



La Société

For nature, history and
science in Guernsey



Long-tailed Tits feeding. Photo courtesy of Mike Prosser.

Welcome to the February newsletter. We hope you will find it of interest. We would like to take this opportunity of thanking all Members for their continued support. Now that COVID rules have eased we hope you will be able to enjoy the various events that will be taking place over the year – we have listed a few of them in the newsletter. Do keep an eye on the website calendar www.societe.org.gg for details of all forthcoming events.

I would like to take this opportunity to tell you about 2 new Section Secretaries. Our Archaeology Section Secretary of 15 years Tanya Walls has (sadly for us) moved to England and has been replaced by Andy Lane. More about Andy on page 4. Chris Mourant recently stood down as Ornithology Section Secretary and has been replaced by Julie Davis who contributes regularly to the newsletter. We would also like to welcome our new Communications Officer Pierre Ehmann. Contact details for all can be found on page 28.

Kate Lee - Secretary

AGM 2022

The AGM will be held at Candie in the Frossard Theatre on Wednesday 23rd March beginning at 7.30pm for the purpose of transacting the following business:

- (a) To hear the report of the outgoing President, Donna Francis.
- (b) To receive the annual statement of accounts.
- (f) To elect the officers and members of the Council. Julia Henney is standing down as Vice-President and Donna Francis is standing down as President. The post of Vice President and President are vacant. Rodney Collenette has come to the end of his 6 year term on Council as an Ordinary Member. Colin Spicer is stepping down as an Ordinary Member. There are four vacancies for Ordinary Members on Council. If any member wishes to propose a Vice-President, President or Ordinary Member for a seat on Council kindly send the candidates CV to the Secretary at Candie together with the names of the proposer and seconder by Thursday 10th March 2022.
- (g) To appoint accountants.
- (h) To consider any other matters or propositions affecting La Société. Any member who wishes to make a proposal at the AGM should submit it in writing, supported by a seconder to the Secretary to reach her by Thursday 10th March 2022.

A full agenda together with the minutes of the last meeting and a copy of the 2021 accounts will be available to all members who attend the AGM. Details of nominations for Members of Council and all proposals for discussion will be displayed on the Noticeboard at Candie from Friday 11th March 2022. After the AGM there will be a short break, during which refreshments will be served. Then there will be an illustrated talk (details to be announced).

2020 Transactions

The 2020 Transactions (photo of Forest Church on the front cover) are now available for collection from Candie on a Tuesday/Thursday or Saturday morning between 10am and 11.30am. Parking is easier on a Saturday.

Richard Hocart, who edits the Transactions, says: 'the Transactions for 2020 contain a variety of interesting articles as well as the usual section reports. Andy Marquis describes the tiny invertebrates that play such a vital part in breaking down dead leaves in the soil, an account illustrated by many of his own photographs. Professor Peter Goodall of the University of South Queensland examines Georges Métivier's 'Franco-Norman' dictionary published in 1870, revealing the wide linguistic knowledge of this remarkable Guernseyman. Donovan Hawley and Laurie Waite of the Clifton Antiquarian Club describe their recent excavation of Le Trépied Dolmen, which has established a more precise date for its construction. John McCormack examines the evidence for rood screens in Guernsey churches, all of which fell victim to religious reformers in the sixteenth century. I have contributed a history of the Le Marchant Manor in town and have suggested an earlier date for the building of the Constables Office than the date usually quoted.

There are obituaries of three Société stalwarts who sadly passed away in 2021: Edith Le Patourel, Bill Hill and David Le Conte. We are pleased to be able to publish David's last article, an illustrated account of Guernsey Astronomers Past and Present. Finally Professor Tim Thornton of Huddersfield University, who has made a special study of the history of the Channel Islands has contributed a review of Professor David Cressy's new book "England's Islands in a Sea of Troubles", which examines and contrasts the relationship between the government in London and the offshore islands during the 16th and 17th centuries. Copies of the book are available to order from the Lexicon and are available online from Amazon.

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

Forthcoming Event

Nature Guernsey will hold a Rockpool Ramble on Sunday 20th March between 11am to 12 noon at Salerie Corner, Gategny/South Esplanade. What3words – cope.suppose.parts. Event weather permitting, please check www.facebook.com/natureguernsey on the day.

Section Reports

Archaeology

We have now finished our excavations in the garden of ‘The Shell House’ at Le Villocq (Castel). The house originated in at least the 13th century, although it has undergone many alterations since then. There was once another building behind it, as can be seen on the 1787 Duke of Richmond map, but this had been destroyed by the 20th century. Currently there are plans to restore the house and extend into the garden behind and we were curious to see whether any remains of this second building survived. We dug a series of test pits to try and find the position and hopefully some material to date it. Surprisingly we found very few deposits or artefacts older than the 19th century and concluded that the garden must have been worked down, almost to the natural gravel, in relatively modern times. A few pieces of prehistoric pottery, a piece of Roman tile and some medieval sherds were the earliest finds.

We suspected that a ruinous and overgrown wall running east west across the garden might incorporate parts of the lost building and so dug two test pits against its south face. Soil had built up against the wall and we dug some 1.1 metres down to the gravel before we found traces of a platform and indications of the lines of the walls. There were jumbled small stones intermixed with clay in the deposits above and the building must have been carefully taken down so that the stone could be re-used elsewhere; the presence of clay indicated that the walls were clay-bonded. We recovered a bone from below the footing of the upstanding garden wall and hopefully we will get a radiocarbon date from this.



