



La Société

For nature, history and
science in Guernsey



Wheatear. Photo courtesy of Rod Ferbrache.

President's Report

I'm delighted to announce that our Education Officers commenced employment with La Société in September. Becky Ogier is our full-time lead and Sarah Allez is assisting part-time, while continuing with her studies. This initiative is only made possible by funding from the Guernsey Community Foundation; we are so thankful to them. Becky and Sarah will be providing conservation nature education through the schools tied into the curriculum and Strategy for Nature. They will also restart our junior member monthly events; more information will follow soon.

Anthony Stagg has been running corporate work parties on our reserves for some ten years and doing a fabulous job. The appointment of Becky and Sarah enables us to actively encourage more corporates to get involved. Anthony will still lead the reserves work parties only now he has two helpers. We are also offering corporates the opportunity of citizen science surveying, which will provide much needed data for the records centre.

For more information email Becky at ecl@societe.org.gg or call 725093.

After the quiet of lockdown many Sections organised an array of events which were very well attended. Lockdown certainly inspired a greater interest in nature. We hope you enjoyed the various walks, bug hunts, grasshopper surveys, bird ringing, star gazing, moth trapping and bat watching. Details of forthcoming events are on our website www.societe.org.gg.



Nature Guernsey Bug Hunt at Pleinmont.

Photo courtesy of Lesley Bourgaize.

In September Frank Dowding and Geoff Falla were presented with their Honorary Membership certificates in recognition of their contribution to our Astronomy Section. Kate and I had a lovely couple of hours with them along with several Astronomy Section members at Blanchelande, hearing how they first became interested in Astronomy and the development of the Observatory at Rue du Lorier.



Frank & Geoff with their Honorary Membership Certificates.

Photo courtesy of Donna Francis.

The WEA series of talks about La Société has been well attended and provided a great opportunity for some Sections to share their passions and update you on what their Sections have been doing, thanks to Roy Bisson for organising. There will be three further talks in November on Family History, Astronomy and “Education Initiatives and the Future Role of La Société”. Please see page 5 for full details.

We have also had a weekly slot on BBC Radio Guernsey to showcase all the Sections and Projects, such a great opportunity and this has attracted several new members.

Finally, the 2019 transactions are hot off the press and available for collection from Candie during normal opening hours – see page 4 for further details. My thanks to our editor Richard Hocart and all the contributors.

Donna Francis – President

Volunteer Vacancies - Section Secretaries

We are currently looking for Section Secretaries for the following Sections:

Climate Change

Marine Biology

Zoology

A section Secretary is responsible for arranging meetings, talks and outdoor events for Members. They have the use of the Section room for meetings and the Frossard Theatre for talks. Section Secretaries have a seat on Council. For further information kindly contact the Secretary Kate Lee email secretary@societe.org.gg

Christmas Cards & Books

With Christmas fast arriving just a note to say we have a wide range of local view Christmas cards, ideal for family and friends off island, 6 cards for £1.00. We also have a good stock of local nature and history books for sale, you can browse them on our website www.societe.org.gg (click on publications then on Book Shop) – you can order online and have the books posted to you or the recipient or you can click the “collect from Candie” button and save on the postage. The office is open Tuesday/Thursday and Saturday morning between 10am and 11.30am for browsing, purchasing and collection. Parking is easier on a Saturday morning.

Christmas Gift Idea

This year why not consider giving La Société membership (£28 single, £34 double/family) for 2021 as a present. A welcome pack will be supplied. You can also join family or friends via our website www.societe.org.gg, remember please to mention if it is to be a gift.

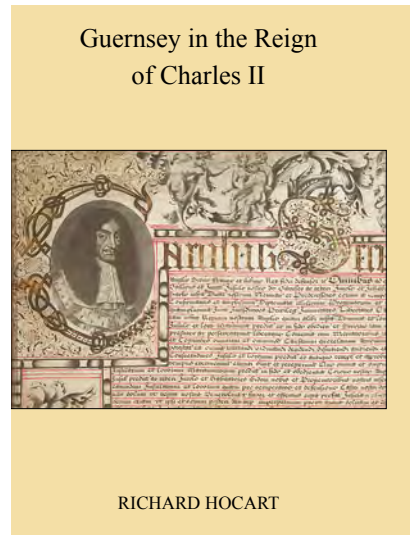
New Local History Book

Richard Hocart has published a book on Guernsey in the reign of Charles II. This covers the years 1660 to 1685. In 1660 the King was restored and the island, which had sided with Parliament against Charles I, had to seek a pardon for its part in the rebellion. The book describes how the pardon was obtained and how the island secured, after a seven-year delay, confirmation of its rights and privileges. Charles II compelled the islanders to abandon Presbyterianism and to accept the Anglican Book of Common Prayer. Two chapters describe how this was achieved in the face of much popular resistance.

