



# La Société COMMUNIQUÉ

For nature, history and  
science in Guernsey



Archaeology Open Day at the Brothers' Cemetery  
cover photo by Mike Deane



## From the Président

Although we are now well into 2026, I would like to take this opportunity to wish you all a belated Happy New Year. This time last year, I was expecting my two-year term as President to be coming to an end. However, in the absence of anybody prepared to take on the presidency, I agreed to continue in the role for another year. At the 2025 AGM, following a contested election, members elected Felicity Quevatre-Malcic to be our vice president, a role which had been vacant for the previous two years. As the adage says, two heads are better than one, and I have greatly appreciated Felicity's input and support over the past year.

The 2026 AGM will be held at our Candie Headquarters on Monday, March 30th. Details can be found elsewhere in this publication. The positions of President, Vice President, and three ordinary members of Council will be up for election. Please consider allowing your name to be put forward for one of these positions. If you would like more information about these roles, do not hesitate to contact me. I am delighted to say that Felicity has agreed to stand for the position of President. She will be well known to many of you through her involvement in several LSG sections, her choral work, and as a recently retired Jurat of the Royal Court.

One essential position is that of Treasurer; put quite simply, LSG cannot function without one. Our current treasurer, Dave Christopher, informed Council early last year, of his wish to step down in September 2025, after five years at the helm. Unfortunately, despite advertising the post on various websites and in the media, we have been unable to recruit anyone to the role. The Council and I are very grateful to Dave for continuing well beyond his preferred date for stepping down. In simpler times, almost anyone could have carried out the role. Money and cheques were paid into the bank, cheques were issued as necessary, and then at the AGM, the treasurer told the meeting how much remained in the account! Today, however, the increase in legislation coupled with the broader scope of LSG's work has increased the workload and means the job can only be carried out by someone with the relevant skills and experience.

To attract someone to the post, it was agreed by the Council at the January meeting that we must be prepared to make some remuneration to a new treasurer. We are currently re-advertising the post, and hope that we can find someone to take on the role. Whoever does so, will find meticulously kept records and a financially sound organisation. If you know of someone, or would be prepared to put yourself

forward, please contact me at [president@societe.org.gg](mailto:president@societe.org.gg) or by phoning the office on 725093.

You will probably be aware that His Majesty, King Charles III, bestowed royal status on the Golden Guernsey Goat in 2024. Unfortunately, the breed is under threat of becoming extinct on its native island, though it continues to thrive in the UK and America. His Excellency Lieutenant General Sir Richard Cripwell hosted a two-day symposium at Government House in October. Will Harford-Fox, our Conservation Herd manager, attended both days, and Felicity Quevatre-Malcic was able to attend the second. (I must confess to only going along for the evening drinks reception!) The aims of preserving the RGGG breed fit well with the aims of LSG in both cultural and environmental terms. In helping to preserve the breed, the animals themselves can be used as a conservation tool; this happens now at locations in the United Kingdom. We are holding meetings with experts across the spectrum to ascertain if this is something LSG can support.

I would like to thank Keith Opie, President of the Golden Guernsey Goat Breed Society, and Peter and Mandy Girard, whose herd of goats at Route des Sages, is well known to everyone, for their support and advice.

We want to do it, but can we afford to do it? We are presently looking at various initiatives that will help to finance our current Conservation Herd, particularly as the Land Rover, essential for the smooth running of the operation, is very old, and in need of expensive repairs. Members will be updated on the results of the ongoing discussions at a later date.

Recently, LSG was invited to attend a meeting with the Committee for the Environment & Infrastructure. Among the issues discussed were the threats to our marine environments, disturbance to feeding shorebirds, and legal protection at a species and habitat level. The RAMSAR sites of Lihou and surrounding areas including our own La Claire Mare NR, Herm, Jethou, and the Humps, were also discussed.

We attended a second meeting, this time with the Planning Authority, alongside the National Trust of Guernsey and Guernsey Trees for Life, to discuss the recent actions of some developers, and how these actions, while they may be 'lawful', are hardly in keeping with the spirit of the law, and contrary to the Strategy for Nature which was adopted by the States of Guernsey in 2020. We also discussed several other issues such as Biodiversity net gain, the growing use of 'weed' suppressing membranes/ artificial grass, and ensuring that, whenever possible, native tree and shrub species are planted, rather than the

dreaded Griselinia, which has no wildlife value! We continue to review all planning applications and make comments if/when necessary. We remain concerned about the amount of land being subsumed into domestic curtilages.

I believe that there is an increasing awareness amongst many architects/ developers/landowners regarding environmental matters; however, there is much more that could be achieved to include spaces for wildlife when building and renovating properties.

I came away from the meetings feeling encouraged that both committees really want to do what is in the best interest of Guernsey's landscapes and biodiversity but in some cases, their actions are constrained by current laws.

Following another violent storm, the island is clearing up after many trees came down. We are grateful that LSG properties came through relatively unscathed, but I must express my thanks to Environment Guernsey, who quickly dealt with the issues which did arise. If you have lost trees and have a piece of land that you think could benefit from replanting, and would welcome some advice on suitable species, then please let us know. It should be remembered, however, that not all open areas are suitable for tree planting, as doing so could harm existing habitats.

