that benefit and plenty of first hand anecdotes and stories!

Ticket prices

Adults – £12.50 (*La Société members discounted price £8.50*)

Children – £7.50 (*La Société members discounted price £5.00*)

Tickets will be available from the box office (<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/o/st-james-17496376271>) on 24th February.

Honorary Archivist Vacancy

I have been La Société's Librarian and Archivist for the past four years, and am now hoping to pass the position on to another member, so please consider whether you would like to be considered for this honorary post, which requires no previous library experience.

The library, housed on the upper level of the Section Room, has some 500 volumes covering mostly the history of Guernsey and the other Channel Islands, not including the many books which are the responsibility of individual Sections. In my time in the position I have created a complete new Library catalogue (in Excel format), reshelved all the books, relabelled the shelves, moved Sections' books to The Russels, deposited a large number of documents in La Société's archives held by Island Archives, donated a few volumes which are not of interest to La Société to the Priaulx Library, and provided several duplicates to La Société's book sale.

The position should, therefore, require someone to keep the catalogue and shelving up to date, and answer occasional queries. Access to the Library and loans to members are handled by the Secretary. Access to the archives, which are fully catalogued, can be arranged direct with Island Archives.

Kindly contact our Secretary Kate Lee email secretary@societe.org.gg if you are interested in this post.

David Le Conte



Nick Baker. Photo courtesy of Juliette Mills.

Section Reports

Archaeology

Last October we returned to Les Canichers, a site in a garden behind the Swan Pub first excavated in 2001. The Section know the site as ‘the pigeon house’ and it was rather unpleasant to work on since it was next to two derelict houses which had been occupied by pigeons for many years.

We were originally drawn to the site because of its proximity to the Roman settlement at La Plaiderie, just 50 metres to the south-west. During the first excavation a few Roman pot sherds were found in deposits also containing a lot of briquetage (rough pottery associated with salt-making and dating from the Iron Age and Roman period), however the main discovery was that of a large stone feature containing prehistoric pottery and flint. The shape and extent of this feature could not be determined because the trench was too small, but it clearly had structural elements. At the time we interpreted it as a cairn, probably associated with land clearance for early agriculture.



Looking west across the 2019 trench with two metre pole. The stones missing from the central area were removed during the earlier excavation; beneath is a dark soil and then the natural fractured rock.

Photo courtesy of Philip de Jersey.

Our recent return to the site, almost twenty years later, came about because the two derelict houses were to be demolished and a car park built over our earlier trench. Once the demolition was complete we were able to clean up the original trench which had been left open since the first excavation. We extended the original trench to the north and west, but were not able to go far because of the limited space. In this extension we found more of the cairn and once the whole thing was cleaned up two clear lines of stones, looking very much like a wall, could be seen running through it. This apparent wall was about 80 cm wide, followed the line of the contour and ran for at least five metres before ending at its north-east end in a possible return. On the north-west (or uphill) side of the ‘wall’ the stones were small, tightly packed and appeared to form a platform at least two metres wide; on the south-east (or downhill) side the stones fell away with the gradient and were a mixture of sizes, some being very large, this looked more like tumble. We removed a section through the cairn to examine its construction and recovered prehistoric pottery and flint both within and beneath it. This included a very fine blade in Cinglais flint, an import from Normandy typically traded in the Neolithic period around 4000BC. However a charcoal sample from beneath the cairn gave a radiocarbon date of about 650BC – in the Iron Age.

Interpreting the stone structure is difficult, we only saw a section of it and it was very disturbed. It may have been a platform constructed into the slope of this small valley, a stream would have run just below it (where Le Truchot is now) and flowed out to the sea around a hundred metres away. It could have had a practical function perhaps associated with some sort of industrial process. Alternatively it may be part of a once much larger monument, a cairn of ritual function. The site is readily visible from the harbour and this would certainly have been utilised in prehistory. Dating the structure is also difficult, the finds indicate a Neolithic date, but the radiocarbon date came out as Iron Age. A big difference, and thought is being given to this. We are still studying the finds and writing up the site and a full report will appear in a future Transactions.

If you would like to know more about the site, a series of short videos was made during the excavations and these can be found on You Tube by searching 'Canichers'.

