





Avocet, La Claire Mare Nature Reserve by **Chris Bale**, February 2025 cover photographer.

From the Président

I would like to begin by wishing you all a belated Happy New Year and to report on a few changes taking place at our Candie Headquarters. In December we said goodbye to our secretary Kate Lee, who retired after 12 years in the post. She was the face of LSG at Candie and the voice on the end of the telephone and as such, known to many of you. Janice Firth, our highly efficient Membership Secretary, also retired at the end of 2024. I would like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to them for their hard work and dedication over many years.

Dave Christopher, LSG Treasurer, and I oversaw the recruitment of a new secretary and we were very fortunate to receive applications from people well-suited to the task. Interviews took place in January, and it was decided to offer the job to Jackie Ward, who accepted and will take up her post in the middle of February.

Some of you may know Jackie through her work as a tour guide or in her previous role as a Celebrant. Following a review, we have decided that the office will in future be manned for two days per week, Wednesdays and Saturdays, from 10.00 to 13.00. The Council and I would like to welcome Jackie and wish her well in her new post.

A few other changes have also taken place. Sarah Allez has added the organisation of Nature Guernsey events to her duties as Education and Conservation Officer. She will be keeping a watchful eye on memberships, too, as this is also part of her new portfolio. At the end of last year, we welcomed two new Section Secretaries.

Geoffrey Mahy has taken on the Philology Section, a post that has been vacant for some time. Many of you will know Geoffrey through his work with Le Cercle Français, one of our associated groups. John McCormack, our long-standing Historic Buildings Secretary, has stepped down, and we thank John very much for his efforts on behalf of the section, not least for the military precision with which he planned the very popular trips to France!

Callum Tostevin-Hall will be taking on the section, and elsewhere in this publication, you will find a provisional programme of events for this summer. Some of you may already have met Callum who gave several fascinating talks at Candie on the theme of Guernsey's Castles, some of which are relatively unknown, and of which little remains. We wish him well in his new role.

Pierre Ehmann has agreed to oversee the compilation of the Communiqué, and this will be his first edition. Pierre also keeps our website and social media platforms updated so if you haven't already done so, please check out the website, our Facebook page, or our Instagram account for the latest news.

Several environmental issues have emerged since the last Communiqué, the first being the decision by Environment and Infrastructure to grant the Guernsey Mountain Bike Association (GMBA) permission to cycle over two stretches of the cliff path between Les Tielles and Pleinmont. This decision was made without any approach to LSG or the National Trust of Guernsey (NTG), the two major landowners in the area. Guernsey's cliffs are designated as Sites of Special Significance (SSS), and we and the NTG invest heavily in land purchases and maintenance in these areas. It should also be noted that groups such as the Guernsey Conservation Volunteers (GCV) give their time freely to improve these sites for nature.

The decision only came to light when a member of LSG was asked to point out areas where the nests of the Blackbacked Meadow Ants Formica pratensis were situated. It would seem that this is the fourth time the Environment and Infrastructure Committee has been asked to consider this request, however, LSG has never been consulted.

A trial period of four months was granted between November 30th and March 29th, a period that stretches into the breeding season of cliff-nesting bird species.

As well as this issue, we have several other concerns, including disturbance to three species of owl and the prey they rely on. This would be especially worrying in sub-optimal hunting conditions, and the prolonged storms of this winter have heightened our fears. It would seem little if any monitoring was conducted before the trial, and we are unsure if data is being collated to monitor what is happening now. If data is unavailable, how can the environmental impacts of the trial be assessed? I met with a representative of the GMBA, and we discussed several issues that particularly concerned LSG. The group agreed to stop riding the cliffs after spells of bad weather to enable wildlife to build up reserves. In addition, the GMBA agreed to avoid traveling between Mont Herault and Batterie Dollman over the farmland in between, and instead, use the metalled roads. We are grateful to them for agreeing to these changes.

On the subject of Pleinmont, we are currently in the process of buying a field in the area east of the scramble track. It is intended to manage this area as perennial grassland to encourage ground nesting birds to breed; it really is time we heard singing Skylark Alauda arvensis at Pleinmont again! In the first year, we will be monitoring the area, and hope, with

time, the grassland will develop and become species-rich.

For this project to be successful, we need to ensure that disturbance is kept to a minimum, how this can be achieved is easier said than done!

