



La Société

For nature, history and
science in Guernsey



Skylark, Alderney, April 2021. Photo courtesy of Berni Kerrigan.

President's Report

Despite another lockdown which thankfully was short and sharp it has been a busy time, I can't believe I've been in post for just over a year already.

I'm really pleased to report that we have been successful with a number of funding applications including the Strategy for Nature and Guernsey Electricity.

We have been informed of a generous donation coming our way from an esteemed member left to us in her Will. We are very grateful to receive legacy donations that enable us to increase land purchases and protect more precious areas for nature.

Last years successful Bursary applicant, Charlotte Burgoine, will be gaining valuable experience with us as she assists us updating the habitat management plans on our Reserves once her course is completed. Charlotte is also volunteering with Trevor Bourgaize and learning about the CI Bird Ringing Scheme.

We are keen to encourage volunteers to work with us and learn from the large pool of expertise we have to offer. If you would like to volunteer; please get in touch, there's a wide variety of opportunities available.

In more recent years we've focused much more on holding nature events, walks and talks and this is resulting in an increase in memberships. We are really grateful to you all for supporting us; membership subscriptions are a valuable resource towards managing our reserves. We are equally thankful to the many volunteers that run these events and give so freely of their time.

I hope you enjoy this edition of Communiqué it's longer than usual as it's bursting with news about all the activities that have taken place together with details of events planned for the summer.

Finally, we are looking for a new date for John Horton to visit and will re-schedule his talk as soon as we can.

Wishing you a warm and sunny summer time with lots of opportunity to enjoy nature.

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 at Candie for talks. Section Secretaries have a seat on Council. For further information kindly contact the Secretary Kate Lee email secretary@societe.org.gg

AGM 2021

Please note that the 2021 AGM due to be held on Thursday 25th March has been moved to Wednesday 18th August at 7.30pm in the Frossard Theatre, Candie. There will be an announcement of the AGM in the Guernsey Press in early August. A full agenda together with the minutes of the last meeting and a copy of the 2020 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 Wednesday 28th July 2021. The talk after the AGM is yet to be announced.

Bibliography of Books, etc. relating to Guernsey's Maritime History

Dr. Eric Barré of the University of Caen-Basse-Normandie has compiled an extensive on-line bibliography of published works relating to the maritime history of the Bailiwick of Guernsey. It will evolve as further works are added. The bibliography can be accessed on the website of La Société d'Archéologie et d'Histoire de la Manche: <http://sahmmanche.free.fr> On the home page select A TELECHARGER, and then select Texte Divers. Dr. Barré's bibliography is listed among these texts.

Jethou Trips 2021

We hope to arrange guided trips (Ornithology, Archaeology, Botany and Natural History) to Jethou over 2 Saturdays in June. Once confirmed details will be emailed to Members.



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La Société Guernesiaise Bursary 2021

The £1000 bursary is open to both undergraduate and postgraduate students, and aims to support students studying subjects related to biodiversity and conservation of the natural environment, or researching aspects of Guernsey's wildlife and ecology.



Further information and details on how to apply may be found on La Société's website, or by emailing science@societe.org.gg.

Forthcoming Events

Saturday 8th May, 11am, Frossard Theatre, Candie – a talk entitled “What is the Asian Hornet Strategy and is it Working?” an illustrated presentation by Francis Russell, Asian Hornet Project Coordinator. Booking details to follow by email to members.

Tuesday 1st June - Nature Guernsey is planning a day of events. Pop the date in your diary and look out for more information on the online La Société events diary and the Nature Guernsey Facebook page.

La Société will be holding a book sale (second hand books of all subjects and a few new Société books) on Sunday 12th September, 2pm at the Russels, Les Cotils. There will be plenty of parking. If you have any books in good condition that you would like to donate kindly email Kate secretary@societe.org.gg before bringing them to Candie.

A Look at Lockdown – a Community Photography Project

Lockdown this year led to Islanders spending more time outside, appreciating the quiet while less traffic was on the roads. This led to La Société launching a community photography project, “A Look at Lockdown”.

The concept of this was simple – when out, have a look around, and take a snapshot of the wildlife you see.

The project proved to be massively popular, with 54 individuals taking part, submitting a total of 239 photographs. Those who took part both appreciated having a focus to get out and searching for wildlife, while also having great fun.



Buff tail bumble bee. Photo courtesy of John Ogier



Flat periwinkle - *Littorina obtusata*.
Photo courtesy of Lucy Hurdley

To see the end result of “A Look at Lockdown”, please visit the online gallery at societe.org.gg/wp/gallery

Jade Kershaw – Communications Officer

Section Reports

Archaeology

Our work at Sandy Hook dolmen finished towards the end of last year with an attempt to dig through the raised beach encountered in test pits on the old vinery site next to the dolmen. This was geology rather than archaeology, but intriguing just the same. We went through more than two metres of extremely hard beach deposit with no sign of the solid rock and when we could not safely go deeper, we took samples of the beach deposit. Hopefully these will enable geologists to tell us about the formation and age of the beach. In my previous newsletter I described the, almost intact, prehistoric pot recovered from the dolmen itself. Since then we have received a radiocarbon date for undisturbed soil deposits associated with the pot: a date of 2461 - 2276 BC. This matches very well with the late Neolithic or very early Bronze Age date generally ascribed to this unusual type of monument.

Before lockdown we were in the process of uncovering and trying to interpret a building found on a development site at the Vale Mill Quarry. It was built on a levelled area in front of an exposed quarry face, with a back wall (against the face) just over 3m in height; it has two rooms. The quarry was operational in the second half of the 19th century and by the early 20th century had become a reservoir. The 1900 Ordnance Survey map shows two buildings on the site, we think that our building replaced these and is therefore more likely to be associated with the reservoir. There is still a little more work left to do and we may yet find more clues as to the purpose of the building; however our working theory is that it may have been a pump house. It is interesting to reflect on how quickly knowledge can be lost - this building is only just over a hundred years old and its function already seems forgotten.