The north wall of the building behind “The Shell House”, seen from the north, showing the large grounders, quoin stones and the blocked door and window. A stone path leading from the back of the house to the blocked doorway can be seen in the trench dug between the two buildings. *Photo courtesy of Phil de Jersey.*

Once we had cleared the vegetation from the south face of the upstanding wall and moved material stacked against the north face, we could see the façade of a building with a blocked doorway and at least one window preserved. It has some very large grounders and quoinstones, which suggest an early date, as does the evidence of clay bonding from the test pits. The north wall of the building survived because it had been incorporated into a garden wall, which later still had a lean-to building constructed against it. The stone from the rest of the building may have been re-used in an extension to the main house, now gone, but shown on the 1900 Ordnance Survey map.

This my last report for the Communiqué because I am stepping down as Archaeology Secretary after fifteen years. The new Archaeology Secretary will be Andy Lane, Andy has worked in the States Archaeology Service since 2019 and before this was a Keeper at Castle Cornet. He can be contacted at Andrew.Lane@gov.gg

Tanya Walls – Archaeology Section Secretary

Astronomy

Current News from the Observatory



Members demolishing the old telescope building and working on the new build.



*Work on the Observatory.
Photos courtesy of Jean Dean
and Anthony Nel*

The centrepiece of the Astronomy site is its timber roll-off roof observatory which houses two research-grade telescopes, one a Meade 16" diameter Schmidt Cassegrain with a 4-metre focal length which gives exceptional views of the planets, nebulae and galaxies. It was constructed in 1992 and finished in 1993 and has during its lifetime accommodated over 10,000 or more visitors of all ages. In 2020 after our summer open evenings, it was decided to close the observatory building because there was a concerning amount of rot in one of the corners. The aim was to repair the structure, but after we started to remove panels the extent of the rot was far more widespread than originally thought, and after seeking advice from a local builder it was decided that it would be cheaper to replace the whole structure. Considering the building was constructed out of second-hand greenhouse timber and the packing crates from a new generator that had been delivered to Guernsey Electricity it is a great testament to those who built it, that it lasted nearly 30 years! The challenge to members was to replace it with a similar structure that would last at least as long within an affordable budget.

We decided to take this opportunity to review how we host our visits. School class sizes are typically over 30 children plus adults. If the weather is fine then we can accommodate such numbers; however, if it is raining then it becomes more difficult as our lecture room only accommodates 20 people seated and a few in the rear kitchen area. We decided to make the telescope building dual-use: an observatory with the roof rolled-off when the weather is suitable, and an additional classroom space when the weather is poor. We were slightly restricted, as we decided to keep the cost more affordable by using the existing structural steel supporting the roof when it is rolled off. However, we were able to enlarge the footprint by 600mm in both directions. The extra floor space and a better quality finish inside, along with better lighting and a (hopefully) 50" flat-screen wall-mounted monitor will allow seating for approximately 12-16 people. The extra size will also allow us more room to replace the telescope mount in the future.

We are very grateful to Crocker Build for supporting us in this project both financially by passing on all materials at cost and labour at favourable rates, and by fitting in the work at a time when the construction industry is very busy. We are also very grateful to Norman Piette for special rates on the timber, the electrician Richard Sweet who also passed on materials at cost and favourable labour rates, and Edmundson's Electrical Supplies for generous discounts on materials. We are also most appreciative of the grant made available to us from La Société Guernesiale for the project which is being supplemented by Astronomy Section funds.

We demolished the existing building on the 3rd October 2021, leaving the telescope in place – and very well protected. The structural framework and roof were completed by Crocker Build by the end of October last year. Since then, Astronomy Section members, along with retired carpenter Peter Dean, have spent in the order of 600 hours to date, finishing the structure, battening and fitting external cladding and painting. We are now finishing the inside ready for the second-fix electrical work. There is still some external work to be completed, including constructing concrete steps, fixing a handrail and generally tidying up the site.

We hope to have the building finished around Easter time and are very much looking forward to being able to use the telescopes and return to normal operations including educational and public outreach and hosting the juniors. We will hold an official opening event and will name the site the David Le Conte Astronomical Observatory, in honour of David.

Jean Dean – Astronomy Section Secretary

Bat Section

Waitrose donate to charities and not for profit organisations every quarter with their “Community Matters” project. In the 2021 Autumn quarter Waitrose’s aim was to help Environmental Projects. On the 27th of October 2021 Waitrose donated £350 to the LSG Bat Group.



Photo courtesy of Vanessa Gillease.

The photo shows Charles Hurford, Sally Pedlar from the Bat Section with little Arthur in his bat suit being given the cheque by Vanessa Gillease from Community Matters of Waitrose and Partners at Admiral Park. Vanessa said “we are happy to donate the money to the bat section because bats always seem to get overlooked”.

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

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

Botany

Unfortunately due to some very stormy weather the Botany section was forced to cancel its planned Saturday morning walks in both October and December of 2021. We were able to hold walks in November at La Claire Mare/Colin Best Reserve and also take part in the Botanical Society of Britain and Ireland (BSBI) New Year Plant hunt which this year we completed at Bordeaux Hump.

There was a good turn out for our walk along the shingle bank, through La Claire Mare and the back of the Colin Best Reserve. It was interesting to visit both sites at the same time and observe the differences between them at a botanical level.