Finally, it is with great sadness that I must report the passing of Maria Van Der Tang, who led the Family History Section with such enthusiasm and dedication until just a few months before her untimely death in November 2025. She contributed hugely to the ongoing work of the section, not just during her tenure as secretary but for many years before. Our thoughts are with her family and many friends.

It has been an enormous privilege to serve as your President for the past three years. Countless people have helped me, and La Société as a whole, during that

time. To mention any names would be to ignore so many more, so I will refrain from doing so. My tenure has not been without its challenges, but I hope I leave La Société in a strong position. My involvement in the society, which began nearly 50 years ago, will continue through my membership of various sections, enabling me to support La Société's growth and adaptation to any challenges that lay ahead.

Trevor Bourgaize  
President  
La Société Guernesaise



## AGM 2026

The AGM will be held at Candie in the Frossard Theatre on Monday, March 30th 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 16th, 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 16th, 2026. A full agenda together with the minutes of the last meeting and a copy of the 2025 accounts will be available to all members.

Details of nominations for Members of the Council and all proposals for discussion will be displayed on the Noticeboard at Candie from Monday, March 16th, 2026. Where notification to a member can be given by digital technology, the secretary shall give notification of proposals and propositions at least ten days before the AGM. For those without access to digital technology a hard copy shall be posted to them at least twelve days before the AGM.

After the AGM there will be a short break during which refreshments will be served, followed by a short presentation by Tanya Walls, Archaeology Section Secretary "Where did the monument builders live? - The search for Neolithic settlement in Guernsey and Herm."

## Bat Section

2025 has been a busy year for the La Société Bat Group.

The Bailiwick Bat Survey report was published at the beginning of the year, a culmination of 4 years' worth of data collected and analysed by the British Trust for Ornithology. Our group members were instrumental in collecting many of the records, and special thanks must go to Mary Simmons and Andrew Guille, who both spent many hours putting out and collecting acoustic detectors to collect this valuable data that has enabled us to understand more thoroughly how bats interact with our landscape. We are now looking into how to best continue with ongoing monitoring within the Channel Islands.

A further important role that the Bat group performs is in visual monitoring of known roosts, and this year in particular Paul Wadley and Elaine Mahy spent many hours recording and analysing bat activity at two known Grey Long-eared Bat maternity roosts. This globally rare bat has several well-established colonies in Guernsey, and monitoring these roosts help us to understand how these populations are being affected by our changing environment.



As well as research and monitoring, we have an active outreach programme to help raise awareness of our local bats. We have run several public bat walks, offered guided bat walks to school, scout and guide groups, and arranged fun craft mornings at church and museum events.

Laura Harrison  
Section Secretary

## Nature Guernsey

In the last newsletter, I reported that we only had one more Nature Guernsey event scheduled for 2025 but we actually had a last minute addition, so there are two final events to report upon in this write up.

On World Migratory Bird Day last year, falling on Saturday 11th October, Nature Guernsey hosted an all-day bird watching event at La Claire Mare Nature Reserve. Our aim was to identify as many bird species as possible with a goal of 50 species throughout the day, which we are proud to say we achieved! Between 8am - 5pm, we saw (or heard) 52 species of bird. The team had a brilliant day watching in the hides, leading walks along the Shingle Bank and also along the lanes to the back of La Claire Mare reserve where the Conservation Herd were grazing. People of all ages and identifying abilities came along to join in the fun, and we had a great day connecting with these special animals and enjoying the benefits of this mindful activity in nature.

We already knew that La Claire Mare is one the island's premier reserves for birds, but this event emphasised the importance of protecting and enhancing areas like this on our island. This nature reserve is comprised of wet grassland, reedbeds and open water which means it supports a wide array of species - both

residents and migrants. Birds define landscapes and have incredible behaviour patterns which are often taken for granted - we are so lucky to live alongside these fascinating creatures.

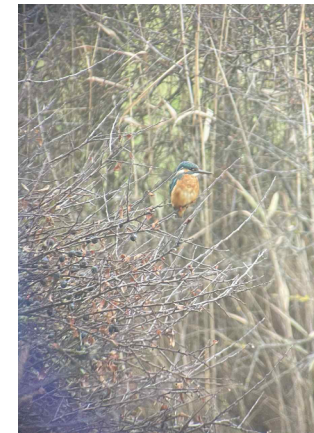
Our final activity of the year was a joint event between the Astronomy, Bat and Entomology sections of La Société. We spent the evening observing and learning about bats, moths and of course, the wondrous night sky. Although the weather wasn't on our side that evening, it was lovely to see lots of you turn up and take an interest in these aspects of nighttime nature.

Thank you again to all the generous volunteers who give up their time to help us to put on these events, as well as all of you who come along and join in. We are looking forward to another year of Nature Guernsey events in 2026.

Sarah Allez, Chairperson,  
Nature Guernsey



La Claire Mare Nature Reserve, Sarah Allez



1. A Redshank on the reserve. 2. The Kingfisher showed up and perched in surrounding shrub of the reserve, Sarah Allez

### Upcoming Nature Guernsey Events:

Nature Guernsey organises free family-friendly events, aimed mainly at introducing non-members to the natural history of our island and the work La Société carries out to maintain and safeguard important habitats. Existing La Société members are also welcome to attend these events.