The second Governor appointed by Charles II, Lord Hatton, encountered many difficulties in trying to impose his will on the islands and was recalled by the King in 1665. Richard Hocart suggests that many of Hatton's difficulties were self-inflicted. Another destabilising feature covered in the book is the long-running feud between two factions, one royalist and the other ex-parliamentarian, which led to frequent disputes in the Royal Court and occasionally necessitated the King's intervention.

Richard Hocart has made full use of official records in Guernsey and England, and also of the surviving private letters between leading islanders, which provide a remarkable insight into their aspirations and fears and help to explain their actions.

Book details: Guernsey in the Reign of Charles II; 196 pages, four illustrations. ISBN 978-1-5272-6167-9. Available from La Société Guernesiaise. Price: £12.



Front Cover.
Image courtesy of Richard Hocart.

2019 Transactions

Dear Member, the 2019 Transactions have arrived and are now available for collection from Candie. Please note 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 would prefer to receive the Transactions electronically or no longer require them kindly email secretary@societe. Likewise if you are unable to collect them due to health/mobility problems please phone the office on 725093 and leave a message.

Dorothy Le Conte has a full set of Transactions from 1882 for sale (one journal is a photocopy) – some are bound and some are loose. If you are interested kindly contact Dorothy on 264274 for further information.

Finally, we have quite a few uncollected Transactions from previous years. If you are able to deliver a few to Members in your parish please let our Secretary Kate know when you collect your Transactions from Candie.

Subscription Rates for 2021

Subscription rates remain unchanged for 2021 as follows:

| | Local | Overseas |
|------------------------|-------|----------|
| Single | £28 | £25 |
| Double / Family | £34 | £25 |
| Student | £5 | £5 |
| Corporate | £200 | £200 |
| Schools | £20 | £20 |
| Life Membership-single | £360 | £360 |
| Life Membership-double | £480 | £480 |

Please note Standing Orders and Direct Debits will be collected in January 2021.

If you pay by Standing Order kindly instruct your bank to pay the correct amount as shown above.

If you pay in cash, cheque or Paypal (via the Website) we respectfully request you to arrange payment by 31st January 2021 at the latest.

Where there is a shortfall in the amount received; regrettably we are unable provide a copy of the annual Transactions.

Payment by Direct Debit (“DD”) reduces our administration considerably. We would really appreciate you switching to DD for 2021 and have enclosed a DD form for those not currently paying by DD. Kindly return the DD form to Candie before the end of November to give us time to process the form.

Events – WEA Talks

The Workers Educational Association has organised a series of talks within its autumn programme that describe the history and work of the Société - the last of the talks will take place on Thursday evenings in the Frossard Theatre at 7.30pm.

Thursday 12th November “Family History” with Maria Van Der Tang. This Section of La Société reflects islanders’ intense interest in their heritage. The activities are based at the Russels at Les Cotils where enquiries from the public often begin a fascinating challenge.

Thursday 19th November “Astronomy” with Frank Dowding. Public interest in astronomy and space has been stimulated by the activities of this Section. As a founding member Frank will talk of its early beginnings to the present day.

Thursday 26th November “La Société- Education Initiatives and Future Role” with President Donna Francis. La Société plays a vital part in protecting and enhancing Guernsey’s natural environment and its biodiversity. It believes education is key to supporting this work and is introducing new educational initiatives to children and the public. President Donna Francis will explain La Société’s future role.

Société Members are offered places at the special rate of £3 per evening should there be sufficient space. You can email Roy Bisson (roybisson@cwgsy.net) to reserve an individual talk or turn up on the night on the off-chance of vacant seats.

Section Reports

Archaeology

Excavations at Sandy Hook

Once lockdown was lifted the Section was able to get involved with the excavations at Sandy Hook dolmen. This early Bronze Age burial monument was first discovered in 1912 and since then housing has built up around it. The reason for our excavation was a proposed housing development on an adjacent site and the plan to create an access road alongside the monument itself. Although it is currently closed to the public the dolmen can be viewed through a gate in Sandy Hook Estate.

Our excavation showed that the 1912 excavators had already been though most of the ground on the south side of the monument. However, we did find one undisturbed area where a small and largely intact vessel had been buried. This pot is similar to one discovered in 1912 and is around 4,000 years old, it is likely to have contained cremated human remains. We also re-located parts of the monument which had become buried beneath the turf.