The New Year Plant Hunt (NYPH) was also quite well attended considering it was a fairly cold wind and the time of year. The NYPH has now been running for eleven years with the Societe Botany Section joining in most years since 2015. The aim of the NYPH is to record all the plants in flower over the first four days of January. The recording session needs to last no more than three hours and results are uploaded onto the NYPH website. These results contribute towards the understanding of how wild and naturalised plants are responding to changes in autumn and winter weather patterns, both annually and longer term. In previous years analysis of results from the project has shown interesting differences between urban and more rural areas. The results can be seen on the NYPH website (nyph.bsbi.org) and analysis of this years results should be available from the end of January.

This year our group recorded twenty-seven different species in flower at Bordeaux Hump. Down slightly from the thirty-five recorded last year at Petit Bôt. However the sites are obviously different with Bordeaux being more exposed to the weather and we did find different species in flower at the two sites.



The Guernsey Fern (Asplenium x microdon). Photo courtesy of Anne Woodington.

Sadly, in the November, an *Asplenium x microdon*, one of our rare spleenwort hybrids, was dug up from, a place where it has been growing undisturbed for many years. In the light of this, the decision has been taken to hide location information for our rare species on our online plant database. The news of this loss and the need to have to take this action has saddened the whole group.



Jersey Botanist Visit. Photo courtesy of Jersey Botany Group.

On a more positive note we were visited by a group of 6 Botanists from Jersey during October with visits to the lanes in St. Saviours, and Saumarez park and nature trail, with a dinner at the Fleur du Jardin. Our group also enjoyed a Christmas lunch at La Barbarie Hotel.

Anna Cleal – Botany Section Secretary

Botany Walks – please meet at 1.45pm for a 2.00pm start.

Saturday 5th March – Fort Doyle for Spring Flowers (Perry's Guide ref 7 H1)

Saturday 2nd April – Icart to Saints Bay for Spring Flowers (Perry's Guide ref 30 B5)

Saturday 7th May – Pleinmont to Pezeries Point for Spring Flowers (Perry's Guide ref 32 D2)

Saturday 4th June – Les Vicheries Orchid Fields for Orchids - (Perry's Guide ref 20 C3)

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

Join the Botany Section's Facebook page to find details of the monthly walks and recent plant photos. Once you have joined you can add your own images.

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

Entomology

Thanks to a generous grant from the Strategy for Nature fund, administered by ACLMS the Entomology section will shortly be taking possession of some specialised photographic equipment. This equipment, under the direction of Andy Marquis will greatly enhance our ability to separate and identify closely related species. Identification keys are used by entomologists but these rely on very clear images, not always easy to obtain on moving insects sometimes just one or two millimetres long!

We will be acquiring a high-resolution digital camera (Canon EOS R5) together with a microscope objective lens which can be fitted to the camera via a cheap tube lens.

This can then be mounted onto an automated focus stacking rail which is also being purchased. The rail will allow for an automated focus stack to be carried out. The kit being purchased also allows for a stack and rotate, what they call virtual object creation or multi-axis stacking (see <https://cognisys-inc.com/learn-how-to/multi-axis-stack>).

With many insects, photographers will be familiar with the difficulty of getting enough of the insect in focus whilst still very sharp and close enough to allow identification. This kit will take a photo, move forward, take another etc, etc for a determined number of shots until there are enough slices of the insect in focus to digitally create an all in focus photo, it will then rotate a set number of degrees and do it all again until there is a complete image from every angle, it does this automatically and very precisely as per the settings programmed in. This is very difficult to do by hand, even with a manual focussing rail, the distances involved are measured in microns and every movement must be equal to work properly.

With this equipment we will be able to photograph specimens very precisely and send the photos to experts with more hope of an identification rather than the current method of sending a physical specimen half way around the world (as with some ants which are currently on the way to the world expert in Hong Kong). It will also allow us to engage the public with some “wow factor” specimens.

We are also purchasing some equipment to allow the measuring of small insects precisely using home compound microscopes. As many will know when following a key, an exact ratio is sometimes required to determine species.

The final item on the list is a Berlese Funnel which will be useful for all members to sample soil, leaf litter, moss, seaweed etc for specimens. Homemade ones can work, but a proper one makes life a little easier and safer when left to do it's job.

I am hopeful that by using this new up to date equipment, we can expect to add some new species to the Guernsey lists.

Trevor Bourgaize – Entomological Section Secretary

Family History

The Family History Room openings have re-commenced on the 1st and 3rd Saturdays of each month between 10am and Noon.

The first meeting of the year will take place on Saturday 26th March at the Frossard Theatre, Candie at 10am. This will be the postponed AGM followed by a slide show of old photos of Guernsey by Brian de Jersey. The illustrated talk will be open to all Société Members but seats will be offered to Family History members first.

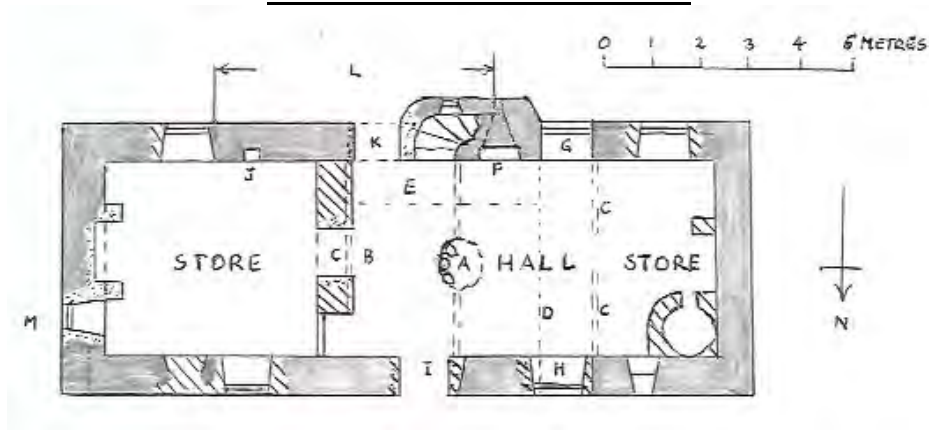
Please note that the Island Archives have changed their phone number, it is now 224512. You will need to call and book an appointment to view any records and say which records you would like to view, so they can get them out and ready for your visit.