The Nature Guernsey events for 2026 are currently being planned. Once they have been finalised, they will be emailed out to all members, posted on the events page on our website and posted on our social media platforms.

## Archaeology

Towards the end of 2025 we enjoyed two lectures. In November States Archaeologist Philip de Jersey gave a talk on our excavations at Les Huguettes in Alderney. This was a chance to hear about the work last May and about future plans. In December, Heather Sebire and Duncan Brown gave an update on the forthcoming Lihou Priory excavation report. Heather is a past States Archaeologist and recently retired from English Heritage; Duncan is an archaeologist specialising in Medieval and Post-Medieval pottery. They were in Guernsey for a meeting with fellow archaeologist Michael Batt, a specialist in Norman and Breton regional pottery. Thanks to all these speakers for taking time out of their busy schedules to tell us about their work.



Heather Sebire and Duncan Brown with the Lihou Priory pottery, **Tanya Walls**

Our involvement with the Brothers' Cemetery in St Peter Port has continued and last October we held an open day. We were hoping for fair weather to encourage

some invertebrates out but were unlucky on that score. Philip de Jersey gave a talk on the history of the cemetery and the lives of some of those buried there; while Helen Litchfield (Botany) was on hand to answer questions about the flora. We have tried to encourage management of the Cemetery to enhance the biodiversity, and the Botany Section has surveyed there several times. If you would like to find out more about this little-known place, then have a look at Phil's excellent website. [brotherscemetery.wordpress.com/about/](http://brotherscemetery.wordpress.com/about/)



Open Day at the Brothers' Cemetery, **Mike Deane**

In 2026 we are looking forward to a further season of excavations in Alderney, this time at Whitegates above Longjs Common in an area where finds were made in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. These finds include evidence of prehistoric settlement, 'stone coffins' and a very significant Bronze Age metal hoard which is on display in Guernsey Museum. A building development is planned for Whitegates, and we are keen to have a look at the area before this begins.



A casualty of Storm Goretti in the Brothers' Cemetery - thankfully the tombs appear to have escaped without damage, **John Lihou**

We also hope to open another trench in the Paddock Field where we found evidence of Roman settlement and Iron Age burials in 2018 and 2019.

There will also be a further season of excavations by NEOSET. This project, led by Breton archaeologist H  l  ne Pioffet, is looking at evidence of Neolithic settlement on the coasts of Guernsey and Herm. Last year the team, which includes local volunteers, worked above Bear's Beach in Herm and near to Les Fouaillages on L'Ancrese Common. Evidence of Neolithic structures has been found on both these sites and work will continue on the site near Les Fouaillages this year. NEOSET also plan core sampling of peat deposits from locations around Guernsey; pollen and macro plant remains can be identified in

peat and used to build a picture of the prehistoric environment. We are very grateful to HSBC who recently made a generous contribution to this project.

Currently we are putting together a programme of events for the year ahead; this will include talks and visits to sites around the Island.

Our first talk of the year will be: "Richard Keen - 60 years of commercial diving around Guernsey". This talk by Richard is open to all Soci  t   members and will be in the Frossard Theatre on Tuesday 17th February at 7:30pm.

Tanya Walls  
Archaeology Section Secretary

## Education Team

Last autumn saw a change to our involvement with the Cultural Enrichment Programme as, instead of giving lessons to Reception pupils, we began delivering our series of Outdoor Education sessions to Year 1 and Year 2. Much as we loved working with children in their first year at 'big school', teaching slightly older pupils seems to be working out well, and we have been extremely gratified at the knowledge that many of the children have retained since our previous visits! The programme took place at Vale, Notre Dame (twice!), La Mare de Carteret, Vauvert, Le Rondin and Hautes Capelles primary schools over the duration of the term.

We were kept busy on the CSR front too, with our coastal clean-ups in high demand, litter-picking beaches, grassland and car parks around the island. We also scheduled a number of reserve maintenance activities as we worked our way through our land management calendar, as well as fitting in some of the ever-popular (and useful) crab surveys.

Once again, December was all about wreath-making for the Education Team, and our programme took in every age group from pre-schools like First Steps, Monkey Puzzle and Preschool Duval to our adult members. Our eco-friendly wreaths have become extremely popular and we very much look forward to these fun and festive sessions!

The new year certainly got off to a soggy start, with some disruption to our schedule due to wet and windy weather. Storm Goretti overturned our plans to carry out nature reserve maintenance work with Form 1 from Ladies' College during January but we did manage to fit in a classroom session on La Société's role in the community, and we look forward to rescheduling our reserve activity soon!

As 2025 drew to a close, so did our partnership with Investec as their chosen charity, an arrangement which was initially expected to be of three years' duration but ended up lasting for four, which was an unexpected but much appreciated bonus for us. As well as receiving generous financial support, we were able to schedule monthly CSR events with Investec employees which took us all over the island to maintain nature reserves, remove invasive species and carry out wildlife surveys.

A huge and heartfelt THANK YOU to all the volunteers who gave so generously of their time and effort, and never failed to be delightful workmates! We are truly grateful.