Excavation at Sandy Hook from above: the archaeological trench is on the right, the very regular lines of stones were the base for early 20th century railings, the spoil heap is on the left; the monument itself lies between and slightly above the two. *Photo courtesy of Richard Lord.*

Once we had finished our excavation beside the monument we backfilled this area and moved onto the old vinery site where it is proposed to build the houses themselves. It is just possible that there was a medieval leper colony in this area – it was certainly somewhere nearby – and this, along with its position close to the Bronze Age monument, made it archaeologically interesting. We did not know to what extent the glasshouses would have destroyed any archaeological deposits, so we dug eighteen 1 x 1 metre test pits across the site to assess this. Beneath the modern ground surface we found 19th and 20th century glasshouse remains continuing almost to the undisturbed geology. There was a thin ancient soil surviving just above the geology in a few of the test pits and in this we found worked flints. The vinery had largely obliterated any prehistoric or medieval remains which could have been on the site.



Early Bronze Age pot found during 2020 excavations. Photo courtesy of Phil de Jersey.

A particularly interesting aspect of the Sandy Hook excavations was the geology. The 1912 excavators had commented in their report in the Transactions that the monument had been built almost directly onto an ancient raised beach. We also found this pebble beach in our own excavations, both beside the monument and in nearly all of the test pits on the old vinery site. We are familiar with seeing remains of the 8 metre raised beach eroding out along our coastline – the RAMSAR site at L'Eree is particularly notable – but it is rare to see it in plan. This beach was formed during the last interglacial period when sea levels were higher; around 100,000 – 120,000 years ago.

You may be interested to know that Digimap have recently updated the appearance of their Antiquities Layer; to view go to <https://www.digimap.gg/> and select Online Mapping then Antiquities.

Tanya Walls - Archaeology Section Secretary

Astronomy

Comet NEOWISE

During the early summer our skies were graced with Comet NEOWISE, a naked eye comet that encouraged many people to look up at the night sky. Once such a comet would have been treated as harbinger of doom, but now with our understanding of planetary science we no longer fear them, instead we study them and they help us understand the origins of our solar system.

NEOWISE was the brightest comet since Hale-Bopp in 1997 and stunned observers throughout June and July this year. It came within 63 million miles of the Sun on July 3rd and within 64 million miles of Earth on July 23rd. It was visible from anywhere within the northern hemisphere and some amazing photographs were taken, both locally and around the world.

A comet is a small lump of rock and ice a few miles across that is left over from the formation of the solar system. This means comets are essentially unchanged for 5 billion years and they are incredibly useful for understanding how our solar system formed. Most comets are on extremely eccentric orbits which means they take hundreds or thousands of years to complete one orbit of the Sun, spending most of their time in the furthestmost, coldest and inhospitable regions of our solar system. Comet NEOWISE will not return to the inner solar system for 6700 years!

As a comet approaches the sun, the solar radiation heats the icy surface of the comet, causing the ice to sublimate into a gas. This gas creates the tail of the comet that we actually see and the tail can be up to a million miles long. Most comets actually have two tails, a curved one created by dust particles carried away by the solar wind, and one straight blueish tail created by charged gas particles under the influence of the Sun's magnetic field. The tails always point away from the Sun, and as such do not show the direction the comet is travelling – when the comet is moving away from the Sun the tail is in front of the comet.



Comet NEOWISE on 20th July 2020.
Photo courtesy of Tom. Harvey.

Comets are only discovered a few months or weeks before they become visible, meaning we do not know when the next great comet will arrive. They are simply too small and distant to detect before the tail forms. On average there is around one comet a year visible to the naked eye, but it could be a long time before we see another as beautiful as NEOWISE.

Jean Dean and Tom Harvey

Other Astronomy News

Congratulations to Tom Harvey who has been accepted as a Fellow of the Royal Astronomical Society after being nominated by David Le Conte. Although delighted, Tom says the appointment is bittersweet as sadly David is no longer here to share the moment. Tom's hard work at Southampton University, where he is studying physics with astronomy, has resulted in him being awarded the Whittaker Bursary which will allow him to complete his fourth year at Harvard University in the USA.



Member Tom Harvey preparing to Photograph NEOWISE from Jaonneuse Bay, July 2020. Photo courtesy of Jean Dean.

Tom is one of three recent ex-junior members currently studying at University, the others being Anthony Nel who is studying Computer Science at the University of York and Pieter Durman who is studying Natural Sciences at Girton College, Cambridge. All three have helped throughout our public summer open evenings presenting lectures on Comet Neowise and the Fermi Paradox, and running the telescopes. Anthony, who at the moment is studying remotely, has taken on responsibility for our educational outreach this observing season. Also following our solar outreach visit to the Grammar School Sixth Form College in July, we have acquired a new junior member, Ella Jura who is planning to study astronomy at University and is likewise helping out with open evenings and our Introduction to Astronomy Courses. It is very rewarding seeing junior members develop an interest in science and go on to university.