Maria van der Tang – Family History Section Secretary

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

DISCOVERY AT BORDEAUX



ARMOREL (983) GROUND-FLOOR PLAN

BASED ON MEASUREMENTS BY ALAN RITCHIE; ROOMS LABELLED AS ORIGINALLY SET OUT.

A – Remains of central hearth

B - Position of medieval high table, facing fire

C – Positions of former timber-framed partitions

D - Probable extent of unheated W. chamber

- | | |
|--|--|
| E – Position of former gallery linking chambers | F - Évier, draining below tourelle |
| G – Primary arched back doorway | H - Primary arched front doorway |
| I – Medieval hall window | J – Keeping place |
| K - 19 th -century doorway forced through back wall | L – 19 th -century kitchen addition |

12TH AND 13TH-CENTURY FABRIC SHADED GREY; 17TH-CENTURY ALTERATIONS WITH DIAGONAL LINES; 19TH-CENTURY ALTERATIONS DOTTED.

A most unexpected and unique discovery last year has added greatly to our knowledge of a vital transition in house-design in the islands. During building work, when 19th-century additions and alterations inside were being removed from Armorel and recent plaster taken off all interior walls, the remains came to light of a central hearth, such as remained in use until the sixteenth or seventeenth centuries in Britain, or even longer in such conservative settings as Oxford or Cambridge colleges, but which in France and these islands had been superseded by wall fireplaces in most houses by the fourteenth century.

Fortunately, Alan Ritchie, who lives nearby, recognised the importance of this and made drawings before contractors removed the stones and the scores of limpet shells associated with them. As can be seen from the composite plan above, only part of the hearth survived, as the rest had been destroyed when a 19th-century floor was put into the western part of the house.

For several years we have been finding very clear evidence for extremely ancient fabric retained when wall fireplaces were first inserted into halls and chambers, but we had never expected to find an actual example of such an open hearth, functioning, of course, in a hall that was open from the ground to the roof-timbers, where smoke escaped through thatch or via a louvre long lost.

Not only is the discovery of immense importance in itself, but it has also allowed us other insights, both at Armorel itself and for the evolution of house-design elsewhere in the islands. By looking at blocked openings in the walls here, we were able to work out that the hall had once been centrally-placed in a three-cell house, with entries close to the west end, where a single-bay store was lit by a small, low window that has now been partly unblocked and displayed externally. This room and a larger, two-bay store at the eastern end would each have been divided from the hall by timber-framed partitions, signs of which survive elsewhere, but unfortunately not at Armorel, where absolutely no medieval timbers remain. In the 17th century, the western partition was entirely removed, and a stone cross-wall just on the ground floor took the place of the eastern one, its doorway later altered. A wall fireplace with bread oven to one side was then built against the eastern gable wall, but not recessed into it. A new front door was created opposite the tourelle entrance, and a new partition created a cross-passage. 'High' and 'low' ends of the hall/kitchen/living-room were thus completely reversed.

However, although the house was built with this open hearth downstairs, a heated chamber above the two-bay store at the eastern end of the house had a wall fireplace from the start. Of course, if a chamber were to be heated at all, it would need to have such a fireplace, if only because an open hearth upstairs could only work if supported on a stone pillar, and then would have been most inconvenient for the placing of beds. Fortunately, the rough stone corbels for this wall fireplace,

partly covered by a 19th-century chimney breast, also survive, and, most importantly of all, are to all intents and purposes identical to those of the upstairs hearth in Bordeaux Haven/The Moorings (982) next door to Armorel, where the arch supported by the corbels is complete; there is a photo on p. 77 of 'Channel Island Houses' where it will be seen that it in no way matches that of the cooking hearth in that house, clearly much later, illustrated on p. 298.

Taken together, then, this evidence enables us to understand that while cooking and socialising were yet continuing around central hearths downstairs in island houses, their private bedchambers had already been provided with wall fireplaces. Though new houses were being built with wall fireplaces both upstairs and downstairs by 1300 or soon after, older buildings clearly did not always update their halls until more than a hundred years later, explaining the contrast between fireplaces at Bordeaux Harbour/The Moorings. At Armorel, where there is absolutely no sign of any intermediate wall fireplace downstairs before the major rearrangement of c.1650, one must wonder whether in some conservative, perhaps poorer families, or where houses were tenanted, updating did not happen at all during medieval times.

Opinion is divided as to whether the tourelle is a primary feature or not, but whatever the case, it must have been present by the fourteenth century, to which period all other 'square' tourelles belong, often associated with various archaic features, such as round chimneys or arched doorways of primitive design. It is likely that the smaller chamber, at the west end of the house, oversailed the original entry as suggested on the plan, which would have meant that the timber supporting a gallery would have been no longer than any beam elsewhere in the house.