The building on the side of the reservoir at the Vale Mill Quarry. Photo courtesy of Phil de Jersey.

We had plans for several talks and events during the first few months of this year, but these have had to be postponed for the time-being. One we did manage was a meeting of the newly-revived Junior Section, which was a great success. We visited the Creux ès Faies dolmen at L'Eree and also looked at the nearby Neolithic / Bronze Age settlement site. The children were surprised to find the spirit of the antiquarian Mr Lukis in residence at Le Creux ès Faies.



Mr Lukis showing children some of the prehistoric artefacts he found in Le Creux ès Faies.
Photo courtesy of Phil de Jersey.

Tanya Walls – Archaeology Section Secretary

Astronomy

Perseverance and Mars

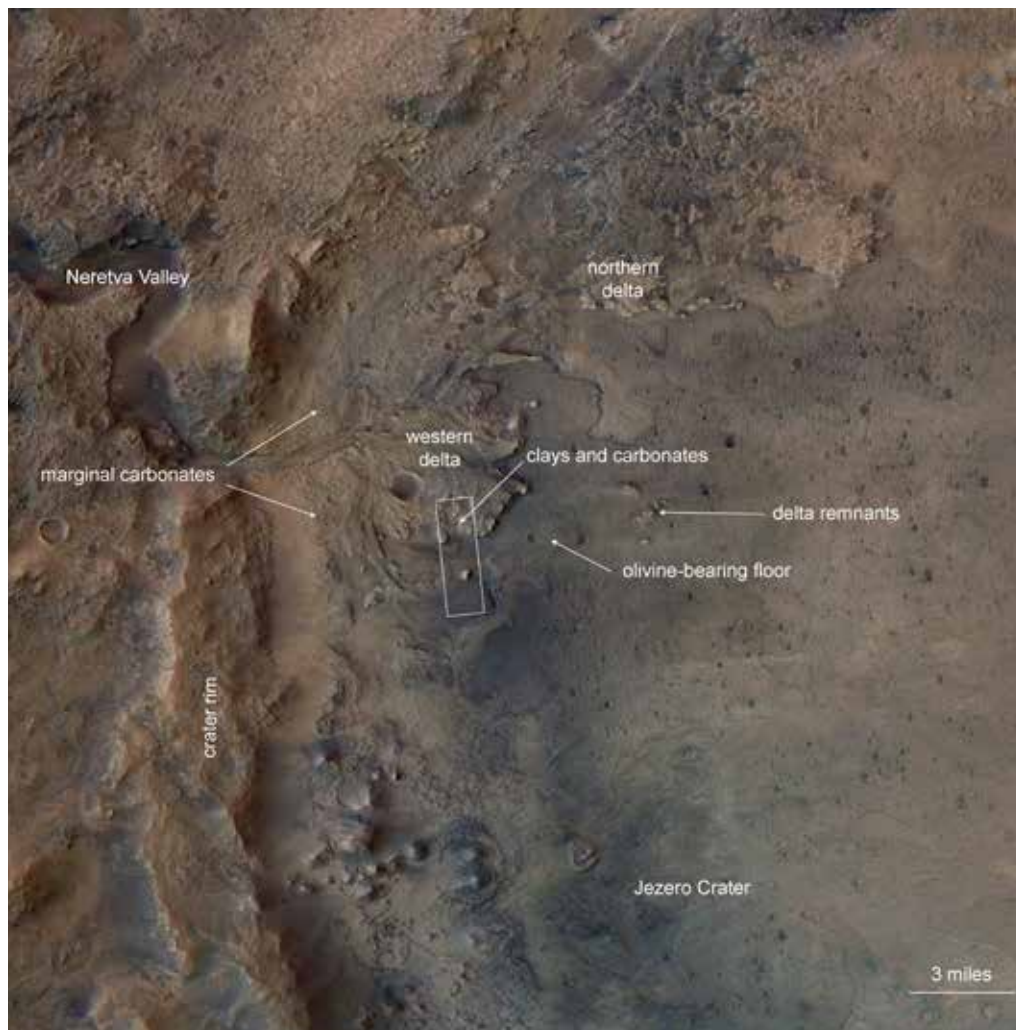
The world has been captivated by the excitement and drama of NASA's latest mission to the Red Planet.

The Perseverance Rover has landed in Jezero Crater, which is thought to be the site of an ancient Martian lake. 4 billion years ago, Mars had a much thicker atmosphere, and was a lot warmer, allowing significant liquid water to exist on its surface. Mars could even have supported oceans. Everywhere on Earth there is liquid water containing life in some form, even in the harshest conditions. It is entirely possible that Mars supported an entire biosphere of life, either one that evolved entirely independently of Earth's, or indeed by panspermia, the idea that life was carried from Earth to Mars or vice versa, via meteorites ejected from the planet's surface by a large impact.

This water would have been around for hundreds of millions of years, potentially long enough for evolutionary cycles to produce complex life well adapted to Mars. However, as the planet's interior cooled, its protective magnetic field weakened and the Sun's wind blew much of the atmosphere away, causing a notable amount of water to freeze and migrate to the poles. Just within the Martian polar regions there is enough ice to cover the entire surface of Mars in 35m of water. There is likely to be a lot more ice trapped underground. Today Mars's atmospheric pressure is only 1% of Earth's, but even still there are some craters which can support incredibly salty streams of water for a few days a year. Radar observations have also detected a subsurface lake near the south pole over 20km long. Martian life may have been able to adapt to the changing conditions and migrate underground, potentially still surviving in underground lakes such as these. There are Earth bacteria known as chemotrophs, which obtain all their energy via chemical reactions, and not from the Sun. They are found deep in Earth's crust, and on the sea floor, where sunlight does not reach. Maybe Mars could still support such extremophiles?