Jean Dean - Astronomy Section Secretary

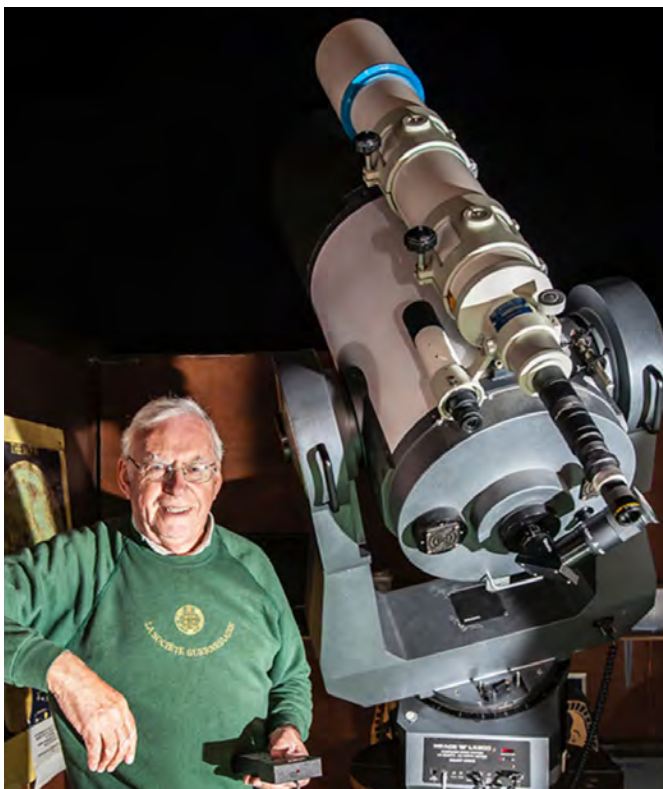
Obituary David Le Conte, 1940-2020

It is with great sadness that we report on the passing of David Le Conte who has been the heart of the Astronomy Section for over 4 decades. David joined the section after a distinguished career in astronomy working at Edinburgh Royal Observatory and Aberystwyth University where he was recruited by the Smithsonian Institution which took David to America. This led to his involvement with NASA and the Apollo Program, working as the manager of the Smithsonian Institution's Astrophysical Observing Station in Maui, Hawaii and later during the Apollo 11 moon landing at a tracking station in Arizona. After the end of the Apollo Program David became Executive Director of the Smithsonian Institution's Research Foundation in Washington DC and later a department manager at Kitt Peak National Observatory in Arizona.

David returned to Guernsey in 1978 and held a number of senior posts within the civil service. He designed the Guernsey flag and used his astronomical knowledge and mathematical skills to ensure the correct positioning of the Liberation Monument. His involvement in astronomy continued when he joined the young Astronomy Section, securing the site we use today and building a thriving section which embraces a wide range of astronomical disciplines and is committed to public and educational outreach. In 1991 David was elected a Fellow of the Royal Astronomical Society after being proposed by Sir Patrick Moore. He was elected President of La Société Guernesaise in 2002 and recently held the post of Archivist and Librarian. In 2005 David was accorded the highest civic accolade by being elected a Jurat of the Royal Court.

Those of us who were privileged to know David will always remember him and have cause to be thankful that we were able to move in his orbit.

Jean Dean and Jason Hill



David Le Conte using the Astronomy Section's Meade telescope.

Photo courtesy of Jean Dean.

Bat Section - Summer Report

Another busy summer has passed for the Bat section. Firstly, we got the summer started with our Maternity Roost Surveys. This involves standing outside a bat roost and counting the bats as they leave. This is done each year and the results are compared to understand if the roost is getting larger or smaller.

Andrew Lee has worked very hard to get bat nest boxes erected in underground locations around the island. We now wait to see if the bats will use the boxes.

The little Chapel development continues to grind on. The wood and Chapel was home to the highly endangered Grey Long Eared Bats. The Little Chapel Trust developed the Little Chapel with no provision provided for the bats which were roosting in the Chapel. In August the planning Department had a public hearing to decide if the Little Chapel Trust could get planning permission to develop the woodland into a park. The hearing was attended by Charles Hurford as a concerned individual and sadly this complex ecosystem has been granted to be developed with the concession of a bat survey and eco-friendly lighting.



Grey Long Eared Bat roosting in the Little Chapel. Photo courtesy of Sylvia Brouard.

Elaine Mahy and Sally Pedlar attended a radio interview on bats in Guernsey for the BBC in September.

The bat walks have been very successful and to date we have provided bat walks for Air Scouts, Cubs, Ogier Law and Nature Guernsey. We have had 160 People attending our bat walks to date and still have two to complete. See the comments below.