As for dating, without going into tedious detail, I think that Bordeaux Haven/The Moorings is the earliest of this group, perhaps c.1250; that Armorel is a generation later; and that La Maison Bordeaux is mid 14th-century. I also think that all three houses were built on the same holding, almost certainly by a family engaged in trade connected to Bordeaux.

John McCormack – Historic Buildings Section Secretary

Events

Saturday 5th March – Frossard Theatre, Candie at 7.30pm a talk entitled "Early Wall Fireplaces and their Influence on House-plans" by John McCormack.

Saturday 26th March – Frossard Theatre, Candie at 7.30pm a talk entitled "Later Medieval and Post-medieval Fireplaces" by John McCormack

Saturday 9th April – Frossard Theatre, Candie at 7.30pm a talk entitled "Discovering La Tour-Gand and Various Other Surprises" by Callum Tostevin-Hall.

Saturday 14th May, a visit to Les Adams (327 CIH) by kind permission of the new owners. Please meet on site at 2.30pm.

New members are always very welcome to attend, but should contact John McCormack (tel. 720303; e-mail mrjam@cwgsy.net) beforehand in case of alterations or final instructions. Those attending regularly should kindly ensure that they are already members of La Société.

Ornithology

Some Sightings during Autumn and Winter 2021 – 2022

Great Northern and **Black-throated Divers** have been sighted off the west coast during January, together with **Slavonian Grebe**.

Cattle Egret, once very uncommon, have been seen at the Reservoir, King's Mills, Les Grantez (9) and Rue des Bergers

An Autumn highlight was a **Hen Harrier**. Wayne Turner and Mark Guppy were the first members to catch up with this scarce migrant visitor at Pleinmont on 16th October.



Andy Stoealing captured a different juvenile at La Claire Mare in November, 2019. It is difficult to separate young birds from adult females and they are often referred to as 'ringtail' Hen Harriers as a catch-all term – something I have only learned very recently. With both these individuals, slight plumage differences and a yellow iris meant that Wayne and Mark were able to confirm juvenile. This individual probably stayed for several weeks, last reported on 18th November. Jamie and Michelle Hooper and Tony Bisson saw another individual at Mont Herault and above Creux Mahie on 22nd January. Dave Andrews saw one at Jerbourg on 30th December, most likely a different individual.

Dave Carre had a good view of a **Water Rail** at the Vale Pond on 21st January. These birds are secretive, spending time hidden in reeds. Looked at head-on, they are surprisingly thin which allows them to get through the narrow gaps between the stems. The beak is soft, almost rubbery, and is adept at grabbing a wide variety of food such as seeds and berries. They will also predate voles, young birds and carrion.





Golden Plover at Pleinmont, photo by Andy Stoaling from 18th January. Several members caught up with this visitor, also seen at Mont Herault.



Peter Vaudin got 2022 off to a great start with a **Grey Phalarope** at L'Eree on 2nd January. Small, elegant waders, they have very characteristic feeding behaviours. It was a great spot given the grey weather, fading light and grey plumage. The photo, by Dave Carre, was taken at Jaonneuse back in November, 2020.

Great Spotted Woodpecker has been seen at several locations around the island, most often at Saumarez Park, but Mark Guppy caught up with one at Le Foulon on 18th January. Although a record from last year, Trevor Bourgaize and I were lucky enough to have one in the nets at Le Château des Marais back in the autumn. Trevor has also heard one drumming close to his garden near Fort Road. The local population is slowly increasing.

Mike Cunningham has had two **Coal Tits** in his garden, the rest of us have had to look at the Reservoir and Le Guet to catch up with these scarce winter visitors. He took this photo on 20th January.



Surprisingly, there was only one sighting of **Yellow-browed Warbler** during the autumn migration. One individual flew into nets that Trevor Bourgaize had at Le Château des Marais on 9th October. I was fortunate enough to ring it and add a tick to my Guernsey bird list.



Jamie Hooper and Vic Froome found a **Water Pipit** at the Richmond end of Vazon on 21st January.

They are not easy to identify as they are so similar to other pipit species – the typical ‘little brown job’.

Photo by Anthony Loaring, Shingle Bank, February 2018



Winter finches, **Siskin** and **Brambling** have been seen at various sites, including the Reservoir and Le Foulon. I have been lucky enough to have a couple of Brambling in my garden near L'Ancrese, mixing with a small flock of **Chaffinch**.



Rod Ferbrache photographed the **Brambling** on the left at Vazon on 22nd November. Mike Cunningham captured images of female and male Siskin in his garden in St. Peter Port. These finches are uncommon winter visitors, many more will come into the island if there is cold weather further north later in the winter. Siskin love to feed on Alder and people have enjoyed good views of them at Le Grand Pré.

For more detailed sightings, please look at the Guernsey Birds Website,

<http://www.guernseybirds.org.gg>

Members are welcome to add their sightings and photographs to the website.

Our programme of outings for the year started with a walk around the valley at Petit Bôt on 15th January, making the most of this time of year when the trees are bare. We had sightings of **Goldcrest** and **Chiffchaff**. Down on the beach, we had clear views of **Fulmar**, one of the earliest returning breeders, back on their breeding site on the cliffs.



Fulmar at Petit Bôt. Photographed by Andy Marquis back in 2016

Chris Mourant

Chris has decided to stand down as Section Secretary at February’s AGM. He has been in the post since 2017 and has been a member for many years. He organises the pelagic trips every summer.

He is a bird ringer, is always willing to show people the work involved and regularly gives demonstrations to Section members when we walk along the Shingle Bank to his patch at La Claire Mare.