As Mars has no plate tectonics, and very little weather, much of the surface including Jezero Crater has remained relatively unchanged for billions of years. If life once existed on Mars, NASA hopes to find evidence of it in this ancient lakebed and the surrounding shoreline.

Perseverance's sister mission, Curiosity, which landed in 2012 in Gale Crater, more than 2000km away, looked at the potential habitability of Mars in the past, and provided indisputable evidence of historic liquid water. Perseverance takes the next step and looks directly for past signs of life. Perseverance will use its onboard drill to collect samples of Martian rocks and store them in sample containers, with the aim of retrieving them in a mission planned for 2026, thus returning them to Earth for comprehensive laboratory analysis. In the meantime, Perseverance has a suite of instruments onboard for analysing the composition of rocks and identifying organic compound.



This image shows the remains of an ancient delta in Mars's Jezero Crater, which NASA's Perseverance Rover will explore for signs of fossilized microbial life. *Photo courtesy of ESA/DLR/FU-Berlin*

Thomas Harvey - Astronomy Section Member

Solar Outreach Program

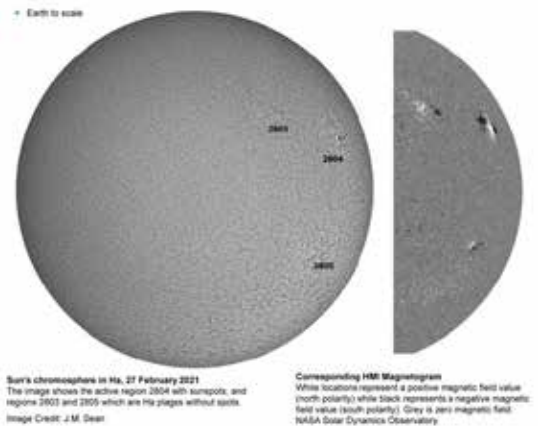


Lunt Solar Telescope - the Astronomy Section's new hydrogen-alpha solar telescope.
Photo courtesy of Jean Dean.

We are pleased to report the hydrogen-alpha (Ha) solar telescope has finally arrived direct from the USA. It allows the observation of the Sun's chromosphere which is an irregular layer above the photosphere (the visible surface of the Sun), where the temperature rises from 6,000°C to about 20,000°C. Other equipment is still on order, including a telescope and special filter to view the Sun's photosphere. Covid has led to worldwide shortages of astronomy equipment; it seems a lot of people have decided to take up astronomy as a hobby during lockdown. We are hopeful though it will all arrive within the next few weeks.

Jean Dean – Astronomy Section Secretary

To read more about Astronomy and Astrophotography please visit www.astronomy.org.gg.
Facebook: [La Société Guernesiaisie](#).



The Sun's chromosphere taken on 27th February 2021 with the Lunt solar telescope. Image courtesy of Jean Dean.

Bat Section - The Guernsey Grey Long Eared Bats

Here in Guernsey our most concerned species of bat is the Guernsey grey long eared bat. This is a species that I think is more endangered than the Blue Whale or the Kakapo. We know of just 3 roost sites and there could be less than a hundred individuals left on the island. In fact, I the Secretary of the Bat Section have never seen a living individual. Plenty of dead ones though!

These unique bats are threatened because of their specialist requirements. The grey long eared bat is a slow breeding and a long lived species. They feed on larger insects that they scoop off tree leaves and are slow flying and hover like butterflies.

They are a void dwelling species and need unobstructed roof spaces, barns or old sheds to roost in. They use ledges to perch on while they feed on their prey. They won't use bat boxes so mitigation for roost destruction is difficult.

The current enthusiasm for installing LED lighting on the island creates an artificial barrier to bats who will actively avoid light due to fear of predation. Light modifies insect behaviour which has an impact on how bats feed.

Pollution from cars, buildings development, loss of grassland to car parks, false grass, old tree removal and cats are all providing challenges to the survival of the grey long eared bats. Their hovering feeding patterns on road side verges make them particularly vulnerable to being killed by cats and cars.

These bats are surprisingly tolerant and trusting of people. For years bats happily roosted in the Little Chapel. The public passed through the Chapel. There was no disturbance and people delighted in seeing them there. In 2017 the Little Chapel was developed and doors put on and the roost was destroyed.

This tragic event was a loss of the only site in the island that I know of where the public could observe native Guernsey bats roosting. We await to see if the Little Chapel development trust will mitigate the loss of this roost site.

With regards to COVID I must point out that the threat to European bats comes from being infected by humans. Not the other way round. The Guernsey Bat Section has stopped doing roost surveys because we don't want to risk passing COVID onto them.

I find it very interesting that grey long eared bats are still surviving in Guernsey. With the sheer onslaught of development and change that the present generation are subjecting the island to it is remarkable that the species hasn't gone extinct yet and is a demonstration of how resilient nature can be.



Grey Long Eared Bat. Photo courtesy of Orly Razgour.

If you want to help Guernsey bats you can: support the bat group with donations so we can buy bat boxes, let sections of your lawn grow long so bats feed off the insect fauna, leave old sheds undisturbed on your land as it will be more likely that bats will be roosting in them, keep your cat indoors at night so it can't go hunting bats, turn off door lights at night, try not to use your car too much to keep pollution levels down and finally write to your local politician asking for better bat protection.

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

How lovely that we were able to meet for the New Year Plant Hunt before the second lockdown caught us. It was, thankfully, a dry afternoon and plenty of people assembled to look for flowering plants. We added 10 plants to last year's list, a phenomenon that was repeated throughout the British Isles and thought to be a result of the warm weather in the later months of 2020.



Common Dog-violet, Viola riviniana. Photo courtesy of Helen Litchfield.