The spring term finds us visiting St Mary & St Michael, Amherst, Forest, Vale (again) and St Martin's schools as we continue our Outdoor Education programme, and we also have a wide variety of bespoke lessons to look forward to, ranging from presentations on Guernsey landscapes to bird-themed events marking the RSPB Big Birdwatch. As I mentioned in my last update, our

spring/summer diary started filling up very early so if you'd like to book us for an event with your school, youth group or company during the warmer months, please get in touch while we still have a few empty pages!

Becky Ogier  
Education and Conservation Lead  
[ecl@societe.org.gg](mailto:ecl@societe.org.gg)

## Juniors

The autumn Junior event of 2025 was a nature crafts drop in which took place during half term. Junior members of La Société were invited to join us in making two different types of bird feeders to help our local birds find food as the colder months approached. This event went down a treat and we're sure the birds enjoyed the extra food put out for them.

The final Junior event of the year was our eco-friendly wreath making workshops. This year we held three workshops, all of which were fully booked. Some beautiful wreaths were created for the festive season. The bases of the wreaths are made of straw and moss and our Junior members add foliage foraged from across the island as well as natural decorations such as pinecones, dried orange slices, alders and cinnamon sticks. We're so proud of this annual event which brings such festive joy, whilst not damaging our environment. Thank you again to everyone who came along and

supported these events – we love leading them!

If you haven't yet joined us at one of our junior events, we'd love to see you this year. The details of our events are sent out to all members of La Société for whom these activities are free of charge. If you have any suggestions as to the sort of events you'd like to see this year, please email Sarah [eca@societe.org.gg](mailto:eca@societe.org.gg).

The Junior events for 2026 are currently being planned. Once they have been finalised, they will be emailed out to all members, posted on the events page on our website and posted on our social media platforms.



Photographs: Some examples of the beautiful wreaths made this year by La Société's Junior members.

## Botany Section

Perhaps the most exciting occurrence in the last quarter was the re-emergence of the Guernsey Centaury, *Exaculum pusillum*, at the boggy hollow. At the same moment that Pam Turner reported that it was showing, John Poland messaged enquiring as to whether there was any news of it. John flew over a couple of weeks later and was delighted to find it in full bloom. There were many specimens, including two very large ones. It had last been seen in 2021 so we suspect that the very hot, dry spring weather was perfect for it.

Whilst John was here we were able to show him the Ladder Fern, *Pteris vittata*. We were alerted to this by Jenny Grange who had found it growing on a wall in St Peter Port. The only previous British Islands records are of it growing in a disused green house in Hertfordshire.

We are grateful to volunteers from Investec. Three volunteers took time out of work to begin cataloguing Bridget Ozannes' vast collection of mosses. I am pleased to report that one out

of the three really enjoyed the work and has volunteered to return when she has more free time. While they were getting on with that, I commenced cataloguing the Dupuy Herbarium. Both sets of information will be held on LSG's cloud systems for future reference.

We joined a presentation to the Guernsey Guild of Accredited Guides, offering our services to point out any particularly interesting plants on their regular walks. One participant commented that the botany was 'surprisingly interesting!'

The collaboration with Creative Learning in Prison has been a huge success with many plants sown and grown for onward handing to Grow Ltd. In particular, we now have a large stock of the endangered Dwarf Pansy and are considering careful reintroduction to former, known sites.

As always, we are keen to survey any sites that have been managed with conservation in mind. Don't hesitate to contact us at [botany@societe.org.gg](mailto:botany@societe.org.gg)

Helen Litchfield  
Section Secretary



## Astronomy Section

The Astronomy Section's Annual Business Meeting was held in October, at which new officers for the section were elected: Elaine Mahy as Secretary, Matt Skillett as Equipment Officer, and Chris Guerin as Treasurer. Subsequently, Robert Roue has taken on the website / IT, and Nick Rowe has taken on the role of Sagittarius editor.

Other members have been involved in various ways, including Jill Barnicoat who kindly organised the Section's very enjoyable Christmas meal at Les Rocquettes Hotel, and Nick Després who has kindly continued to take care of mowing.

### The arrangements for the Section are currently as follows :

- meetings for members are weekly on Tuesdays from 8pm;
- group visits are arranged as per enquiries received; normally these run in winter months with the dark evenings;
- open events - one completed at Halloween 2025, with a series being planned for 2026.

### Member activities

We have a series of member talks, activities and observing projects planned and under way.

Talks so far have been given by Chris Guerin on the Moon, and a fascinating, detailed talk on the Apollo Missions with the aid of a full Lego Apollo 11 rocket to demonstrate which parts are discarded along the way! Elaine Mahy gave talks on the Autumn Night Sky, and in January on Planets and Observability with the aid of photographs she took during the Planets Parade of 2025.