He rings many wetland migrants at this reserve. The photo shows a Sedge Warbler. Photo courtesy of Julie Davis.



He is the only person in Guernsey to hold a special licence to ring Barn Owl chicks. As Barn Owls are sedentary birds, it’s safe to say that if one is found with a ring, it is Chris’ work. He has made – and continues to make – a significant contribution to understanding the population distribution and numbers in Guernsey.

Chris with two barn Owl chicks at Petit Bôt, 2020. Photo courtesy of S. Mallett.

He leads many Saturday walks for the Section. The photo is from Autumn 2020 when people of all ages enjoyed his expertise as we went from L'Eree to La Houquette to see roosting Redwing.

Photo courtesy of Julie Davis.



He is the island representative for the British Trust for Ornithology and as such oversees the Breeding Bird Survey. He organises roping the footpaths on Lihou every spring to reduce disturbance for breeding gulls. As secretary he has been involved with a lot of behind the scenes work. So much so that, as Saturday is his only day off, he has realised that there are simply not enough hours in the day. The good news is that he will continue to help with walks, pelagic trips and, of course, ringing. Thank you, Chris, for all that you give to the Ornithology Section.

Julie Davis – Ornithology Section Secretary

Education and Conservation Team

The Education Team led a busy programme of events and outings with schools and youth groups during the autumn, working with education providers throughout the island. We received training in solar astronomy from Jean Dean of the Astronomy section and have already received interest in this activity, which was featured in a Guernsey Press article. We look forward to delivering this to the island's schools.

We began to post regular Education Team updates on social media which generated interest in our activities and led to new opportunities, particularly with pre-schoolers who enjoyed craft sessions making bug hotels and bird feeders.

Guernsey Water opened their Outdoor Education Area at the reservoir in the autumn, and the Education Team were thrilled to be asked to launch this terrific new resource with activities and lessons, as well as collaborating with Guernsey Water on seasonal spotter sheets specific to the site.



Launch of the Outdoor Education Area at the reservoir. Photos courtesy of Chris George.

The team continues to lead a wide variety of volunteer activities which can involve raking reserves, removing bracken and brambles, pulling sour fig, surveying wildlife, beach-cleaning, clearing paths and far more. We really enjoy getting to know our corporate volunteers so it was wonderful to receive ‘repeat business’ from some of our earliest CSR partners, and even better when they put in requests for more this year!

We are always keen to introduce our expanded range of corporate offerings to companies looking for a productive and fun way to use their Corporate Social Responsibility hours, so if your organisation is looking for volunteer opportunities, please contact Becky Ogier on 725093 or at ecl@societe.org.gg for our e-brochure.

A highlight of 2021 was a meeting with the Education Department’s head of curriculum when we were invited to devise a programme of environmental education to which every local pupil will be entitled. We were therefore delighted to be invited to speak at the Headteachers’ Curriculum Conference, where we were able to address senior education staff directly, explaining our goal of ensuring a common baseline of environmental education for all children.

Although we were once again slowed down by Covid over the winter as schools cancelled visits and corporates restricted CSR to ‘virtual volunteering’, the enforced lull offered an excellent opportunity to forge ahead in putting together the Environmental Education Entitlement programme. We sought the input of various sections of La Société in compiling the content and their advice made our task much easier. Their suggestions and contributions informed our decisions in selecting topics for inclusion and have immeasurably enhanced the programme. As always, we are deeply grateful for their guidance and support.

2021 was our first full year in post as Education Officers and very much focused on establishing a solid foundation for environmental education in our island, and we look forward to building upon this in 2022!

Becky Ogier – Education and Conservation Leader

Juniors

We on the Education Team are pleased to say we had a busy autumn with our Junior events and as always, we are extremely grateful to our enthusiastic members who came along and supported these events.

November's Junior event was a brilliant talk on Antarctica presented by the Guernsey Scientist, Liz Sweet. Liz spoke about her trip to the coldest, windiest and least populated continent, her experiences working at the Neumeyer II research station, as well as the extraordinary wildlife she encountered. Our Juniors were fascinated Liz's photographs and were captivated by her account of her experiences!



Emperor Penguins in Antarctica. Photo courtesy Of Liz Sweet.

After two months of having to cancel our Archaeology Junior events due to Covid and bad weather, we were thankfully able to run our November event where we washed finds found from digs at the Shell House site.

In December, we invited our Juniors to join us for a festive morning of eco-friendly wreath making to celebrate the start of the Christmas season. Interest in this event was so great that we added a second session due to popular demand. This event was also open to non-members and as a result, we had some families join La Société's membership for 2022 which is fantastic.

*Wreath making workshop.
Photo courtesy of Sarah Allez.*



For the final event of the year, our Juniors were invited for a tour around the Guernsey Museum stores at Grange House, St John's Street where we looked at archaeological finds, natural history and artefacts from Guernsey and around the world which went down a treat!

In 2021, the Education team held 20 Junior events covering a wide variety of topics, and in total we had 174 Junior attendees at these events. We'd like to again take this opportunity to thank the Section Secretaries and members for volunteering their time to help out and lead these brilliant events as we couldn't do these without them!

Our programme for 2022 commenced with an archaeology event on Sunday 16th January where archaeologists Tanya Walls, Phil de Jersey, Andy Lane and Dave Lane led our Juniors around Grandes Rocques headland where we had an action-packed morning looking at the remains of a medieval settlement excavated in the 1980's, finding the marker stones from the Victorian rifle range and observing the cliff erosion where prehistoric flint erodes out. To finish off the event, as it was low tide, we walked across the rocks to Houmet Jerbe, an islet where flint and prehistoric pottery has been found. We had a fantastic turn out for this activity and we look forward to hopefully seeing many of our new attendees again at our future events!