"Thank you so much for giving up your time this evening to take us on the bat walk. It was fascinating and I'm sure we all learnt something new. Please pass on our thanks to your team that helped, it was so kind".

"I just wanted to thank you for letting us accompany you on the Bat Walk, which was a lovely experience. We were both amazed at how many bats we encountered and your talk was really informative. We were hugely impressed by the children's interest and engagement – there were some very smart observations made".

"I just wanted to thank you and the other members of the team for such an enjoyable evening".

"I have had lots of comments today from those who took part saying how interesting and fun it was".

"The kids loved it!"

We also welcome our new members Nikki, Tara and Ellie and were delighted to have Becky and Sarah, the new LSG education officers attend a bat walk.

Charles Hurford - Bat Section Secretary

If you find an injured bat please contact the GSPCA direct on 257261 or 07781 104082 (24 hour emergency line). Any bat queries can be sent to Charles Hurford by email bats@societe.org.gg

Botany



Sea Bindweed (Calystegia soldanella). Photo courtesy of Anne Woodinton.

With Lock-down ending in mid-June Botany Section engaged in a number of new initiatives to capitalise on the increased interest in the natural world.

We restarted monthly evening meetings. These have produced lively debate as to the direction in which the section should be heading and the type of activities that should be carried out. Seed saving, recording, habitat maintenance, plant categorisation are just some of the topics that have been discussed. All section members are more than welcome to attend sessions, just turn up on the 3rd Tuesday of each month, 7pm at Candie.

Evening walks have been very well attended and will be continued next Spring. The first of these was at Fort Doyle. We looked first at the coastal plants, with Golden Samphire, *Limbarda crithmoides* and Rock Samphire, *Crithmum maritimum* growing side by side. We then walked up to the top of the common. This area is extremely rich with several small species notably Heath Milkwort, *Polygala serpyllifolia*, Trailing St. John's-wort, *Hypericum humifusum* and Orange Bird's-foot, *Ornithopus pinnatus*. Common Centaury, *Centaureum erythraea*, was growing in abundance, you could barely put a foot down without treading on it.

The second evening walk took us to Jerbourg point. The highlight of this walk was Hare's-foot Clover, *Trifolium arvense* with large patches growing above Petit Port.

Our Saturday outings were also well attended. The July outing was held at Grande Havre and Vale Pond Reserve. We began along the shore line and looked at several rare species there. Sea Bindweed, *Calystegia soldanella* was in full flower, Prickly Saltwort, *Salsola kali*, lived up to its name and Sea-holly, *Eryngium maritimum*, looked startlingly blue. It was very encouraging to see these endangered species flourishing in their natural environment.



Sea-Holly (Eryngium maritimum). Photo courtesy of Anne Woodinton.

August took us to Pleinmont, a walk along the cliff path familiarised us with the common species to be found along the cliff tops.

In September we visited Delancey Park. Again, it was a lovely turnout with plenty of new faces. Our tree knowledge was put to the test and we were pleased to see Guernsey Pigweed, *Amaranthus blitum*, growing on a compost heap.

We also had the opportunity to survey two areas of previously unrecorded land. I would urge anyone seriously interested in learning about botany to attend one of these recording sessions if at all possible. As well as drawing on the considerable knowledge of our experienced botanists, we also use our floras to 'key out' species in time honoured fashion. These visits are publicised just to members of the botany section. If you are a member and do not receive the emails, please let me know by emailing h.litchfield.GSY@gmail.com.

The first of these excursions took us to a low-lying area behind Vazon Bay. An August survey produced a species count of over 90 species. Typically, at that time of year, we would expect around 60 species. A rich area indeed.

The second took us to an area in the upper part of Talbot Valley. Again, a very varied and interesting habitat. The highlight of this trip being several plants of Hard-fern, *Blechnum spicant*. A note in the 'Checklist of Guernsey Plants' states 'not seen recently,' very rewarding to be able to update the record. We look forward to visiting both areas again in Spring and seeing what further treasures they reveal.

Disappointingly, but not surprisingly, the decision has been taken to postpone the Annual Summer Meeting of the Botanical Society of Britain and Ireland, in Guernsey for 2021. This has now been rescheduled for 2023 as 2022 is already booked for Scotland.

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 Section Secretary

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 Group has been a Section of La Société Guernesiaisie since 1987 and over that time it has taken on the task of transcribing old headstones in the Parish Church Cemeteries, including Le Foulon, Brethren in the Green Lanes and the German cemetery at Fort George. We have a group of people who help with the transcribing of the stones and the planning out of the area to help as a guide to the location of the graves.