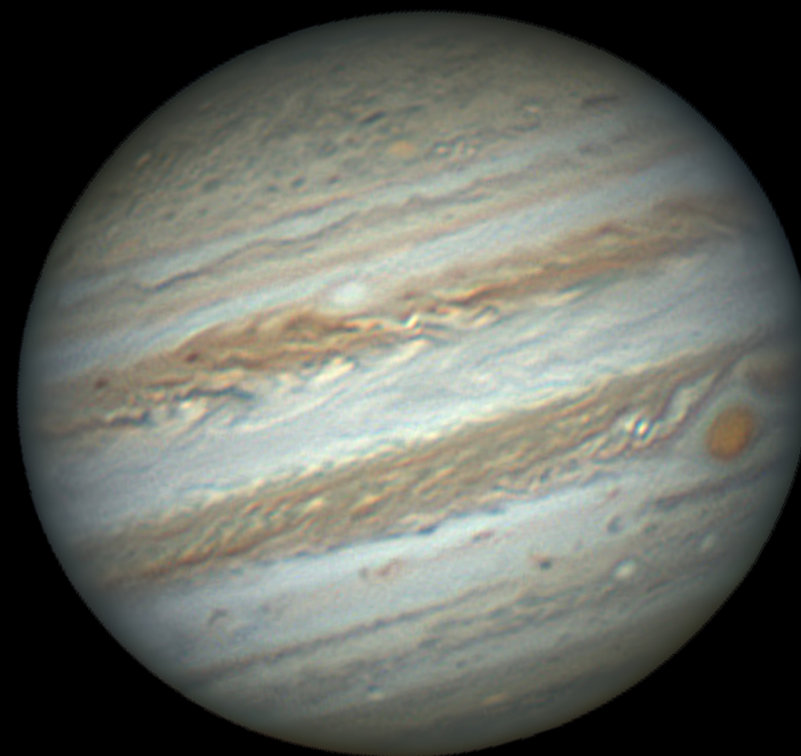
Activity for this year will include familiarising more active members with the telescopes, which will both aid opportunities for research and projects, and enable more of the active members to support our interactions with the community.

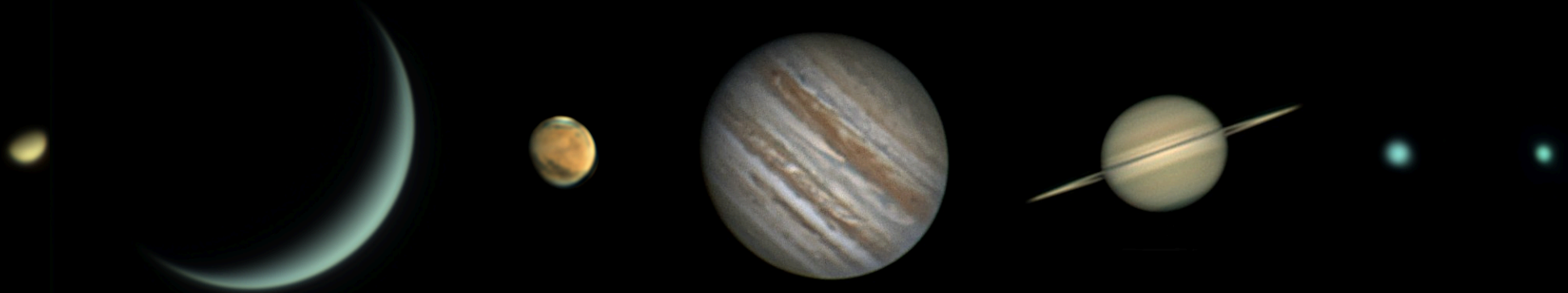
We are making plans to run a Messier Marathon observing event for members around a new moon early in the year - watch this space!

The section's Sagittarius newsletter will be out shortly, with astronomical information, news, events, and member articles and photography.

Our Tuesday meetings are open to potential new members and occasional visitors too, so if you are interested in finding out more, do get in touch or just come along on a Tuesday. Members are kept in touch by email, and many of our events are advertised on our Facebook page, [facebook.com/AstronomyGuernsey](https://facebook.com/AstronomyGuernsey)

Jupiter, 1st January 2026 by Matt Skillett, taken with his 14" Dobsonian telescope.





### Group visits

We welcomed 3rd St Martins Cubs in November and 3rd St Martins Beavers in January. Several visits are booked in over the next weeks, and further enquiries are welcomed. Elaine Mahy and Robert Roue have hosted groups, and other members have offered to help for future visits.

### Halloween Open Evening

We held a joint Open Evening at the Observatory with the Bat and Entomology Sections, under the Nature Guernsey umbrella, which was well attended considering it was a cloudy and rather windy night! Visitors including many families were able to view and discuss the telescopes with Matt Skillett,

Robert Roue and Paul Gavey, with Elaine Mahy coordinating the evening and Jill Barnicoat and Jenny Webster offering their expertise, help and assistance where needed. For the Bat Section, Laura Harrison and Charles Hurford organised bat walks while Mary Simmons and Sally Pedlar spoke with families inside, alongside Education Officer Sarah Allez. Andy Marquis from Entomology had moth traps set up outside and a collection of moths to identify, ably assisted by Andy Smith. Trevor Bourgaize was on hand to assist where needed. Thank you to everyone.

For anyone bringing groups to the Observatory by arrangement or visiting on one of our advertised Open events, we generally show visitors how the telescopes operate and offer viewing if clear; and offer an illustrated talk on a space-related subject.

Donations are welcomed and assist with running and maintenance costs. We suggest adults £2, children £1.

The David Le Conte Astronomical Observatory is in La Rue du Lorier, St Pierre-du-Bois. Perry's Guide reference 21 E3. Parking for group or public events is generally available at La Houquette School, Rue des Paysans. From the school go 100 yards up the road, then

left onto Rue du Lorier, then immediately right, behind a large bunker. The road is dark, so a torch is advisable.