Junior Archaeology Event at Grandes Rocques. Photo courtesy of Sarah Allez.

We are delighted to be continuing our monthly Junior events throughout 2022. The details of our events are sent out to all members of La Société who hold a family membership for whom these activities are free of charge.

If you are interested in joining the mailing list or would like to hear more about our Junior events, please email Sarah Allez at eca@societe.org.gg

Sarah Allez – Education Conservation Assistant

Upcoming Junior events for 2021:

Saturday 12th March, 2pm to 4pm, a botany walk along the Petit Bôt cliffs led by the Botany Section and Raymond Evison OBE.

Saturday 19th March, 2pm to 4pm, a botany walk led by the Botany Section and Raymond Evison OBE starting at Icart Point.

Saturday 2nd April, 2pm to 4pm, a botany walk led by the Botany Section and Raymond Evison OBE around Port Soif headland.

Thursday 14th April, 2pm to 4pm, a bird walk led by the Ornithology Section around the Reservoir, starting at the Outdoor Education Area.

Reserves Committee Report February 2022

A report of the work carried out on the Reserves appears each year in the Transactions, but as in the last year or so, as well as its normal management activities, the Reserves Committee has undertaken a number of projects, I thought I would write an update for the newsletter.

The first project got underway at the end of 2020, and was the introduction of wardens for eight of our most important and frequently visited reserves. At various times in the past, wardens have been appointed to help maintain and monitor reserves, the first being to monitor the Colin McCathie reserve [Vale Pond] in 1980. Over time and for a variety of reasons, the use of wardens was discontinued, but it was something the current Reserves Committee was keen to reinstate. When a request went out to members at the end of 2020, we were delighted with the response, and wardens were duly appointed for Le Grand Pré, Colin McCathie, Silbe, Le Pré d'Enfer, La Claire Mare, La Marette and Le Jardin de Lorette Nature Reserves. Their main task is to report any problems or misuse, but many also help with work parties, recording, removal of invasive non-native plants [INNS] and litter picking. We are very grateful for the enthusiastic way these individuals have embraced their task and very much hope they enjoy being involved in this work. At the end of the first year, six indicated their willingness to continue while two resigned, one as they were leaving the island and the other due to pressure of work. New wardens have since been appointed.

The second project was to begin a refurbishment programme for the hides. La Société maintains seven hides in all on five sites, two are block built and the rest wooden. The lower, wooden, hide at La Claire Mare was considered to have deteriorated beyond repair and was replaced by a new structure at the end of 2020. Work parties were then organised to clear, clean and repaint the interior of the concrete hides during 2021.



Before and during! - Vale Pond Hide, Colin McCathie Nature Reserve.. Photo courtesy of Lesley Bourgaize.

Work on the remaining hides is ongoing, with one of the aims being to replace wooden shutters with Perspex, as was done at La Claire Mare, allowing people to view the birdlife while being protected from the worst of the weather. Another aspect of the refurbishment has been the design and erection of membership boards, which include a QR code with a link to La Société's website. We hope this will encourage visitors who enjoy visiting the hides but who aren't yet members of our organisation, to join.

A new interpretation board, similar in design to the one placed at Jardin de Lorette in 2020, has been erected at La Société's second orchard, La Marette, in La Blanche Carrière, Vale. In the coming year we are hoping to have new boards at La Claire Mare and Pré d'Enfer. These not only highlight the history, flora and fauna of the reserves but also serve as advertising for the work of our society.

Finally, we are always looking for land which fits the four criteria adhered to by the Reserves Committee, namely land adjacent to that already owned or managed by La Société, land which has the potential to become a species rich habitat, land which represents a rare or threatened habitat or land which contains rare or threatened species. I am pleased to say that we were offered and have agreed to purchase more land at Pleinmont. Once the purchase is finalised, information will be included in the Land Management report in the Transactions.

Lesley Bourgaize
Chairperson, Reserves Committee



Projects

Conservation Herd



Brown Nose thinks it is self service at the hay bar! Photo courtesy of Judy Wade.

On behalf of the Conservation Herd it's that time of year when two calves will be born, they will be fed colostrum from their mother to give them their best start in life and a week later handed over to the Herd, last year they were both born on Valentine's day so we will wait and see what their birthdays will be for 2022. The volunteers have been asked if they wish to help out with the calves which involves a morning and afternoon feed of milk, some hay and fresh water and of course mucking out their hut. The calves will wear calf coats for the first few weeks until the weather warms up. They will remain as a pair and not join the main Herd until later in the year.

Meanwhile the main herd of 6 are in their winter home at Le Moye near Bordeaux, their next move will probably be in March when they move round the corner to L'Ancrese Common.

Finally, the Conservation Herd are looking for an assistant manager to help with all aspects of looking after 6 steers and 2 calves. Duties to learn could include dealing with and coordinating volunteers on move days and setting up fields, speaking with land owners about grazing, speaking with home owners about supplying water, managing Press and social media promotion. Full training will be given. For more details please contact Dave Bartram. For clarity this is an unpaid role.

Dave Bartram
Conservation Herd Manager

Tel. 07781 168529 email conservationherd@societe.org.gg

Guernsey Biological Records Centre

Office Move

Packing and preparation for the Raymond Falla House closure was my top priority and the Records Centre moved into Tourist Information Office during December. This is only an interim move and we will be relocating again during 2022 – destination to be confirmed.