Some of the old cemeteries do not have plans for the burials, so trying to find a grave with headstones that are now unreadable is a hard task, so this is where Family History can help.

Over the last year it has been recognised by the Rectors and Funeral Directors as a helpful source enabling them to find a grave that has a headstone but where the inscription is indecipherable due to its age and the fading of the lettering. When a new burial needs to take place in a family grave the old grave can now be easily located.

If Family History had not taken on this task, a lot of information would have been lost forever. We are proud to have been recognised for the hard work we do and our ability to help others.

Maria van der Tang - Family History Section Secretary

Events

Saturday 28th November at 11am, an illustrated talk entitled "More Pictures from Guernsey's Past" by Brian de Jersey, followed by our annual AGM.

The research room at the Russels, Les Cotils is still open on the 1st and 3rd Saturday each month from 10am until noon, and by appointment at all other times. This can be arranged by calling Maria on 248538

If any of you have a family story or article you would like to see printed in the next Journal, please send it to us by sending it to us at researchenquiries@hotmail.co.uk

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 14th November – John McCormack will give a talk on "The Evidence for Medieval Galleries, Internal and External."

Saturday 28th November - John McCormack will give a talk on "The Evolution of Window Design from the 14Th Century Onwards."

Saturday 12th December - John McCormack will give a talk on "The Appearance of Cross-passages in Historic Houses."

All talks are held in the Frossard Theatre, Candie and begin at 7.30pm.

New members are always very welcome to attend. Please contact John McCormack by email mrjam@cwgsy.net or telephone 720303.

Ornithology

Poisoning of Local Raptors

As most of you will have read or heard about in the local media, four Peregrine Falcons and a Buzzard have been illegally poisoned since April 2019. There may well have been others which are not known about. These crimes have been committed deliberately, using live pigeons coated in chemicals which are banned in the islands. The Ornithology Section, together with La Société, have pledged £2,000, together with other pledges from the RSPB and private individuals over £16,000 has been promised as a reward following information that leads to a successful prosecution. Police investigations continue.

The Ornithology Section absolutely condemn these irresponsible and criminal actions. Peregrine Falcons naturally returned to Guernsey after an absence of many years and have bred successfully in recent years. This persecution endangers the future of the species locally and has implications for the wider environment. Dangerous chemicals from the baited pigeons could easily end up in water courses, kill other wild animals and pose a serious threat to pets and children.

Summer Events & Outings

Claire Mare – Saturday 1st August



*Unusually fine weather for an outdoor meeting of the Ornithology Section.
Photo by Julie Davis*



*Chris handling a warbler.
Photo by Julie Davis*

The group were very interested to see Chris Mourant demonstrate his bird ringing skills and extensive knowledge. In the photo above he is gently blowing on the breast feathers to see how much fat and muscle the bird has. After a bird has been ringed it is weighed and the wing length is measured. It is also aged and sexed, where possible. There will be more about bird ringing in the next newsletter.

Sark – Saturday 5th September

We had an enjoyable day although migrants were thin on the ground. Lynda Higgins, our Sark member, did us proud, showing us parts of the island that are not accessible to the public. The photo shows a beautiful spot in Dixcart Woods where Long-eared Owls have bred successfully this year. We were also shown an area near Saignie Bay where Barn Owls have been breeding. Lynda does a lot of recording work for the island and the good news is that, as a result of this visit, Trevor Bourgaize will be going back for a week in October, with a couple of helpers, to do some ringing work.

Future outings will be publicised in the diary on La Société's webpage www.societe.org.gg. Everyone, as always, is very welcome to attend.

Interesting Bird Sightings

The autumn migration is well underway and there has already been a crop of rare and unusual birds to enjoy around the island. September started with two Cattle Egret at the Vale Pond, followed later in the month by a Great White Egret. Unusually, this vagrant bird stayed for two days and many people were able to see it.



Lynda Higgins points out where the Long-eared Owls nest. Photo by Julie Davis



Great White Egret. Photo courtesy of Julie Davis.

Julia Davis

Owl Be Back

This year has seen a higher than normal mortality rate in local barn owls. During any typical year a mortality rate of one to two birds might be expected, whereas this year the total appears to be six, advises Jamie Hooper. Barn owls sit at the top of the food chain and they hunt for small mammals. They eat their prey whole but cannot digest the fur or bone so regurgitate this as a pellet which is useful as scientists can study the leftovers. It turns out that field voles are the favourite food and make up about 45% of their diet, with shrews accounting for 20% and mice 15%. A barn owl will typically eat 3-4 prey items a night. During the breeding season, a pair of barn owls will (ideally) find this amount for each owlet as well. This works out to almost 4,000 prey items a year to feed a pair and their offspring!