Lockdown came and with it cancellation of all meetings. However, plans for the nursery for native species are progressing well. Materials have been purchased, seeds gathered and Chris Chatfield of Guernsey Gardens together with Raymond Evison have begun the process.

Andrew Lee has arranged for seedlings of Field Scabious, *Knautia arvensis*, that he has raised, to be planted on a bank at the National Trust Les Caches property. We are very pleased to be working with the National Trust to preserve our native species in this way.

Prior to lockdown we were able to hold an indoor meeting in January. Plans for 'food and flower walks' were discussed and we look forward to getting together for these. We will also be holding more evening walks and our regular 1st Saturday in the month walks. With recording visits, socials and study groups, we are looking forward to a very busy few months. Do keep an eye on our Facebook page for open meetings, or join the botany section to be kept informed of all our get togethers.



Butcher's-broom, Ruscus aculeatus. Photo courtesy of Anne Woodington.

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.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/>

Helen Litchfield – Botany Section Secretary

Events

All are welcome to join members of the Botany Section for daytime walks at 2 pm.
Please come in suitable footwear.

Orchid Field

Saturday June 5th Meet at Hougue Patris, Perry's Guide ref 7 F1

Woodland and Coastal Plants

Saturday July 3rd Meet at Petit Bôt, Perry's Guide ref 12 A5

Coastal Flowers

Saturday August 7th Meet at Pembroke, Perry's Guide ref 6 C2

Bee orchids, Walls and Banks

Saturday September 4th Meet at St Germain Perry's Guide ref 14 D2

Woodland and Coastal Plants

Saturday October 2nd Meet at Portelet, Perry's Guide ref 32 D2

Evening walks commence at 6pm.

Bioblitz – Citizen Science Project

Wednesday 12th May Meet at Fort Hommet, Perry's Guide ref 14 B1

Coastal Flowers

Tuesday 8th June Meet at Rousse, Perry's Guide ref 33 F2

Reclamation Mound

Tuesday 13th July Meet at Bordeaux, Perry's Guide ref 7 H5

If you have any queries about the walks kindly email [Helen Litchfield botany@societe.org.gg](mailto:botany@societe.org.gg)

Family History

Family History were busy working behind the scenes during the second lockdown, we were indexing Civil Births from 1922 up to 1933 and Civil Deaths from 1926 to 1948, these will eventually be available in our Family History room at Les Cotils and the Priaulx Library.

We are patiently waiting for the release of the 1921 Census, which is out next year, when we will undertake our own index, again this will be available at both places when finished.

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 emailing Maria van der Tang 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 as above.

Events

Saturday 22nd May, 10.30am, Frossard Theatre, Candie. A slide show and talk on the History of the Guernsey Police by Keith Pike. Booking details to follow by email.

Maria van der Tang – Family History Section Secretary

Historic Buildings

The programme that we had optimistically put together last December for the whole of this year had necessarily to be abandoned after no more than a spluttering start, and so now that we are allowed to have meetings once more, some of the dates and many of the titles are changed. Please therefore note the new dates and titles below and remember to change them in your diaries. The first one was already prepared before it became quite as apt as it turns out to be.

The following talk will examine the evidence for lost layouts of a group of medieval buildings, partly as a result of unexpected discoveries during the work going on at one that had become derelict.

It is as yet by no means certain that the study days in England will go ahead in May, if only because returning islanders might not wish to self-isolate for longer when coming back home than the duration of the excursion itself. We shall just have to see how things develop. But it was necessary to block off accommodation before the rest of England took refuge in the West Country for their holidays, and we have been fortunate in being able to use the whole of The George for ourselves. It is a building put up for traders and their merchandise at annual fairs held on land belonging to the monks of Hinton Charterhouse in the fourteenth century and is a fascinating building in its own right, with lots of puzzles in its evolution to keep us on our toes. On the trip, I also want to take issue with the guide book to Sherborne Old Castle, where there seems to me to be an extremely rare twelfth-century chimney of very unusual form that has completely eluded the textbooks, in spite of the accepted wisdom that it was part of the alterations made by Sir Walter Raleigh, the explorer and erstwhile Governor of the Channel Islands.

At Cleeve, it is possible to see, better than anywhere else in England, how monks got fed up with sleeping together in draughty dormitories and made themselves more comfortable by building partitions within them in the fifteenth century. And we hope to visit the birthplace of photography at Lacock Abbey as well as exploring the wonderfully-preserved village. There is a very great deal to see in the area, so if anyone is really interested in joining us, please do get in touch, preferably with the Section Secretary by e-mail (mrjam@cwgsy.net).

This perhaps just gives you a taste of the variety of things the Section occupies itself with, and we shall of course be delighted to welcome any new members.

John McCormack – Historic Buildings Section Secretary

Events

Please note all visits start at 2.30pm.

Meet at the location.

Saturday 8th May - A walk around La Bellieuse. Please meet at the main gate of St Martin's church.

Saturday 10th July - A visit to Saints Farm, by kind permission of Mr. and Mrs. Hazzan.

Saturday 14th August - A study day, looking at the stone used in our church buildings, and identifying the quarries from which came the Purbeck marble slabs for monumental brasses, with an interlude for eating at St. Peter's Terrace. Details on request.

Saturday 4th September - A joint visit with the renewed Junior Section to the Vale Church, meeting inside the church.

Saturday 9th October – a visit to La Maison Bordeaux by kind permission of Mr Radford.

Junior Section

We are pleased to announce that the Junior Section has been relaunched this year with 2 Archaeology events, 2 Botany walks and an Ornithology visit. You can read more about the Junior Section in the Education Officer's report on page 20.