Finally I would like to report that I will be away from February until May and Soo Wellfair has very kindly volunteered to stand in as Secretary during my absence, she can be contacted at archaeology@societe.org.gg. Section activities will be taking place as normal and to find out more please contact Soo or Phil de Jersey (Philip.dejersey@gov.gg).



The Cinglais flint blade. Photo courtesy of Tanya Walls.

Astronomy

David Le Conte, FRAS joined the Astronomy Section in 1978, following a distinguished career in astronomy. David gained his degree and worked at the Royal Observatory in Edinburgh, afterwards moving to Aberystwyth in Wales where his research on the development of astronomical equipment led him in 1964 to work for the Smithsonian Institute in the USA on NASA's Space Program, tracking satellites with optics and lasers. While working as the manager of the Smithsonian Institution's Astrophysical Observing Station in Maui, Hawaii, David photographed one of mankind's momentous events, the Apollo 8 trans-lunar injection (TLI) rocket burn which sent Apollo 8 out of Earth orbit and on its journey to the Moon on 21st December 1968. Later David became Executive Director of the Smithsonian Institution's Research Foundation in Washington and his last appointment before returning to Guernsey was as a department manager at Kitt Peak National Observatory in Arizona.



David Le Conte c. 1966 with a Baker-Nunn camera in Florida, the type used to photograph Apollo 8's TLI.
Photo courtesy of David Le Conte.

As a member of the Astronomy Section David has held various Committee posts over a span of 35 years, Secretary, Editor of the Sagittarius Newsletter and Public Relations Officer along with being Course Moderator for 34 years on the very popular annual WEA Stargazing. David has been integral to the educational and public outreach programmes, as well as giving lectures on astronomy to various groups and assisting students in astronomy activities for their Duke of Edinburgh Award. He has also been President of La Société Guernesiaise and more recently, Archivist and Librarian. At this year's Annual Business Meeting in January David announced his retirement from all official duties and the Astronomy Section committee and members would like to thank him for his enthusiasm over the years in encouraging and promoting astronomy, both within the club and the wider community.

In 1987 the Astronomy Section acquired their own telescope, a second hand 11-inch Celestron Schmidt-Cassegrain which allowed the Section to expand its observing capabilities under the supervision of founding member Geoff Falla. This February the Celestron telescope was retired from service and has been donated to a sixth form pupil at the Grammar School who is planning to study astronomy at university, and with the aid of staff it will be refurbished as a project. The Astronomy Section have replaced it with a portable 12-inch computerised GOTO Skywatcher Dobsonian which will be a significant asset for members to use and on the public and educational outreach programs.

The Section rounded off its public outreach program with two events. A Nature Guernsey Halloween - themed open evening which included the Bat and Entomology Sections. There were three stands outside in the car park, together with an astronomy talk in the club room and a presentation of deep space astronomy in the telescope building. There were two well attended bat walks led by Charles Hurford and a wide selection of moths and insects presented by Andy Marquis and Lesley Bourgaise. Visitors could also try their hand at recognising star constellations and checking star maps.

The final public open event was a rare astronomical occurrence, the transit of the planet Mercury across the Sun's disc on November 11th. The weather was reasonably favourable with members watching the event until sunset and the public being invited to view the transit from 1pm to 2pm. A variety of telescopes were available for viewing the transit, fitted with special solar filters, one with a Herschel Wedge and a hydrogen alpha solar scope. The event was well attended and members acquired a selection of photographs. The next transit will not be until November 13th, 2032.

We are currently hosting various visiting schools and groups at the Observatory while we have early sunsets. Typically, the visits include a lecture and telescopic observing. The visiting groups have included Elizabeth College Science Club, 8th Guernsey Cubs, Castel year 5, Grammar School year 13 Physics group and Notre Dame years 1 and 2. We have further visits planned by Le Rondin, Hautes Capelles, La Houquette and the 9th Scouts during the next few weeks.

Finally, we are about to start a 5-week Stargazing Course which filled up within 24 hours of advertising it. Since we have had such an overwhelming response, we are considering running a second event in early Spring.

Jean Dean



Transit of Mercury across the Sun's disc, November 11th 2019.

Photo courtesy of David Le Conte.