For further information about the Astronomy Section see [astronomy.org.gg](http://astronomy.org.gg)

Elaine Mahy  
Astronomy Section Secretary

Image above: Planets Parade in 2025, by Elaine Mahy; a composite of Mercury through to Neptune, taken with her Celestron C8 telescope.

Apparent sizes are to scale as viewed from Earth on the dates taken. Images of Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter and Uranus are from 1st March; and Saturn and Neptune are from 28th September.

## Astronomy Section

### Beyond the De La Rue Ocean: Modern Celestial Names

In the 2019 edition of *Sagittarius*, the late David Le Conte, for whom our Astronomical Observatory is named, shared how Guernsey man Warren De La Rue (1815–1889) once had an ocean named after him on Mars. David's article, "De La Rue Ocean on Mars" explained how that 19th-century name was eventually replaced by the International Astronomical Union (IAU) in 1919 in favour of the classical Latin name we use today: *Mare Erythraeum*.

Inspired by David's exploration of that transition, I wanted to research the broader story behind these names. If the 1920s were about Latinising the sky for scientific neutrality, the 21st century is about globalising it, ensuring that the map of the stars reflects the diversity of the entire human race.

As David noted, the early mapmakers of Mars, like Richard Proctor, were often biased, naming craters and seas after their friends and colleagues. When the IAU was formed, they realised that if every country named a planet's features after its own national heroes, the maps would become a political battlefield. Their solution was to use Latin, a language belonging to no living nation. This gave us the classical era of nomenclature. For decades, if you discovered a ridge on Venus or a crater on Mercury, you looked to Virgil, Homer,

or the Roman pantheon for a name.

Today, the IAU has moved far beyond the borders of Rome and Greece. As we discover thousands of features on distant moons like Titan or Enceladus, the Latin well has begun to run dry. In response, the IAU now assigns cultural themes to different worlds:

- **Indigenous Names:** The dwarf planets in the Kuiper Belt are named after creator deities from non-European cultures, such as Makemake (Easter Island) and Haumea (Hawaii).
- **Literary Names:** On Saturn's moon Titan, hills and mountains are named after the characters and mountains in J.R.R. Tolkien's Middle-earth, like Bilbo Colles or Doom Mons; and on Enceladus, craters are named after the characters from the Arabian Nights, such as Shahrazad, Dunyazad or Ali Baba.
- **Global Mythology:** Saturn's outer irregularly orbiting moons are grouped into Inuit and Gallic clusters with prograde orbits, with names like Paaliaq and Tarvos; and the Norse retrograde clusters, such as Ymir and Thrymr, honouring the storytelling traditions of the far north and ancient Europe alike.

For many of us, the dream of naming a star is a common one. However, the process is far more rigorous than certain websites would have you believe. If you find a new Asteroid, here is how it officially becomes a part of history:

1. Upon discovery, you report your coordinates to the Minor Planet Center (MPC). The object is given a "provisional designation" (like 2026 AB12).
2. You must observe the object until its orbit is precisely determined. This often requires observations over several "oppositions", so this can take years.
3. Once the orbit is confirmed, the IAU assigns it a permanent number. Only then does the discoverer have the "naming privilege". For 10 years after numbering, you can propose a name to the IAU's Working Group for Small Bodies Nomenclature.
4. The name must be 16 characters or less, pronounceable, and non-offensive. To prevent the "Proctor problem" David wrote about, you cannot name it after yourself, and political/military figures must have been deceased for at least 100 years.

Curiously, whilst you are forbidden from naming an asteroid after yourself, the rules for comets are the exact opposite. By tradition, a comet is officially named after its discoverers (up to three people). This is how we get names like Comet Hale-Bopp. However, even this is evolving. Most modern comets are now found by automated sky surveys. In these cases, the comet takes the name of the project or its location, such as C/2025 A6 (Lemmon).

Whilst "Lemmon" sounds like a surname,

it refers to part of the Catalina Sky Survey network in Arizona, the Mount Lemmon Survey, which itself was named after the 19th-century botanist Sara Plummer Lemmon.

And talking of botany, Guernsey's local flora is represented by Asteroid 1318 Nerina (the Guernsey Lily).

The transition from private tributes to Latin standards, and now to global cultural themes, marks the maturing of our science into a shared human story. Today, our local Guernsey Lily shares the sky with Polynesian creator gods and the heroes of modern literature.

Whilst David Le Conte's 2019 article provided a vital anchor to our past, this new, inclusive way of naming celestial objects ensures that as we look forward, the map of the heavens speaks a language that belongs to everyone.

Robert Roue  
Astronomy Section Member





## Marine Biology Section

Happy 2026 to all La Société Members!

2025 was an action-packed year of activities in, on and by the water. Over winter we had a more relaxed itinerary, with two talks run with local speakers in October and November.

Our first presentation was given by The Guernsey Clean Earth Trust, with many thanks to Paul Bugden and Olivia Bennett for giving us a run down on their 2024 beach litter report and informing us of the upcoming activities planned for the organisation.