Events

Saturday 1st May, meeting at 9:50am for 10:00am, this session will last between 1-2 hours, at Castle Cornet - We will be looking at finds from excavations at the castle in the 1970's and at the area excavated. We also have the opportunity to see some parts of the castle not normally open to the public. Afterwards we will go to the Amherst Room where there will be some Tudor artefacts to handle and some medieval craft activities.

Saturday 22nd May, 10:30am - 12:00am at Chouet headland - A Pollinator Walk in collaboration with the Pollinator Project led by Barry Wells.

If you have family membership and would like to be on the mailing list for Junior events please email the Junior Section contact, Sarah Allez - eca@societe.org.gg

Natural History

Events

Monday 17th May - the Natural History section will be visiting La Société's Le Jardin de Devant (Torteval Wood). For more information check La Société's online events diary at www.societe.org.gg, or contact the Section Secretary Lesley Bourgaize by email naturalhistory@societe.org.gg.

Ornithology

Past Events and Outings

Shingle Bank 3rd November 2020

This was well-attended meeting in one of Guernsey's best bird-watching spots. Over the winter, the Shingle Bank provides feeding opportunities for waders and gulls. Roosting Oystercatchers, Curlew and gulls can be seen on the bank. Curlew will also join Redshank, Lapwing, gulls and ducks on the freshwater scrapes on the Colin Best Nature Reserve.

Vale Pond Working Party 18th November 2020

This was organised by the Reserves Committee. Gorse and bracken in front of the hide was obscuring the edge of the pond. At least ten people came and the job was done. Another working party was arranged for January to tackle the invasive non-native German Ivy in the car park area at Rue des Bergers but was postponed because of bad weather.



*Clearing bracken at the Vale Pond.
Photo courtesy of Julie Davis.*

L'Eree Car Park to La Houquette Nature Reserve 28th November 2020

Thirty-seven people attended this walk which was led by Chris Mourant. It was a big group which almost could have been split into two. Birds were thin on the ground, although we did see Redwings coming into roost from La Houquette's Nature Reserve. There were lots of positive comments as several people did not know this quiet corner of the island. The weather was on our side for a change and the view of the sunset over Lihou with a full moon coming up was special.

Interesting Bird Sightings Late Autumn and Winter 2020

First date for **Black-throated Diver** was at Rocquaine on 5th December (ADM). The first of only two sightings this winter.

Great Northern Diver was first sighted at La Vallette on 29th October (MAG) and they have been seen at various sites along the west and east coasts.

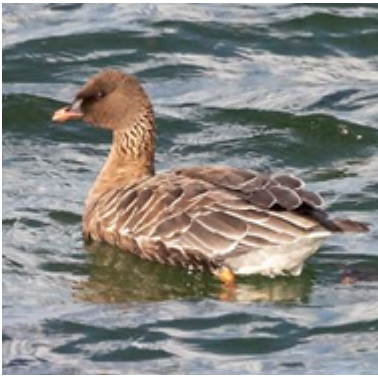
Great-crested Grebe numbers have also been low with single sightings at Perelle, Richmond and Vazon - the dates indicate there may have been just two birds.

Slavonian Grebe was recorded at Vazon on 1st November (WRT) and there were several sightings around L'Eree and Lihou Headland at the beginning of January. These could have been the same individual.

First date for returning **Fulmar** was 26th November at Petit Bôt (MAG). They have also been seen further west along the cliffs and in Herm.

Cattle Egret are seen more often than they were just a few years ago. They have been recorded at several sites around the island. A flock of 8 was seen at Rue a Fresnes on 11th November (MAG).

A **Great White Egret** showed well at the Vale Pond. There were other sightings around the island, the first at the back of La Claire Mare, by long-time member, Peter Vaudin on 29th October. The Vale Pond also had a **Glossy Ibis** on 20th October. (JH)



*Great White Egret at La Claire Mare on 29th October 2020.
The Grey Herons help to give an indication of size.
Photo courtesy of Mike Cunningham.*

*Pink-footed Goose at Rocquaine on the 14th October 2020.
Photo courtesy of Tony Loaring.*

Pink-footed Goose was first seen at Mont Hérault on 8th October (VF APL) and at other sites later in the month.

Colin Best Nature Reserve had **Canada Goose** on 25th October. The waterlogged field at Barras Lane also proved to be a good spot to see geese and ducks.

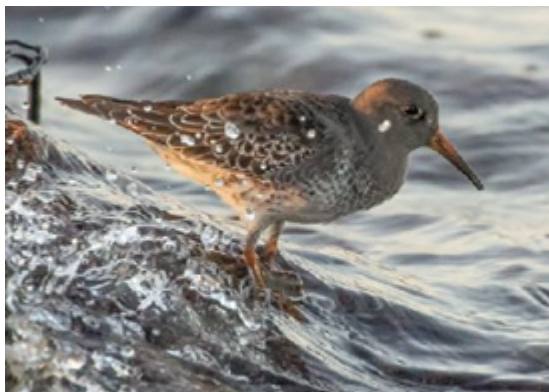
Brent Goose were seen back in September in small numbers. They are now to be seen in their usual overwintering sites including Herm, Bordeaux, Perelle and Vazon.

A **Shoveler Duck** was at Rue des Bergers on 13th October (PJV) and a **Long-Tailed Duck** was seen at Pezeries on 16 November (JH)

Two **Red-breasted Mergansers** were at Grandes Rocques on 11th November (ILP). There have been subsequent sightings at L'Erée and Rocquaine.

There were sightings of **Black Kite** at the Rohais (RJM), **Hen Harrier** at Pleinmont (RAF et al) and Les Gravées, (RJM). **Merlin** were seen at Les Baissières (VF) on 19th October and then at various sites around the island. Vic Froome probably had the best view of a female sitting about a metre away from him, near the fisherman's hut at Port Grat on 23rd December - an early Christmas present!