Sometimes owls are unable to hunt due to unfavourable weather conditions, particularly heavy rains and strong winds, which can lead to starvation. The number of prey items can also vary and during years of reduced prey more owl losses can occur, and that is given as the likely cause for the increased mortality rate this year says Jamie. There are several ways in which we can help owls, one is to

provide owl boxes. Another is to provide habitat for prey items so their population will increase and in turn support the owl population. This can be done by allowing patches of grass to grow up in a garden or creating a pollinator patch. However, there is no need for alarm as Jamie advises “We would expect a bad year would be followed, not necessarily straight away, but maybe in a couple of years’ time by a bumper year for voles and for the owls to fledge a good number of youngsters”.

Jean Dean



Barn owlet. Photo courtesy of Elaine Ground – the Owl Whistler.

PROJECT REPORTS

The Conservation Herd

In February 2014 - with the birth of the founding member, Charles - the Conservation Herd was established. Since then it has moved from strength to strength due to the support, enthusiasm, dedication and hard work of the volunteers. I feel very honoured and privileged to have worked with such wonderful people.

It has been an incredibly rewarding project to manage and I am very proud of what has been achieved over the past 6 ½ years. Large swathes of grasslands have been carefully grazed to encourage the spread of wildflowers and support populations of insects and birds which feed on them. The grazing has also helped introduce some very rare wildflowers to new areas of the island, such as Deptford pink which until last year was only known from a small site on L'Ancrese Common.



Julia Henney and a steer at L'Ancrese Common. Photo courtesy of Chris Sims.

There have been some difficult times too - wet and muddy winters, the beast from the east, and of course, the devastating loss of Pat Costen, who was an integral member of the Conservation Herd team.

Despite these difficult times, the project has flourished due to huge support from both the volunteers and the local community – especially the residents near to where the cattle graze. Meeting and chatting with neighbours and visitors of the Herd is an uplifting and rewarding way to spend an hour to two!

Earlier this year I made the decision to stand down as Herd Manager largely due to time restrictions - I am employed full time as Biodiversity Officer and am also now Vice-President of La Société. But I also believe that new management and a new perspective is a good thing for any project and it will bring a positive change to the Herd.

We were very fortunate to be approached by Dave Bartram who expressed an interest in taking over management of the Herd. Whilst his background is in finance, he has been an active member of the Guernsey Conservation Volunteers for over 20 years, and so is well accustomed to working in adverse weather conditions and is experienced in managing and supporting a team of volunteers.

As soon as Covid restrictions allowed, Dave began learning about the management of the Herd and taking over responsibilities. He has already proven himself to be a huge asset to the Herd and I know will lead it on to bigger and better things over the years to come.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone involved for all the support they have offered the Herd over the past 6 ½ years, and I wish Dave every success in the management of the Herd for the future.

Julia Henney – Vice-President

DolFin ID Project News

The ongoing global pandemic may have impacted human travel throughout the Bailiwick, but, if anything, has had the opposite effect on cetaceans (whales and dolphins) visiting our local waters. So far in 2020 we have amassed more than 60 separate sightings of dolphins and whales, with July and August being particularly impressive.

September was also popular for reported sightings and we hope we all get a lot more chances to spot dolphins before the end of the year. Although lockdown stopped us from hosting public events for several months, restrictions relaxed just in time for us to host 3 events for National Whale and Dolphin Watch (NWDW) week from 25th July – 2nd August. You can learn more about NWDW at <https://www.seawatchfoundation.org.uk/nwdw/>. We are delighted so many interested people came along to learn about our cetaceans, and try their hand at surveying. On Saturday we even had some harbour porpoises showing up during a watch, prompting a rush of people to binoculars.



A small group of harbour porpoises (Phocoena phocoena), which can be identified by their small triangular fin, were seen around the south east coast of Guernsey in August. Photo courtesy of Chrissie Johns.

Bottlenose dolphins continue to be our most frequently sighted cetacean in 2020, though harbour porpoises, Risso's' dolphins, common dolphins and minke whales also made appearances throughout the season in both near-shore and off-shore waters. As part of the DolFin project, we are trying to find out if the bottlenose dolphins seen this summer are part of one returning pod or are from multiple different pods.



*Bottlenose dolphin (*Tursiops truncatus*) off the Sark Coast, June 2020. Photo courtesy of Sue Daly.*

How do we identify dolphins?

Just like fingerprints, the dorsal fin on each bottlenose dolphin is unique to that individual. Thanks to photos of these fins we can now identify some individual dolphins, like Trevor, who has been returning to our waters for at least three years (2018-2020).

Trevor, is a bottlenose dolphin with a distinctive nick 2/3rds of the way down the rear edge of his dorsal fin. This very clear nick helps us positively ID him as the same dolphin. He has been seen in local waters multiple times over the past 3 years.