Bat Section

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

If you find an injured bat please contact the GSPCA direct on 257261 or 07781 104082 (24 hour emergency). Any bat queries can be sent by e-mail to charleshurford@hotmail.com

Botany

Wet and windy weather ruled Autumn in 2019. Our October meeting saw a few hardy souls meeting at Salerie corner to wander up through the back lanes of St Peter Port. Notable finds were Sea Spleenwort, *Asplenium marinum*, growing on the sea wall. Further up into Les Canichers we were pleased to find both Maidenhair Spleenwort, *Asplenium trichomanes*, and Maidenhair fern, *Adiantum capillus-veneris*, growing on the same wall. A new location for Maidenhair fern. Here too was Brookweed, *Samolus valerandi*, taking advantage of a damp patch to flourish in an unexpected location.



Sea Spleenwort, *Asplenium marinum*, as we are familiar with it growing on our sea walls. Photo courtesy of Helen Litchfield.



Sea Spleenwort, Herbarium specimen collected by Ms Dawber in 1887. Photo courtesy of Helen Litchfield.

Did it grow bigger 120 years ago or is the fact that she collected it from a cave relevant? If so, how did she access a cave between Bon Repos and Pleinmont?

November's visit to Le Grand Pré was postponed for a week due to foul weather. The second week was not much better but waterproofs were donned and the hardy few braved it. Areas of reed bed have been cleared and a good variety of plants have re-appeared. Not least of which was the Celery-leaved Buttercup, *Ranunculus scleratus*. Further along, Water-plantain, *Alisma plantago-aquatica*, has appeared amongst the willows. We will watch with interest to see how the newly cleared areas develop.

December saw us meeting at Saumarez Manor. We were not to know it then, but this was to be the last time that Carolyn Helyar would join us to share her passion and extensive knowledge. I cannot write this without acknowledging the shock and grief felt by our group at her sudden passing. We are debating how best to acknowledge her work and share the invaluable documenting of trees, ferns and Arums in Guernsey that Carolyn and Rob carried out. Just recently Carolyn correctly identified Guernsey Elm, *Ulmus x hollandica* var. *insularis* growing in a hedgerow at Les Domaines. St Saviours. In our new 'Checklist of Guernsey Plants' it is marked as "probably extinct."

Some of the less common, native species noted at Saumarez Manor were Feverfew, *Tanacetum parthenium*, Giant Butterbur, *Petasites japonicus* and Large-flowered Evening-primrose, *Oenothera glazioviana*.

The January meeting saw us take part in the Botanical Society of Britain and Ireland's New Year Plant Hunt. We chose Petit Bôt as our location, hoping the South facing Cliffs and Woodland Habitats would give us the greatest possible score. It was not to be. UK wide, the microclimates and more diverse species of inner cities beat our offering of 24 hands down. We were pleased to see that records were also submitted from Jerbourg Headland.

The Botany Section are always interested in surveying new areas, so if you have an area of land that has been managed with conservation in mind, then please don't hesitate to email

botany@societe.gg.

Helen Litchfield

Botany Walks

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

St Saviour's Reservoir – Saturday 7th March - 2:00pm - 3:30 pm

Please meet at St Saviour's Water Reservoir car park (Perry's map reference Page 21 G1) on Rue a L'Or at 2pm on Saturday 7th March. Reachable on Bus route 61.

Pulias Pond And Les Vardes Quarry Nature Walk – Saturday 4th April - 2:00pm - 3:30pm

The Botany Section walk will begin at Pulias Pond at 2pm on Saturday 4th April and proceed to Les Vardes Quarry Nature Walk (Perry's map reference Page 33 G4).

Le Catrioroc Headland – Saturday 2nd May - 2:00pm - 3:30pm

The walk will begin at 2pm on Saturday 2nd May. Please meet at the headland car park (Perry's map reference Page 12 4D). Location reachable via bus routes: 91, 111

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

Join the Botany Section's Facebook page to 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/>

Family History

The Family History Research Room at the Russels, Les Cotils is still on its winter opening times of 10am until 12noon on the first and third Saturdays of each month everyone is welcome to come along and do some research. If you need help, we are happy to help you knock down that “brick wall”.

Our first meeting of the year will be on Saturday 25th April at 11am in The Frossard Theatre, Candie and the speaker is Trevor Cooper on “Mansions, Manor and Merchant Houses”, based on his book.

On Saturday 23rd May at 11am there will be a talk by Keith Pike entitled “Policing in Guernsey before 1920”, also in the Frossard Theatre, Candie.