Two **Little Stint** were seen at the Colin Best Nature Reserve on 2nd October (JH & DS). **Purple Sandpiper** have been seen at a few locations, but they are showing particularly well at Jaonneuse where there is a small flock overwintering with the Turnstone. The first date was 3rd November with a single sighting (ILP), eight were seen on 22nd November (KC). An immature **Sabine's Gull** was seen off Jaonneuse on 4th October (KC).



*Little Stint at Jaonneuse on 6th November 2020.
Photo courtesy of Rod Ferbrache.*



*Hoopoe at Rocquaine on 11th November 2020.
Photo courtesy of Andy Stooling.*

Many people were able to enjoy the sight of a **Hoopoe**. It was first seen at Pleinmont on 5th November (WRT) and then moved to a roadside garden at Rocquaine for a few days.

Kingfisher have showed well throughout the winter at a variety of sites: reserves such as the Vale Pond and Rue des Bergers but also in quarries and along the coast and in the QEII Marina. One was also seen along the Saumarez Nature Trail. They seem to be doing very well. **Woodlark** was seen at Pleinmont on 16th October (JH & APL) in with a small flock of Skylark.

A **Water Pipit** was observed at Albecq Beach on 22nd October (MPL). **Black Redstart** can be seen mainly at locations around the coast, but also at some inland spots. The first date was 1th5 October at Mont Hérault (MAG & WRT). **Ring Ouzel** passed through in October. The first two were seen at Mont Hérault on 14th October (JH DS) and five were seen at Pleinmont on 22nd October (WRT et al). Winter thrushes so far have not been seen in great numbers. First dates were: **Fieldfare** was 2nd October at Pleinmont (ADM), **Redwing** 14th October at Baubigny (MPL) and **Mistle Thrush** at Pleinmont on 15th October (WRT & MAG).



*A delightful photo of a Black Redstart at Salerie Corner on 21st December 2020.
Photo courtesy of Adrian Bott.*

A **Dartford Warbler** showed up at Pleinmont on 4th November (JH & DS). We live in hope that they may re-establish themselves in the island as a breeding species, with milder winters becoming the norm. It seems that **Yellow-browed Warbler** is being seen more often in the UK. There have been several sightings in the island, with three individuals observed in the Vaux de Monel (MAG). The first date was 2nd October at Fort Hommet (JH & DS). The record of one calling at Rue des Valniquets on 18th October (WRT) makes me more determined to improve my recognition of bird song and calls this year! The Vaux de Monel was also the location of a **Rook** on 16th October (WRT, MAG & DS). Pleinmont figures largely in the records and was the location for two **Brambling** on 16th October (WRT & MAG), a Lesser Redpoll on 18th October (WRT, MAG & DS) and four **Common Crossbill** on 14th October (JH & DS). Finally, a **Snow Bunting** was seen at Fort Le Marchant on 31st October (VF, JH & APL).

Observers:

KC	Kevin Childs
RAF	Rod Ferbrache
VF	Vic Froome
MAG	Mark Guppy
JH	Jamie Hooper
APL	Anthony Loaring
MPL	Mark Lawlor
RJM	Bob Murphy
ADM	Andy Marquis
ILP	Ian Le Page
DS	Dave Spicer
WRT	Wayne Turner
PJV	Peter Vaudin



Snow Bunting at Fort Le Marchant on 31st October 2020.

Photo courtesy of Tony Loaring.

Notes by Julie Davis of the Ornithology Section

Education Officers Report

We, the Education Officers began work in our new roles last September and since then we've had a great deal of help along the way from representatives of the various sections and other agencies, which has been invaluable both in terms of practical assistance and also in allowing us to 'pick their brains' and benefit from their experience and expertise. We are hugely grateful for all the support, encouragement and good advice that we've received and look forward to repaying our colleagues' generosity with new interest in La Société among the younger generation.

The past six months have been as busy as they have been enjoyable; we've discovered that we like bats despite having previously found them quite scary, and that crab-wrangling (which is what I like to call crab surveys) is one of our favourite things to do. We've given presentations at schools, taken part in Guernsey Museum events and met lots of children and young people, from pre-schoolers to sixth formers considering their university options. We have visited ancient dolmen with our Junior members, been very impressed by their online questions about the Mars Perseverance landing and tried our hand at some entry-level tree surgery.

This year's plans were rudely interrupted, like everybody else's, by Lockdown 2 which, although unwelcome, gave us some breathing space after a busy close to 2020 to concentrate on pulling together resources and coming up with a packed schedule for the rest of the year.



Rockpooling.

Photo courtesy of Donna Francis.

We are looking forward to introducing our expanded range of corporate offerings to companies looking for a useful and enjoyable way to use their Corporate Social Responsibility hours (and should your organisation be looking for volunteer opportunities, please contact Becky Ogier on 725093 or at ecl@societe.org.gg for our e-brochure). These activities include something for everyone, from dolphin surveying to bird hide restoration, and are a terrific team-building exercise - perfect for re-bonding after a difficult start to the year.

Sarah and I are also very excited about our Junior programme for 2021, which will include monthly meetings of the archaeology club, spring walks to learn about flowers and birds, collaborations with the Pollinator Project and the Clean Earth Trust, astronomy, a visit to a church, a bat walk and much more. Should your children be interested in attending any or all of our sessions, don't hesitate to get in touch – and we're always keen to hear their ideas for future events!

Becky Ogier ecl@societe.org.gg Sarah Allez eca@societe.org.gg

The Conservation Herd

On 14th February 2021 two calves were born and a week later were collected by Dave Bartram, La Société's Conservation Herd Manager and one of his volunteers Luca Gaudion and his dad and delivered to their new home for the next few months. The boys will join the main Herd later in the year but first they are looked after morning and evening and fed 6 litres of milk each day by a group of volunteers, they are also left a bucket of hay and calf rearer nuts which as solids they will eat more of as they get older.