Public support is critical to the success of our project and is enthusiastic as over 200 photos have been sent to us this year alone. The flipside of so many reported sightings is we still have lots of fin photos to work through. This winter we hope to confidently identify whether Trevor is part of a group of returning individuals and see if we can identify any new dolphins beyond our initial 12 individuals.



Trevor. Photo courtesy of Nicky Harris.

If you are interested in helping out we could do with some extra eyes to help identify different fins. We will be back in the near future with updates as we learn more about our dolphins ... but for the moment if you have any cetacean sightings within the Bailiwick, please do let us know!

Report your sightings

You can contact us on the DolFin Project email or the Guernsey Biological Records Centre email or Twitter.

So what do we need to know when you see a whale or dolphin?

- **Time**
- **Date**
- **Location**
- **Species (where you are confident about the ID)**
- **Number of dolphins seen**

Bonus

Any photos or videos are very useful, because even if they are not fin photos, they help us to confirm species and numbers.

Contact details:

Email:

- dolfinproject@outlook.com
- gsybiorecords@gmail.com

Facebook group:

- [Dolphin Spotting Guernsey](#)

Twitter:

- [@Guernsey_BRC](#)

Coming soon!

Website: <https://www.dolfinproject.org.gg>

Nicky Harris (Co-ordinator of the Bailiwick DolFin Id Project) and
Liz Sweet (Guernsey Biological Records Centre).

Reserves Committee News

Reserves Committee are delighted to announce that Orchard PR has sponsored the creation of a new information board at Le Jardin de Lorette, a nature reserve owned by La Société Guernesiaisie.



*Brooke Kenyon (of Orchard PR) and Donna Francis (President of La Société) displaying the information board.
Photo courtesy of Orchard PR.*

Le Jardin de Lorette is an orchard in St. Sampson's that was donated to La Société Guernesiaisie by Mrs Lorette Domaille in 1997. The orchard holds 80 cider apple trees of three French varieties that are primarily grown as a food source for birds over the winter, they were planted by Guernsey Conservation Volunteers soon after it was donated to La Société.

Taken from a recent press release by Orchard PR.

Associated Groups

| | | |
|---|--------------------|---------------------------|
| Alderney Wildlife Trust | Roland Gauvain | 822935 |
| Blue Dolphins Sub-Aqua Club | | bluedolphinssac@gmail.com |
| Friends of the Priaulx Library | Jenny Tasker | jenny@taskeronline.com |
| Guernsey Conservation Volunteers | Angela Salmon | 721163 |
| Guernsey Meteorological Observatory | Martin Crozier | 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.

Environment Guernsey Ltd,
1 Trinity Cottages,
Torteval,
Guernsey,
C.I., GY8 0QD

Tel: (07781) 166924

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



Environment Guernsey
 Environmental contracting & consulting

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 | Donna Francis | 232632 | president@societe.org.gg |
| Vice President | Julia Henney | | vicepresident@societe.org.gg |
| Secretary | Kate Lee | 235380 | secretary@societe.org.gg |
| Honorary Treasurer | Dave Christopher | | treasurer@societe.org.gg |
| Membership Secretary | | | membership@societe.org.gg |
| Editor of the Transactions | Richard Hocart | 254693 | editor@societe.org.gg |
| Reserves Committee | | | |
| Chairperson | Lesley Bourgaize | 710737 | reserves@societe.org.gg |
| Communications Officer | Vacant | | communications@societe.org.gg |
| Land Management & Conservation Officer | Jamie Hooper | 266924 | reserves@societe.org.gg |
| Volunteer Co ordinator | | | |
| Reserves | Anthony Staggs | 722351 | |
| Archivist & Librarian | Vacant | | |
| Science Committee | | | |
| Chairperson | Laura Bampton | | science@societe.org.gg |
| Education Officers: | | | |
| Lead Education Officer | Becky Ogier | | ecl@societe.org.gg |
| Assistant Education Officer | Sarah Allez | | eca@societe.org.gg |
| 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 | Vacant | | 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 | Vacant | | |
| 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 | | |
| Projects: | | | |
| Conservation Herd | Dave Bartram | | conservationherd@societe.org.gg |
| Guernsey Seasearch | Vacant | | |
| Pollinator Project | Barry Wells | | pollinatorproject@icloud.com |

Other Council members are: Jamie Hooper (co-opted), Roy Bisson, Rodney Collenette, Angela Salmon, Colin Spicer & Alex Herschel.

Office hours:

Our office at Candie is open on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday morning between 10am and 11.30am.

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

© La Société Guernesaise

Printed by Colour Monster Printshop Tel: 01481 244175