Another issue has been the proposal to create a vineyard on fields in the Pleinmont area. LSG has concerns that the application lacks sufficient detail regarding the current biodiversity value of the area. Ironically, some of this land is earmarked to attain Area of Biodiversity Importance (ABI) status in the next planning review, and existing ABI land is also included in the application.

Under planning rules, any changes to ABI land must show a Biodiversity Net Gain; in our view, these proposals do not provide this. Another concern is the loss of 'sense of place' this proposal would have on this exposed plateau. We have therefore opposed these plans at this stage and asked for an Environmental Impact Assessment to be conducted thus ensuring that Biodiversity Net Gain can be evaluated.

Some of you have contacted me about the Guernsey Rally. While we have not directly opposed it, we have been involved in discussions regarding several routes, as two pass very close to both nesting Barn Owls Tyto alba and Long Fared Owl Asio otus.

The organisers have agreed to change one of the routes from a nighttime sector to daytime, while the other section will be made a 'quiet zone' and thank them for making these alterations. We will be reviewing the nest sites before the rally and immediately afterward.

On a more positive note, we are delighted to announce that we have been able to add to our land holding in the Rue des Vicheries by purchasing a field that we have managed for some years. We are very grateful to the owners for offering us 'first refusal'.

The diggers have been busy at Le Grand Pré again, re-creating wetland habitats that were drying out. Please visit if you have the chance, but remember your wellies! It will be interesting to see how things progress this spring and summer.

Please note that the AGM will be at Candie on Monday 24th March at 19.30. Jessie Jennings CEO of the Nature Commission will give us a talk on the many simple ways you can record wildlife. Whether you are out every day, are a casual observer or just record in your gardens you can add so much knowledge. And please don't wait until you see something unusual as it is so often the common things that go unrecorded. Even I, a complete Luddite, have started using the phone app iNaturalist showing it really is easy!

This will be my final Communiqué as President, as my term of office ends at the AGM in March. It has been an enormous honour to lead La Société for the last two years, and I am proud of our efforts to preserve and enhance Guernsey's natural environment and cultural heritage. It is also vital, however, that we continue to educate and enthuse people through the many public events we organise each year and I would like to thank all of those people who work so hard to make our organisation a force for good.

We have yet to receive nominations for President and Vice President or for the vacancies for ordinary members of the Council. Please do not think that to fulfil these roles you have to be an expert in any particular subject, there are many people within the organisation who will be happy to advise. Your organisation needs YOU!

If your preference is for a more hands-on approach, then how about some work on one of our reserves or some data recording - breeding bird surveys, butterfly transects, seashore monitoring - the list of ways to get involved is, almost, endless!

Best wishes, Trevor Bourgaize Président

AGM 2025

The AGM will be held at Candie in the Frossard Theatre on Monday, March 24th beginning at 7.30 pm for the purpose of transacting the following business:

- 1. To hear the report of the President, Trevor Bourgaize.
- 2. To receive the annual statement of accounts.
- 3. To elect the officers and members of the Council. The posts of President and Vice President are vacant. There are three vacancies for Ordinary Members of Council. If any member wishes to propose a President, Vice President, or Ordinary Member for a seat on the Council kindly send the candidate's CV to the Secretary at Candie together with the names of the proposer and seconder by Monday, March 10th, 2025.

- 4. To appoint accountants.
- 5. 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 Monday, March 10th, 2025.

A full agenda together with the minutes of the last meeting and a copy of the 2024 accounts will be available to all members who attend the AGM. Details of nominations for Members of the Council and all proposals for discussion will be displayed on the Noticeboard at Candie from Monday, March 10th, 2025.

After the AGM there will be a short break during which refreshments will be served. This will be followed by a presentation from Jessi Jennings, CEO of the Nature Commission, on recording data.

Booksale

We are looking for a volunteer or volunteers who would like to organise our annual sale of second-hand books at the Russels at Les Côtils. The sale proceeds go to La Société. The work involves sorting and pricing books as they are donated, laying them out for the sale and staffing the sale.

In the first instance please contact Richard Hocart on *editor@societe.org.gg* for further information.