Bookings for these talks will be taken as they will be popular so make sure you email Maria van der Tang on researchenquiries@hotmail.co.uk to book your seat. Family History and La Société Members will have priority before the talks are advertised to the public. Bookings will be taken at the end of March for the April talk and end of April for the May talk, so please make sure you let me know, and kindly put the date in your diary so that you don't forget and the seat is left empty.

We are now looking for articles for our 2020 Journals, so if you have a family story you would like to have published in the Journal then please let us have it as soon as possible. You can email your article to the above address or post to PO Box 314, St Peter Port, Guernsey, GY1 3TG.

Finally, just to let all family history members know that my predecessor Edith Le Patourel had a fall on the 27th December in her home, climbing up a ladder at the age of 92, to fix something in her window. She fell hit her head, ruptured her eyeball and had to have emergency surgery which then caused her to have a mini stroke. Unfortunately Edith damaged her good eye as the other one had hardly any vision, so she is now registered with severe vision impaired. Edith is still in hospital and now on the rehab ward. I will keep you updated as time goes on. We wish her well.

Maria van der Tang

Any general Family History queries should be addressed to The Family History Section, PO Box 314, St Peter Port, Guernsey GY1 3TG. Alternatively email Maria van der Tang researchenquiries@hotmail.co.uk

Historic Buildings

Events

Saturday 22nd February a talk entitled “The Segregation of Space in 15th- and 16th-century Churches” by John McCormack, 7.30pm, Frossard Theatre, Candie.

Saturday 14th March a talk entitled “The Evidence for Lost Timber-framing in Medieval Farmhouses” by John McCormack, 7.30pm, Frossard Theatre, Candie.

Saturday 28th March a talk entitled “When were Tourelle Staircases First Built, and When Did They Die Out?” by John McCormack, 7.30pm, Frossard Theatre, Candie.

Saturday 11th April a talk entitled “Evolution of Fireplace Design, 13th Century to 18th Century” by John McCormack, 7.30pm, Frossard Theatre, Candie.

Saturday 2nd May a visit to St. Stephen’s church, led by Rosalyne Le Huray at 2.30pm.

New members are always very welcome to attend, but should contact John McCormack (tel. 720303; e-mail mrjam@cwgsy.net) beforehand in case of alterations or final instructions. Those attending regularly should kindly ensure that they are already members of La Société, and are asked for an annual payment to the Section of £10 at the beginning of each year: this covers petty cash items.

Ornithology

Events

October 2019 saw the last of Nature Guernsey’s outdoor events for the year. The bird ringing demonstration attracted a sizeable crowd at Pleinmont. Trevor Bourgaize put up his mist nets and ably demonstrated the deftness of touch needed by a ringer, together with meticulous record keeping - helped by his wife, Lesley. The photograph shows a Redwing. These autumn migrants, members of the thrush family, are identifiable by the pale stripe over the eye and rufous plumage under the wing. It was special to see one so close as they usually move off when people are around.

Guernsey has bird ringing records which date back to the mid 1940s. The dedication of a small group of island ringers over the years has provided a wealth of information. Each ring has its own coded information about when and where the bird was ringed. If a bird flies into a mist net, it is quickly recovered and bagged so it is not distressed. As soon as the ringing, measuring and weighing is completed they are released as the welfare of the bird is paramount. The data from recoveries - either the bird may be caught by another ringer, or they may be photographed with the ring code visible or the ring is retrieved from a dead bird - gives valuable information about bird movements and bird populations. Margaret and Rich Austin have, for many years, done a fantastic job of collating all the island’s ringing information which is published in the Transactions. It is valuable work, long may it continue.



Trevor measuring the wing length of a Redwing.

Photo courtesy of Julie Davis.

Gulls

There has been a lot of talk about the effect the closure of the tip at Mont Cuet has had on our gull population - mainly Herring Gull. The 2019 breeding season was little short of disastrous with very few young birds fledging successfully. Some think the gulls that relied on the tip for food were generally in poor condition and would not have bred anyway and that 2019 was just one of those occasional years when breeding fails. The habits of the gulls have changed over the past year and the tip is now deserted as the birds learn to find other food sources. It would appear that the population is reducing as some birds fail to adapt or to find enough food. It is perhaps surprising to learn that the Herring Gull is red-listed as their numbers in Britain and Europe are falling. Many people look on the gulls as a pest but the problems associated with them are created by people rather than the gulls themselves.