In November our presentation was given by Eve Torode on her master's thesis project, which centred around using Baited Remote Underwater Video cameras (BRUV's) in different marine habitats off Guernsey, as part of classifications across different trophic levels. We were very grateful for her insight into the marine environment gained from this work, and from all the conversations sparked with attendees on how Guernsey's protections and fisheries management should be improved.

### A note on Ormers

As the 2026 ormer collection season has already begun in earnest, some may

have wondered if our section has resumed the ormer tagging work previously carried out under Marine Biology section leadership. It is with a heavy heart that I report that a lack of time and capacity means we have been unable to restart this work programme in recent years. Given the importance of ormering in the Channel Islands, as a cultural tie to our past and to nature, it would be fantastic to hear of any individuals who would like to try their hand at this work, or who would be interested in sharing their observations while out collecting, such as how they feel recruitment of juvenile stock is faring. Please reach out to the Marine Biology email at [MarineBiology@societe.org.gg](mailto:MarineBiology@societe.org.gg)

### Upcoming Marine Biology activities

For those interested in joining Marine Biology section surveys, there will be a range of seal, dolphin, eelgrass and rockpool activities occurring in 2026. Please keep an eye on upcoming newsletters and La Société invites later in the year (and once we know there's no more Storm Goretty's coming in for us).

Nicky Harris  
Marine Biology Section Secretary





## Conservation Herd

Conservation Herd Update: Looking back at 2025 and ahead to 2026

A Year of Growth and Looking to New Horizons

The Conservation Herd has enjoyed a fruitful and productive year in 2025, adhering to its well-established seasonal schedule and making notable progress in its mission.

Highlights from 2025

- **New Arrivals:** This spring, two calves joined the herd in March. Thanks to the dedication of our volunteers, both calves thrived and were successfully weaned.
- **Investment and Support:** We gratefully benefitted from a £5000 grant awarded by the Strategy for Nature Fund. This vital funding allowed us to upgrade our stocks of electric fencing, cover the costs of essential calf supplies, and purchase new pieces of signage to support our ongoing conservation and outreach efforts.

- **Grazing Journey:** The main group of six cattle began grazing in the Vale in early April. Over the summer, they traveled west, grazing through Vazon headland and continuing their vital work across La Société reserves at Le Gélé, Perelle, Les Vicheries, and La Claire Mare.
- **Local, Sustainable Produce:** As part of our ongoing commitment to sustainable agriculture, two steers approaching three years of age were sent to slaughter, providing local, ecologically friendly beef for sale to La Société members.
- **Extended Grazing Season:** The mild, dry autumn allowed the herd to remain on pasture longer than usual. As winter approached, they moved to their sheltered field at La Moye, where they are being fed hay collected from Home Farm and Les Vicheries. The herd will stay here until March before returning to the fields.



#### Looking Forward: Plans for 2026

- **Welcoming New Calves:** We hope to welcome two new Guernsey calves to the herd in early February, continuing to strengthen our conservation efforts.
- **Financial Sustainability:** To support the long-term viability of the Conservation Herd project, we are exploring a new charging framework. This would involve landowners paying a fee for our conservation grazing services, ensuring we can maintain and expand our work.
- **Project Goat!** Following our participation in the inaugural Royal Golden Guernsey Goat Symposium, we are excited to be investigating the addition of a Royal Golden

Guernsey Goat herd to our conservation grazing program. Goats are renowned for their effectiveness at clearing scrub, including gorse, brambles, and thorny trees - a much-needed service for many La Société reserves such as the Silbe and fields at Pleinmont, as well as the gorse-dominated areas of L'Anresse common.

We thank all our volunteers, supporters, and members for their continued commitment and enthusiasm. Together, we look forward to another year of meaningful progress in conservation grazing.

Will Harford-Fox,  
Conservation Herd Manager

## Ornithology Section

We held a couple of outdoor walks, one with the Junior Section and one from the Vale Pond to Rousse.

We also held an open day for members of La Société at La Claire Mare. Section members were present throughout the day to show the reserve and to record all the bird species seen. Including the Shingle Bank, we recorded fifty-two species by the end of the day.

We had our usual social evening in early December.

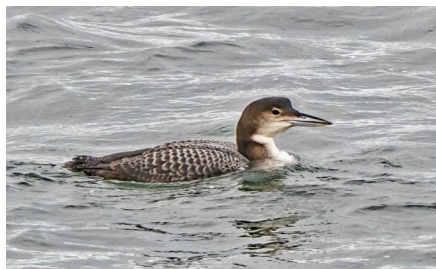
In November, together with the President and other section reps, we met with Adrian Gabriel, chair of the Environment and Infrastructure Committee, together with two other committee members and some of the ACLMS team. Amongst other topics, we discussed the Ramsar Site on Lihou, L'Erée Headland and the Shingle Bank; also, widespread disturbance along Guernsey's coastline and its negative impact on our wading birds. In January I met with members of the ACLMS team to discuss improving the signage at the Ramsar site and the possibility of introducing legislation to protect some coastal areas so that waders can feed and roost without disturbance. Both meetings were positive and I will be reporting back in more detail to Section members later in the year.

The Section is also investigating the possibility of constructing artificial Sand Martin nesting holes at one of our reserves. I had a Zoom meeting in the autumn with a member of the RSPB Worcester and Malvern Group who have successfully undertaken a similar project. I hope to have more news later this year.