They have a calf hut to sleep in at night and will keep their coats on until the temperature rises to at least double digits. They have had their horns removed and have been castrated to ensure they have a good temperament and are safe for volunteers to handle.



Our House. Photo courtesy of Dave Bartram.



Morning Feed. Photo courtesy of Dave Bartram.

In approximately 6 weeks they will be let out to a larger enclosure and will have grass to eat. In July they will move to La Société's fields out at St Peter's to begin their job of grazing to increase biodiversity. They will join the main herd around September time.

Update 23rd April - The calves are in the same place however they are now out of their nursery enclosure and are starting to be weened off milk, they no longer have their morning milk and will soon stop their evening milk as they are now eating hay, grass and a mix of cereals. They are going on a road trip soon to attend the Accidental Zoo open days to help promote the work of the Herd.

If you wish to follow the progress of these little ones please follow our Facebook page [La Société Conservation Herd | Facebook](#).

Dave Bartram – Herd Manager

Guernsey Biological Records Centre Update

2020 was a unique experience that I am sure many of us have no desire to repeat. Yet it wasn't all bad as so many people got out and reconnected with nature. The News Section on the Records Centre website has several posts if you'd like an in-depth look at some of 2020's highlights that are summarised below:

- Huge number of cetacean sightings. Our local whales and dolphins clearly enjoyed the quieter seas.
 - By June we had 19 confirmed owlets as part of the Barn Owl Survey.
 - August was dominated by multiple reports of the bumblebee mimic fly, *Tachina grossa*, the Yellow Faced Fly is a parasitoid whose caterpillars predate Oak Eggar moths, *Lasiocampa quercus*, and Fox moth, *Macrothylacia rubi*.
 - New Black-backed meadow ant, *Formica pratensis*, nest discovered miles away from the cliffs in the lanes of St Saviour.
 - Death's-head hawkmoth, *Acherontia Atropos*, confirmed breeding in Guernsey.
- We also launched some new surveys, which is the focus of this update.

Intertidal crab surveys

In recent years there has been a shift in the crabs on our shores with new species being recorded and anecdotal reports talking about the decline in some native species, particularly shore crabs (*Carcinus maenas*). Sea Fisheries focus on commercial species, so there is no dedicated assessment of other species on our shores.

From September both Dr Mel Broadhurst-Allen from the Alderney Wildlife Trust (AWT) and GBRC began trial crab surveying to develop a survey we could roll out across the Bailiwick. Becky Ogier and Sarah Allez, La Société's new Conservation Education Team got stuck in learning about crabs and made it the focus of their first Corporate Social Responsibility group who were both incredibly enthusiastic and impressively efficient!

Crabs are living animals and sometimes rather uncooperative. We quickly realised very few measurements can be taken from Lady crabs (*Necora puber*) as they're so aggressive. Chancre crabs (*Cancer pagurus*) by contrast tend to curl their legs protectively beneath them, while the relative new arrival, the Furrowed or Montagu's Crab (*Xantho hydrophilus*) raises its rear legs threateningly, even trying to grab you with their legs.



This chancre crab was not impressed with our attempts to measure her. It took several minutes for her to let go of the pencil and callipers.
Photo courtesy of Elizabeth Sweet, GBRC.



A shore crab, centre, being gently moved into position to measure its carapace.

Photo courtesy of Elizabeth Sweet, GBRC.

This survey is great fun and you can tailor the level to a group, so for people with recording experience you can take morphometric measurements of their crushers and abdomen flaps and other detailed information, or you can stick to measuring carapace size and identify if the crab is male or female.

This survey has 3 main goals:

1. To raise awareness of the changing distribution of native and non-native crabs across the Bailiwick.
2. To encourage people to explore the coast and engage with our ocean.
3. To use citizen science to generate valuable scientific data and to make these results freely available.

Ormer surveying

Why should we care about our ormer population? Globally there have been many commercial fisheries for ormers, including in Guernsey and many of these have collapsed due to overfishing. In 1999, Jersey saw a huge die off in ormer numbers, with a reported death rate of 50-60%, but luckily Guernsey and Sark were not affected. Although a cause was never formally identified, the disease, most probably a virus, started in Brittany. This led to the ban on importing ormers to Guernsey in an effort to prevent the spread of disease. The Jersey ormers recovered but if we don't know anything about our ormer population it cannot be carefully managed, putting wild stocks at risk of collapse.

Over the past 6 months we were struck by the large numbers of ormers present in the intertidal zone during crab surveys. We frequently found multiple ormers on a single rock. Lockdown meant La Société's ormer tagging project was not able to go ahead but it was possible to do some socially distanced surveying. After conscripting family members as my rock turning team, we headed out on an ormering tide to find out a bit more about our local *Haliotis tuberculata* population.

This survey is straightforward, every rock turned was given a number and the following data was collected:

1. If there were ormers or not
2. How many ormers on the rock
3. If they were big enough
4. The length of every ormer we found
5. What other species were there
6. GPS position of rock where ormers are present