Interesting Sightings

The Royal Tern was seen again just before Christmas. A Long-tailed Duck was at Vazon for a few days in early January. Purple Sandpipers were seen at Jaonneuse in November and again in January for at least ten days. A rusty-coloured Whooper Swan stayed in the Colin Best Nature Reserve for several weeks. My personal favourites were the Red-Breasted Mergansers, a species of saw-billed



Red-Breasted Merganser. Photo courtesy of Adrian Bott.

The Ornithology Section will hold monthly outdoor guided walks from March through to November and everyone is very welcome to come along. These are not just for experienced bird watchers. If birdwatching is a new interest we would be delighted to see you. It is an excellent way to find 'hidden Guernsey'. There will also be the opportunity to join members on day trips to Herm and Sark during the spring migration.

Julie Davis

Projects

Conservation Herd

On Sunday 26th January the Conservation Herd sadly lost Charles, the founding member of the conservation herd. He died quite suddenly from a condition he had had from a calf. He was a gentle giant who, together with David, led the Conservation Herd for 6 years and will be missed by all the volunteers who worked with him.

After six years of working with the Conservation Herd I have taken the decision to step down as Herd manager. It has been a wonderful and fulfilling role which I feel privileged to have held and I am sure the next person who takes on management of the herd will be able to shape and develop the herd to meet the conservation challenges the island faces.

The herd manager is responsible for the welfare of the animals; ensuring they have enough food, water and are safe and secure. Together with a team of volunteers, they undertake



Charles as a calf. Photo courtesy of the Herd volunteers.

fencing and move the cattle. Other tasks include arranging the cutting and baling of hay for winter feed, helping to rear young calves, arranging the slaughter, butcher and sale of beef annually, maintaining accounts, fundraising, applying for charitable grants and promoting the work of the Herd.

A job description for the Herd Manager is available on our website - if you are interested in this role, or getting involved with the Herd in any capacity, we would be delighted to hear from you. Please email conservationherd@societe.org.gg.

Pollinator Project

Pesticide Free Guernsey Forum – held in October 2019

One of the Pollinator Project's main aims is to discourage the use of pesticides in gardens and other open spaces. Evidence continues to grow about the negative impact caused by the various chemicals we use to manage our land, both to our own health and to the environment on which we ultimately depend.

Pesticides impact nearly all life on Earth. By their very nature, pesticides are designed to kill pests. They include a wide range of compounds including herbicides (designed to kill plants), insecticides, fungicides, rodenticides, molluscicides and nematicides, but also include plant growth regulators, defoliants and desiccants.

They are mainly used in the growing of agricultural crops and commercial plants, but are also used in our communities, homes and gardens.

The Pollinator Project would ideally like to see a future where Guernsey is pesticide free, or predominately uses alternative and healthier methods to grow crops and plants, and to control pests and weeds.

But nothing will fundamentally change without feasible alternatives. What are the current alternatives? Are they any better? And can our community carry on 'business as usual' using these alternatives? What would this mean practically for Guernsey?

To answer these questions the Pollinator Project hosted two forums at Les Cotils, St. Peter Port, on Wednesday 23rd October 2019. We were joined by over 100 people featuring a range of stakeholders including a good number of States Deputies and key civil servants, as well as representatives from the utility companies, NGOs, landscape contractors, sports facilities, garden centres, etc who contributed their thoughts and views.

Presentations were made by two speakers from the UK who have direct experience of either operating pesticide free or working with councils and government bodies to switch to alternatives.

The first, Nick Mole, is Policy Officer at Pesticide Action Network (PAN UK) which is the UK charity focused on tackling the problems caused by pesticides and promoting safe and sustainable alternatives in agriculture, urban areas, homes and gardens.

Our second speaker was Rosi Rollings who has recently turned her passion and love of gardening, plant propagation and bees into a business that supplies pesticide and peat free plants and a consultancy service specifically to support pollinator populations.