Annual Transactions for 2023

The Annual Report and Transactions for 2023 are now available for collection from the headquarters on Wednesday and Saturday mornings. (The cover has a photograph of the market square taken in about 1910.) As well as the usual illustrated reports about the activities and discoveries of the various Sections.

these Transactions contain reports on several archaeological excavations carried out in 2023, a report on the dig carried out at the western end of the airport between 2009 and 2012, the results of a survey of the distribution of the rare 'Guernsey Fern', and the concluding part of Richard Hocart's examination of the disputes between the Governor Sir Thomas Leighton and the people of Guernsey in the reigns of Elizabeth Land James I.

Archaeology

Over the winter we finally finished washing all the finds from the Castle Cornet drawbridge pit excavation with welcome help from the Juniors Section and the 9th (St Peters) Scout Group.

Around 50 trays of material were collected during this dig which included a lot of animal bone, pottery and building material. The pit had been

deliberately filled in when the drawbridge was no longer needed and midden material had been tipped in along with stone and soil. The task of sorting and interpreting all these finds is now beginning.

A display about the excavation can currently be seen at Guernsey Museum and there will also be a talk on the subject in March (see below for details).

Finds from the drawbridge pit excavation. Photo courtesy of **Tanya Walls**

A very exciting discovery was made on Jethou last

November, a denier (small silver coin) was found by gardener Nick Dodd about 50 metres from a small building excavated in 2007. This building has been dated to around AD 700 and is thought to have been a chapel. The coin is extremely rare, possibly unique, and only one other similar example is known from France. It is thought to be a coin of Bishop Audbertus of Avranches – 'Saint Aubert' the founder of Mont St Michel - and dating to around AD 725 is the earliest post-Roman coin yet found in the Bailiwick.



The denier from Jethou: obverse has the letters 'EP' for episcopus, meaning bishop; reverse has the letters '[... V]SERT written backwards, part of a clumsy attempt at representing the Latin name AVDBERTVS. One other coin is known from Maine-et-Loire in France with the full inscription on the reverse.' (Photo courtesy of **Philip de** Jersey)

In May we will be continuing our project on Longis Common in Alderney, this year carrying out further work in the area of Les Huguettes, the Early Iron Age pottery site. Over the course of the vear there will be archaeologists from the UK and France working in Guernsey and in Sark and we will update you on their projects when we know more.

Upcoming events:

Excavation of the Castle Cornet drawbridge pit - a talk by Philip de Jersey and Tanya Walls at the Frossard Theatre on Tuesday 4th March at 7:30.

We also hope to begin some guided visits to Guernsey's dolmens in the spring and dates will appear on La Société website events pages soon.

If you would like to join the Section please contact archaeology@societe.org.gg

Tanya Walls

Archaeology Section Secretary

Education Team



Marine survey with Julius Baer. Emma Boughey



Our frog suits make every day an 9 outdoor day. **Becky Ogier**

It was a busy winter for the Education Team, and we began 2025 as we mean to go on, kicking off CSR activities in January with a marine survey before returning to reserve maintenance at La Marette Orchard, where much of our winter CSR has taken place. We were also delighted to assist members of our Archaeology Section at the Brothers' Cemetery in St Peter Port, removing bramble from the graveyard.

We have a busy programme of CSR coming up this spring and summer, with lots of help needed at various sites, particularly at the Bridget Ozanne orchid fields where we remove Hemlock Waterdropwort, so please get in touch if your organisation or group would like to join us!

Contact Becky eca@societe.org.gg for more information.

Back in November we took part in Candie Museum's Freaky Friday event during the autumn half term break, which was great fun – we were kept incredibly busy with Halloween crafts, with the bat puppets a particular hit.



Removing Japanese honeysuckle at La Marette. **Becky Ogier**

There was a queue out of the section room door at some points, and we are extremely grateful to our helpers Angeline and Tehan, without whom we would have been overwhelmed! We used the opportunity to impart information about bats, rats, crows and pumpkins to our attendees, so hopefully the day was informative as well as fun.

Our wreath-making sessions were as popular as ever during December, when we organised a members-only evening, ran school sessions and assisted at a charity event. Many thanks to our volunteers from Investec, whose assistance in preparing for these activities was a huge help!

Speaking of Investec, we're delighted that they have decided to extend their sponsorship for a further year – their monthly volunteer support and generous financial donation are of huge benefit to our CSR programme.