New contact details

Email: **esweet@biologicalrecordscentre.gov.gg**
Telephone: **01481 220365**
Address: **Guernsey Biological Records Centre, Tourist Information Centre, North Plantation,
St Peter Port, GY1 2LQ**

Office Access Monday – Friday: Winter 10am – 3pm, Summer tbc

Dolphin Masters Student

Zuzanna Soltysiak will be joining us in May 2022 to study Guernsey’s dolphin population. We are looking for a host to house Zuzanna while she is here, **please contact me if you are interested.**

Zuzanna has been awarded £3,000 bursary from the Strategy for Nature Fund to support her studies in Guernsey in 2022. We are incredibly proud of her achievement and the standard of work she is producing in preparation for survey season.

Bailiwick Eelgrass Exploration Project (BEEP)

Seagrasses are flowering plants with deep root systems found within the shallows of our seas across the planet. It supports a variety of marine life, including seahorses and juvenile fish. Eelgrass is a type of seagrass and we have 2 species in the Bailiwick. Eelgrass beds can reduce coastal erosion and seen as a mitigation measure for climate change, through storing organic carbon.

Carbon accumulates in seagrasses over time making this an important Blue Carbon habitat. This carbon is stored in almost entirely in the soils of the seagrass meadow and per hectare (10,000 m²) seagrasses can store up to twice as much carbon as a terrestrial forest.

The Bailiwick Eelgrass Exploration Project (BEEP) was set up in 2019 and aims to increase knowledge on the presence, location and composition of Eelgrass beds across the Bailiwick, through citizen science. The project is supported by several environmental bodies across the Bailiwick and comprises of three objectives:

1. To record the presence, distribution, extent and composition of Eelgrass around the Bailiwick.
2. To promote awareness of this important habitat forming species within the Bailiwick to relevant stakeholders, appropriate bodies and the public.
3. Assess environmental impacts from human activities and develop conservation recommendations/measures.

Guernsey Electricity Power to the People Fund awarded BEEP £1,700 to deploy an advanced mooring system (AMS) which are designed to reduce impact upon Eelgrass compared to traditional moorings. We are currently in the planning phase of this deployment.

Our trained volunteer citizen scientists have identified a small number of bays on Guernsey whereby boats potentially moor within Eelgrass beds. BEEP Coordinator Clare Marshall has been awarded £5,000 from the Strategy for Nature Fund to investigate if the moorings within these bays are directly impacting upon the Eelgrass beds present. Conservation management recommendations will then be given, with the aim to reduce any impacts.



Clare Marshall conducting an eelgrass shore survey at Lihou Ramsar Site. Photo courtesy of Clare Marshall.



Eelgrass semi-submerged at Belgrave Bay. Photo courtesy of Liz Sweet.

Social Media

Finally, do you have a passion for social media? We're looking for a volunteer to take over our social media. Perhaps you're a whizz at Instagram, love Facebook or would like to write a monthly nature focused post on our website. Get in touch, we'd love to hear from you.

Liz Sweet, GBRC Manager

Footnote:

- The Guernsey Biological Records Centre (GBRC) is run by Environment Guernsey on behalf of the two partners; La Société Guernesiaise and the States of Guernsey. It collates, manages and stores data that describes our local biodiversity and forms an evidence base to which decision makers can refer when making decisions which may impact on wildlife or wildlife habitat.

New Publication

Local author Rose Crossan has recently had a new book published entitled "Criminal Justice in Guernsey, 1680–1929". It is available in both paperback and hardback form (paperbacks – £10.00; hardbacks – £20.00). It is on sale locally at the Lexicon and Candie Museum shop, and it is also available online from Amazon, Blackwells and other major booksellers.

Thanks to our Corporate Membership Sponsors for 2022

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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.

Volunteer Vacancies - Section Secretaries

We are currently looking for Section Secretaries for the following Sections: **Climate Change, Marine Biology and Zoology**. A Section Secretary is responsible for arranging meetings, talks and outdoor events for Members. They have the use of the Section room at Candie for meetings and the Frossard Theatre for talks. Section Secretaries have a seat on Council. For further information kindly contact the Secretary Kate Lee via email secretary@societe.org.gg.

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
gsybiorecords@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.

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
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Chairperson	Lesley Bourgaize	710737	reserves@societe.org.gg
Communications Officer	Pierre Ehmann		communications@societe.org.gg
Land Management & Conservation Officer	Jamie Hooper	266924	reserves@societe.org.gg
Volunteer Co ordinator			
Reserves	Anthony Staggs	722351	
Archivist & Librarian	Richard Hocart		editor@societe.org.gg
Science Committee			
Chairperson	Vacant		

Education Officers:

Education & Conservation Leader	Becky Ogier		ecl@societe.org.gg
Education & Conservation Assistant	Sarah Allez		eca@societe.org.gg

Section Secretaries:

Archaeology	Andy Lane		archaeology@societe.org.gg
Astronomy	Jean Dean		astronomy@societe.org.gg
Bat Section	Charles Hurford		bats@societe.org.gg
Botany	Anna Cleal		botany@societe.org.gg
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Entomology	Trevor Bourgaize	710737	entomology@societe.org.gg
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Geology and Geography	Andrew Dorey	252123	
Historic Buildings	John McCormack	720303	mrjam@cwgsy.net
Marine Biology	Vacant		
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Ornithology	Julie Davis		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.

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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