A number of local contributors also joined us to offer a Guernsey perspective -

- John Woodward who has extensive experience is in general horticulture with a particular interest in glasshouse crops;
- Julia Henney, our Biodiversity Education Officer and founder of the Guernsey Conservation Herd; and
- James Watts who has been looking after an award winning herd of 156 'Guernseys' at their home, Meadow Court Farm, and eloquently shared the challenges of managing a Guernsey farm sustainably with the unique challenges faced - such as small scale/fragmented fields/cost etc.

Our last speaker was Miranda Bane, a local ecologist who studied Natural Sciences at Bath, followed by PhD in Pollinator Ecology with her main focus on Bumblebees and the role they play in the larger community of pollinators and plants. Miranda is hoping to return to Guernsey this summer, to carry out a survey in the Bailiwick, which will give us some baseline data on pollinating insects, and she will then monitor changes as we reduce our reliance on pesticides. We could be the first island in the world to monitor the transition to pesticide free land management and our progress will be followed by others keen to do likewise.



From left to right: Gordon Steele (moderator); Nick Mole of Pesticide Action Network UK; John Woodward of Floral Guernsey; Dr Miranda Bane, bee ecologist; Barry Wells of The Pollinator Project; Rosi Rollings of Rosibee plants for bees; and Julia Henney, Guernsey Biodiversity Education Officer. Photo courtesy of Juliette Mills.

The forums were a great success and gave us a deeper understanding of the issues surrounding the use of pesticides. This was a valuable opportunity to learn how various sections of our community use pesticides, their reliance on them for some things, but the general acceptance from those present that pesticides cause harm and need to be replaced by more sustainable alternatives in the short to medium future - especially in small communities such as ours.

The Pollinator Project has now engaged with Guernsey's Environment and Infrastructure Committee to set an agenda for moving the island towards a pesticide free status. We are also supporting GROW Ltd who are working with the Pollinator Project to produce pesticide free, pollinator friendly plants in Guernsey both for our project and for sale to the general public.

Finally we are hoping to introduce a "Pesticide Amnesty" this year, so that gardeners and businesses can dispose of unwanted chemicals safely, and can get advice on alternative solutions.

Barry Wells



La Société Guernesiaise Bursary 2020

La Société Guernesiaise has established a new annual bursary for local students and researchers

The £1,000 bursary will support a student who is studying or researching biodiversity & conservation of the natural environment



To determine eligibility and to apply for the bursary please visit La Société's website

<https://societe.org.gg/wp/la-societe-guernesiaise-bursary-2020/>

Please email: science@societe.org.gg for further information

Guernsey Biological Records Centre 2019 Round Up



Environment Guernsey
Environmental contracting & consulting

2019 has been an incredible year. It kicked off with ormer tagging and the discovery of maerl and extensive seagrass beds down at Longue Hougue. From spring and throughout the summer Julie Davis conducted our annual black-backed meadow ant, *Formica pratensis*, survey, tramping miles and miles of cliff to mark out the nests and check their status. We just about had time to catch our breath for Guernsey's first ever BioBlitz in May with Chris Packham. Seasearch ran a marine observer course, before we spent much of the summer on dolphin surveying.

As the summer drew to a close, we moved office, from our historic location at the Old Tobacco Factory where the Cadastre and Digimap have been so welcoming, up to Raymond Falla House. Our phone number will be changing to 01481 233571 shortly. Our new office has allowed us to expand and upgrade office equipment, including a new computer and we have big plans for the coming years. This move would not have been possible without the support of Agriculture, Countryside and Land Management Services.

The Record Centre would not be able to operate as it does without the expertise of local naturalists in La Société and our Citizen Scientists so we want to say a heartfelt THANK YOU to all of you and our incredible volunteers; Julie Davis, Mary Simmons, Karen Riddle, Nicky Harris, Bella Dean, Bea Coates and Charlotte Burgoine – our intern who has produced some great information sheets on some of our native butterflies.

We've had some fantastic sightings in Guernsey this summer including scaly crickets, vast schools of Atlantic blue fin tuna, Risso's dolphins, a death's-head hawkmoth, Guernsey's first ever pallid harrier, tadpole fish, octopus, bumper numbers of fungi, Portuguese man-of-war siphonophores and more. Thank you to everyone who has submitted records, and our dedicated Recorders whose passion, knowledge and dedication are truly inspiring.



Our research nook, archive and library office is starting to take shape. This small office will be made available to visiting researchers, students and those interested in undertaking local research. Photo courtesy of Elizabeth Sweet.