During the spring term we are running outdoor education sessions at Hautes Capelles, Castel, La Mare de Carteret, Notre Dame and La Houguette schools as part of the Sates of Guernsey's Cultural Enrichment Programme. We're also leading activities at St Mary & St Michael, Blanchelande College, Amherst and Elizabeth College among others, including litter picks, woodland walks, birdwatching and lots more.

We are already looking forward to a packed calendar this summer and hope to squeeze in some members' events – look out for notices on our social media pages and please do get in touch with any suggestions!

Entomology Section

Winter is a quiet time for the Entomology Section, we are all entering our records, converting paper records into spreadsheets and identifying species we photographed and set aside for later.

If you have any casual insect or other invertebrate records for 2024 and have not already sent them in, please send to <code>entomology@societe.org.gg</code> as soon as possible for inclusion in the Transactions.

The planned programme for 2025 for section members is as follows:

- 1. February Leaf-mines
- 2. June Orthoptera
- 3. July Orthoptera
- 4. September Cliff Ants
- 5. Details of moth trapping will be notified as and when. We now have a petrol generator to allow some trapping in the more remote and less studied areas of the island including some of La Société's land which needs to be surveyed for invertebrates.

We will also attend other events during the year such as the Bioblitz and Nature Guernsey open days.

I ran some moth traps on the cliffs later on in the year, 26th October at Pleinmont and 9th November at Saints. This resulted in some interesting records including four Brindled Ochre at Pleinmont and five Feathered Thorn at Saints. It will be interesting to run traps "out of season" at locations around the island, the cliffs especially, to record the moths whose flight period is at the start and end of the traditional moth trapping season which is often considered as April to late September.



Brindled Ochre **Andy Marquis**

Opening my lettuce from Waitrose on 27th November, I was excited to find an insect hiding inside – I am, after all, an entomologist – and as the lettuce was from Spain this was perhaps something interesting!

After some identification work with European entomologists, it turned out to be Nesidiocoris tenuis which is a new species for the British Isles. It's that simple for non-native species to make it into the British Isles and indeed the Bailiwick! This one didn't make it beyond my chopping board before being captured but shows as a good example of how easy it is for species to make it to our shores.



Membership of the Entomology Section is free to La Société members, please email

entomology@societe.org.gg if you would like to join and receive messages about upcoming events.

Philology Section

This section has lain dormant since the sad demise of its last secretary Bill Gallienne a year or two ago. Bill did a tremendous amount of work inspiring islanders to support the island's own language, Guernsey Norman French or 'Guernesiais'. New section secretary Geoffrey Mahy seeks to follow Bill's example, whilst throwing into the mix

modern French, also a major part of the island's linguistic heritage. Two exciting projects are on the agenda. But ideas are also sought from those interested in joining the section.

Best regards

Geoff Mahy Philology Section Secretary **Lgmahy@cwgsy.net** 263029

Ornithology Section

Late Autumn and Winter 2024

The Guernsey Bird Report 2023 was published in November. Trevor and Lesley Bourgaize published the first three reports back in 1987 - 1989. Mark Lawlor then published annual bird reports between 2000 and 2005. He has continued to produce rare bird reports every year since then, but this is the first report for eighteen years that covers all species. A PDF copy was circulated to Section members and is available on request.

Bound copies are also available, £3 for Section members, otherwise £6.



Cover of the Guernsey Bird Report 2023

ornithology@societe.org.gg



The December meeting was a social gathering open to everyone. After light refreshments there was a presentation showcasing some of the birds photographed in Guernsey in 2024.

This was followed in January by our second Photographic Competition.

The winner was Chrissie Johns with her photo of a Short-eared Owl after a successful hunt, which will be featured on the front of the 2024 Guernsey Bird Report. Chrissie was presented with a canvas print of her photograph.



A Pochard was sighted at La Claire Mare in early November, (BM). A Scaup was seen at La Grande Mare around the same time, (AS). One was also seen at the Reservoir in mid-December (DJC) The first of several Tufted Ducks was at the Reservoir on 7th December (MAG).



Tufted Duck, Rod Ferbrache



Purple Sandpiper, Dave Carré

Numbers of Purple Sandpiper continue to dwindle. One was seen at Fort Hommet on 11th November, (MAG) and only a single bird has been recorded at Jaonneuse from 7th December (APL)

A Red-breasted Merganser was in Petils Bay on 27th December, (MPL).