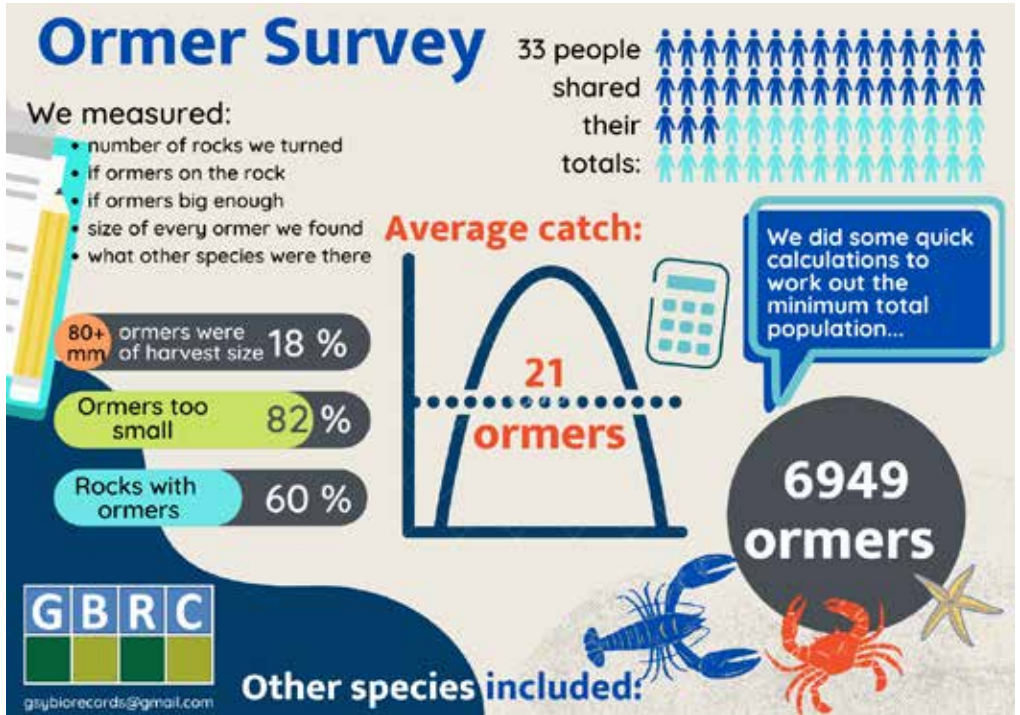
These data help us calculate what percentage of the population is "mature" or of harvestable size. By also measuring the ormers too small to be collected we can see if the population is healthy by looking at the range of sizes.

Some interesting data is already emerging. The original plan was to calculate a potential density of the ormers in an area using the number of rocks we turned and the presence of ormers. In the field it quickly became apparent that crab survey experience means our surveyors are familiar with what type of rock we are likely to find ormers under. So the presence of ormers on 60% of the rocks we turned is a data artefact. We need to recruit people without the experience to get a random sample.

At the end of February we asked people on social media to send in their catch totals and location and using the initial survey data we can calculate a minimum population size for our ormers. Once ormer season is over the final data will be published, although precise location data will be blurred.

Several people are now counting the number of undersized ormers they find and at present just 18% of the ormers we measured were big enough to harvest. More ormer measuring is needed before any robust analysis on population distribution can be done, but initial results are positive. The largest ormer reported so far is a healthy 120mm (12cm) long.

Since February, 33 people have sent in their catches for 8 different locations revising the minimum ormer population size to just under 7000 ormers. Clearly our population is much larger than this, as not every harvest has been submitted, nor every ormer counted, but it's a starting point.



Infographics as of 14th March 2021, detailing what we have found out about our ormers so far.
Photo courtesy of Elizabeth Sweet, GBRC.

Guernsey and Alderney Amphibian and Reptile Survey (GAARRS)

Finally, in partnership with Amphibian Reptile Conservation (ARC) and Alderney Wildlife Trust we're launching Guernsey and Alderney Amphibian and Reptile Survey (GAARRS). This will build on the survey work by John Lihou and Tanya Walls. If you'd like to get involved we're looking for a survey coordinator so please check out <https://groups.arguk.org/guarg> and email us if you're interested.

Elizabet Sweet – Guernsey Biological Records Centre Manager
gsybiorec@gmail.com

Thanks to our Corporate Membership Sponsors for 2021

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Corporate Social Responsibility

Would your workplace welcome an easy, fuss-free way to organise CSR days? Would you like an interesting and fun day out with your colleagues? La Société recently introduced an expanded range of corporate offerings for companies seeking a useful and enjoyable way to use their Corporate Social Responsibility hours. These activities include something for everyone, from dolphin surveying to bird hide restoration, and are a terrific team-building exercise - perfect for re-bonding after a difficult start to the year and a great opportunity to try something new together. Should your organisation be looking for volunteer opportunities, please contact Becky Ogier on 725093 or at ecl@societe.org.gg for our e-brochure.

Associated Groups

Alderney Wildlife Trust	Roland Gauvain	822935
Blue Dolphins Sub-Aqua Club		bluedolphinssac@gmail.com
Channel Islands Occupation Society (Guernsey)	Liz Boxall	candielodge@cwgsy.net
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@gmail.com



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.

Online Book Shop

Dear Member, I would like to recommend some books for you to take with you on your walks through the lanes, exploring our Nature Reserves or walking on the beach starting with "Perry's Coastal Walks and Nature Trails in Guernsey" (£7.95) - the perfect companion to your summer rambles.

The second book is ideal for beginners looking to identify our wild flowers - "Wild Flowers of the Bailiwick" is beautifully illustrated by Wendy Bramall, descriptions are kept simple and the book is suitable to use with children.

The third book is more suited to the keen and knowledgeable Botanist, "Check List of Guernsey Plants" by Rachel Rabey and Jane Gilmour of our Botany Section is priced at £6. There are no pictures and Latin names are included. There is a similar guide purely for the plants in the Parish of St Martin priced at £3.50.

"The Guernsey Bird Guide and Map" (£2) shows you the best places to watch our birds whilst "Common Life on the Seashore" (£3) is well illustrated and perfect for rock pooling and seashore life identification, also suitable for children.

The above books and many more are available via the link below to our online bookshop (website www.societe.org.gg). Books can be posted for a small charge or collected from Candie during office opening hours. A free leaflet listing our Nature Reserves will be enclosed with any order. Happy browsing!

<https://bit.ly/38sh5fV>

Kate Lee
Secretary



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	Jade Kershaw		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		ecd@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@societe.org.gg
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.co.uk
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 Maurant	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		

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

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