Speaking of dolphins, this year saw the launch of the DolFin ID project, spearheaded by Nicky Harris. We won Runner Up at the 2019 Insurance Corporation Conservation Awards, were awarded £1,000 from the Condor Community Fund and have just received £2,500 from Waitrose and Partners Environmental Focus Fund. Trident Ferries supported our surveying with return tickets to Herm. The money received allowed us to purchase binoculars and subsidise boat surveying trips for the public. We'll be holding regular trips in 2020 and putting on training courses for those who wish to become regular surveyors. More will be announced in the next couple of months. Many, many thanks to all of our supporters, especially Richard Seagar who not only ran the boat trips but was effectively deputised as part of the project sharing his experience and tales of marine observations.



Funding came in Giant cheque form from Waitrose and Partners. Photo courtesy of Nicky Harris.

Organising the BioBlitz was our first big collaboration as part of the Biodiversity Partnership Group in 2019. Its success is thanks to the hard work of all involved, in particular the other organisers, Julia Henney, Biodiversity Education Officer, and Laura Bampton, Marine Biology Section Secretary of La Société. Other events included helping out with scaly cricket trapping at Spur Point, manning a stand at Seafront Sunday, the Big Geekend and Fragile Planet event hosted by the Guernsey Arts Commission. We attended Scotland's International Marine Plastics conference in February, the Inter-Island Environment Meeting (IIEEM) in Alderney in September, the National Biodiversity Network Annual Conference and the Jersey Biodiversity Conference in November.

Organising the BioBlitz was our first big collaboration as part of the Biodiversity Partnership Group in 2019. Its success is thanks to the hard work of all involved, in particular the other organisers, Julia Henney, Biodiversity Education Officer, and Laura Bampton, Marine Biology Section Secretary of La Société. Other events included helping out with scaly cricket trapping at Spur Point, manning a stand at Seafront Sunday, the Big Geekend and Fragile Planet event hosted by the Guernsey Arts Commission. We attended Scotland's International Marine Plastics conference in February, the Inter-Island Environment Meeting (IIEM) in Alderney in September, the National Biodiversity Network Annual Conference and the Jersey Biodiversity Conference in November.

Wait, there's more! 2019 saw a marked increase in media engagement in both print and interviews, from the more mundane question - what is the Biological Records Centre? To the topical - are jellyfish numbers on the rise? To the fantastic - the mystery video, what is it? A shark? A dolphin? No, the experts confirmed it was tuna.



*We currently have two dedicated desktop work stations set up with additional desk space for a further 2 people.
Photo courtesy of Elizabeth Sweet.*

Record Centre Contact Information:

Manager: Elizabeth Sweet
Tel: 01481 233571
E-mail: gsybiorec@cwgsy.net /
Website: www.biologicalrecordscentre.gov.gg/
Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/GuernseyBRC/>

Footnote:

- The Guernsey Biological Records Centre (GBRC) is run by Environment Guernsey on behalf of the two partners; La Société Guernesiaise and the States of Guernsey. It collates, manages and stores data that describes our local biodiversity and forms an evidence base to which decision makers can refer when making decisions which may impact on wildlife or wildlife habitat.
- The Biodiversity Partnership Group is made up of local environmental NGO's and States of Guernsey Agriculture, Countryside and Land Management Services. The Biodiversity Partnership advises on, and supports the implementation of, the Biodiversity Strategy.

Elizabeth Sweet

Guernsey Museum - Guernesiais Lessons – all welcome

Tuesday & Wednesday lunchtimes (12 o'clock) in La Société Guernesiaise Section Room at Candie Museum – Beginners and Elementary levels, £25 for series of 6 lessons (£20 for Discovery Card holders).

We are looking out for people to join our fun group for 'Rememberers' which also take place on Wednesday at 1.45pm.

'Rememberers is a friendly gathering for those who once spoke Guernesiais and who may feel out of practice. The hope is that 'Rememberers' will grow more confident and improve their language skills in this supportive space where speaking the language at whatever level is encouraged. The group it is led by 'facilitator' Yan Marquis, who guides and leads on conversation topics and opens discussions.' Entry is free.