A lone Dotterel was spotted at Rue de Belial on 11th November (AB). The last recorded sighting of this scarce visitor was in September 2021

There was a notable passage of Redwing on 24th October with hundreds heading south-east, (AJB).



Dotterel, Adrian Bott



Black Redstart, Dave Carré

Black Redstart is a winter visitor and can mostly be seen on some rocky coasts, including rock armour. The first one was seen on 28th October at Grandes Rocques (AJB). Dave Carré's photograph was taken at the Shingle Bank.



Dartford Warbler, Dave Carré



Hawfinch, Martin Sarre



Snow Bunting, Julie Day

An elusive Dartford Warbler was present at Pleinmont in early December (DJC). The photo is from earlier in 2024.

A long-staying Hawfinch was first seen at Le Foulon on 3rd November, (MAG). A second bird was seen on 11th January, (MAG - again!) and one was present up to at least 17th January. One was seen at Le Grand Pré on 9th January (DE) and again on 16th January, (DE, TDCE, LC). Good to see Tim Earl's name in the observers' list! Martin's photograph shows a beak that can crack cherry stones!

Yellowhammer, (a member of the bunting family) like many farmland birds, has experienced alarming declines in recent years. It has never been a common species in Guernsey and is now listed as very rare. There were single records in 2022 and 2023 and again a single record from 4th November 2024 when one was seen at Fort Hommet (MAG).

Seen by many more people was another bunting, Snow Bunting, which stayed around the sea wall at L'Eree for several days. First seen on 26th October, (AJB), it stayed on into November, (APL). It even made a slot on ITV news, thanks to a video taken by Wayne Turner.

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Avocet. Chris Wilkinson

Star Bird of the Winter – Avocet

First seen on 11th January (JH, DS et al) at Perelle and then at the Colin Best Nature Reserve. This Dutch-ringed bird stayed until at least 23rd January when it had moved over to La Claire Mare. Many people were able to enjoy a view of an iconic bird. It is a rare visitor, the last one was recorded in December 2022.

Thanks to all the people who add their records either to our Guernsey Birds website or the BTO's Birdtrak app. Thanks also to all the photographers who use the group and allow us to use their work to promote La Société.

Julie Davis Section Secretary orntihology@societe.org.gg

List of observers

AJB	Tony Bisson	DE	David Earl	APL	Tony Loaring
AB	Adrian Bott	TDCE	Tim Earl	ADM	Andy Marquis
DJC	Dave Carré	MAG	Mark Guppy	ВМ	Bob Moore
KC	Kevin Childs	JH	Jamie Hooper	AS	Andy Stoaling
LC	unknown	MPL	Mark Lawlor	DS	Dave Spicer

Juniors

The penultimate junior event of 2024 was in collaboration with the Archaeology Section where our Juniors were once again invited to book in for an exclusive tour of the Guernsey Museum stores. This event is always a favourite amongst our Juniors, and we were again fully booked. The tours comprise of all sorts of unique and interesting collections, including archaeology finds, natural history and artefacts from Guernsey and around the world, which are tailored to the interests of the group attending.

Our final event last year was our ecofriendly wreath making workshops. Each year these events seem to get more and more popular which is fantastic. Unfortunately, our workshops were scheduled over the weekend when Storm Darragh hit the Bailiwick worse than initially forecasted and as a consequence we were only able to go ahead with one of our workshops which was a great disappointment, but the safety of our members was priority. As always, the wreaths all looked beautiful having been made solely out of local foliage and decorated with all natural materials.

In 2024, the Education team held 12 junior events covering a wide variety of topics, and in total we had 193 juniors attend these (our highest number since we relaunched in 2020!). We'd like to again take this opportunity to thank the section secretaries and members for volunteering their time to help us organise these brilliant events which engage children with our natural environment, as well as our members who attend and support these events.

We have a great line up of Junior events for 2025 which will begin in March once the weather warms up! The details of these events are sent out to all members of La Société for whom these activities are free of charge.

Sarah Allez Education Conservation Officer





Wreath making workshop. Photos courtesy of Emma Boughey.



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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

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.

Our office at Candie will be open on Wednesday and Saturday from 10.00 to 13.00. La Société Guernesiaise, Candie Gardens, St Peter Port, Guernsey, GY1 1UG

Articles in the newsletter do not necessarily reflect the views of La Société Printed by Colour Monster Printshop Tel: 01481 244175.

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