If you would like to come along to any of the above, please let Yan know on janmarquis@suremail.gg

Plant Heritage Events 2020

Saturday 4th April 9am - 12noon: Plant Heritage Plant Stall at Sausmarez Manor Farmers Market.
Bank Holiday Monday 25th May at 10am: Giant Heritage Giant Plant Sale at Sausmarez Manor.

The Plant Heritage annual subscription is £12 & includes other events & benefits. Please contact me if you would like further information - Tattie Thompson - Events Secretary email kdt@cwgsy.net tel.239444.

Associated Groups

Alderney Wildlife Trust	Roland Gauvain	822935
Blue Dolphins Sub-Aqua Club		bluedolphinssac@gmail.com
Channel Islands Occupation Society (Gsy)	Liz Boxall	candielodge@cwgsy.net
Friends of the Priaux Library	Jenny Tasker	jenny@taskeronline.com
Guernsey Conservation Volunteers	Angela Salmon	721163
Guernsey Meteorological Observatory	Peter de la Mare	237766
G.S.P.C.A	Steve Byrne	257261
La Société Serquaise	Jo Birch	832788
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
Royal Society of Biology (<i>local members group</i>)	Jo Arendt	arendtjo@g.mail.com
The Alderney Society & Museum	Karen Hill	823222
The Guernsey Beekeepers' Association	Damian Harris	07911 721785
The Guernsey Botanical Trust	Cathy Morgan	07911 732912
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.

Guernsey Tobacco Factory,
La Ramée,
St Peter Port,
Guernsey,
C.I., GY1 2ET



Environment Guernsey
Environmental contracting & consulting

Tel: (07781) 166924

Email: jamie.hooper@cwgsy.net
gsybiorec@cwgsy.net

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.

Officers & Council Members

Title:	Name:	Telephone:	Email:
Officers:			
President	Yvonne Burford	07781 146737	president@societe.org.gg
Vice President	Barry Wells	235634	bgw247@me.com
Immediate Past President	Dr Andrew Casebow	722245	
Secretary	Kate Lee	235380	secretary@societe.org.gg
Honorary Treasurer	David Cranch	07781 120915	treasurer@societe.org.gg
Membership Secretary			membership@societe.org.gg
Editor of the Transactions	Richard Hocart	254693	editor@societe.org.gg
Reserves Committee Chairman	Lesley Bourgaize	710737	
Communications Officer	Richard Lord		communications@societe.org.gg
Land Management & Conservation Officer	Jamie Hooper	266924	
Volunteer Co ordinator			
Reserves	Anthony Stagg	722351	
Archivist & Librarian	David Le Conte	264847	
Section Secretaries:			
Archaeology	Tanya Walls	727614	archaeology@societe.org.gg
Astronomy	Jean Dean		astronomy.gg@cwgsy.net
Bat Section	Charles Hurford		bats@societe.org.gg
Botany	Helen Litchfield		botany@societe.org.gg
Climate Change	Dr Andrew Casebow	722245	climate.change@societe.org.gg
Entomology	Trevor Bourgaize	710737	entomology@societe.org.gg
Family History	Maria van der Tang	248538	researchenquiries@hotmail.com
Geology and Geography	Andrew Dorey	252123	
Historic Buildings	John McCormack	720303	mrjam@cwgsy.net
Marine Biology	Laura Bampton	07839 214495	marinebiology@societe.org.gg
Natural History	Lesley Bourgaize	710737	naturalhistory@societe.org gg
Ornithology	Chris Mourant	07911 130415	ornithology@societe.org.gg
Philology	Bill Gallienne	265529	history@societe.org.gg
Zoology	Vacant		zoology@societe.org.gg
Projects:			
Conservation Herd	Julia Henney		conservationherd@societe.org.gg
Guernsey Seasearch	Laura Bampton		guernseyseasearch@gmail.com
Pollinator Project	Barry Wells		pollinatorproject@icloud.com

Other Council members are: Jamie Hooper (co-opted), Helen Litchfield, Roy Bisson, Rodney Collenette, Angela Salmon, Colin Spicer, Donna Francis and Alex Hershel.

Office hours:

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

Printed by Colour Monster Printshop
Tel: 01481 244175

Published by La Société Guernesaise
Candie Gardens, GY1 1UG.

Email: societe@cwgsy.net
Website: www.societe.org.gg
Tel: 01481 725093

© La Société Guernesaise