The Reserves Committee have allocated a grant from Investec to replace the hide at Le Grand Pré. Accessing the site will be a challenge but continues the work to improve our reserves. As a BTO Club Partner, some members signed up for the Winter Bird Survey which is new this winter. It is already well underway with two of the four 'patch' surveys completed and another two to do. There are spare squares, so please consider taking one for the 2026/27 season.

### Selected sightings

Great Northern Divers are regularly seen mainly off the west coast over the winter. This one came in close at Portelet and was photographed at the end of December by Andy Stoaling.



Two Great Crested Grebes were seen at the Reservoir throughout the autumn and at least up to 6<sup>th</sup> January. Two fully grown juveniles were displaying on 1<sup>st</sup> September.

Sea watchers had sightings of Sooty Shearwater in September and October as they were migrating back to their breeding grounds in the southern hemisphere.

Up to 14 Cattle Egret were recorded in the early autumn, mainly near the Reservoir and Rue des Grantez. Numbers dwindled to just a few later in the winter.

Four Glossy Ibis were seen at La Grande Mare in early September. Two remained in the fields at Rue des Bergers until 17<sup>th</sup> October. A Mute Swan, also in the same area, was first seen in late September and stayed at least until early in the New Year.

Small numbers of Tufted Duck have been present at Le Pré d'Enfer, La Grande Mare, Rue Mainguy and the Reservoir throughout the autumn and winter.

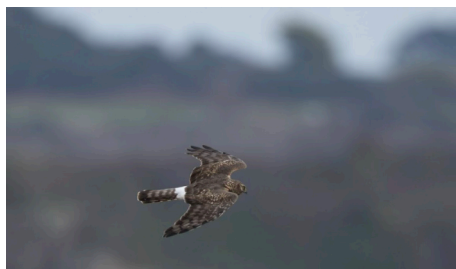
Two Gadwall were photographed by Dave Carré at La Claire Mare at the end of December.



Monica Denning was incredibly lucky to photograph a Black-winged Kite at Pleinmont on 25<sup>th</sup> September. This is a very rare vagrant and was first recorded in the UK in 2023. It is a bird of sub-Saharan Africa and India. The species is quickly spreading northwards into France. This is the first record for Guernsey although it has recently been recorded in Alderney and Jersey. The bird was seen later that day but did not linger.



A Hen Harrier has been seen regularly at Pleinmont throughout the autumn and winter. The 'ringtail' shows up well in the photo taken by Dave Carré.



A single Purple Sandpiper was recorded at Jaonneuse from late October. Six were seen there on 6<sup>th</sup> January. This species is now rarely recorded at other locations.

A Curlew Sandpiper, a scarce visitor, was seen for a couple of days in early September at La Claire Mare.

Jack Snipe are uncommon visitors but one has been overwintering at the Vale Pond, regularly seen and photographed by Dave Carré.



A Kittiwake was photographed by Wayne Turner at Perelle in November. It is quite a common species although more often seen in flight. This bird is a 1<sup>st</sup> Winter, clearly showing its black 'shawl'.



Barn Owls had a poor breeding season as the hot dry summer meant fewer voles. It was encouraging to hear about a pair roosting in a box on a new site in November. It was interesting to note that one was seen hunting at Le Coudré on 4<sup>th</sup> January. A breeding site was known in this area for many years when Dot Bramall did a survey in the late 1980s.

Kingfishers move back into the island in the late summer to overwinter and have been recorded along the coast and at the Vale Pond and La Claire Mare. During the open day on 11<sup>th</sup> October, the Kingfisher showed well close to the hide and was enjoyed by several people.

A very rare Short-toed Lark dropped in for a day at Pleinmont on 21<sup>st</sup> September, just the 6<sup>th</sup> record since 2020.

A vagrant Wood Lark, the first for two years, was seen and photographed by Wayne Turner at Pleinmont in mid-October.



Two Water Pipits were seen at Vazon early in January as keen birdwatchers were out getting started on their list for 2026.

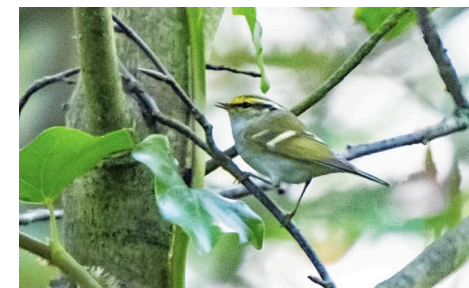
Winter thrushes are about in the island, but we would expect to see bigger numbers coming in with colder weather in the late winter. This is also the case with Brambling. None have been recorded so far in 2026. The Mistle Thrush in the photo was seen by Andy Stoaling at Rue des Hougues in mid-October.



Pete Vaudin observed a very rare Booted Warbler at Vauvert on 22<sup>nd</sup> September – a second island record.

Firecrest continue to thrive. Well over fifteen were ringed at Bordeaux over the autumn. More surprisingly, over 50 Goldcrest were ringed at the same site.

Mark Lawlor discovered a rare Pallas' Warbler at Le Vaux de Monel on 9<sup>th</sup> November where it stayed for a few days. Andy Stoaling managed to photograph this elusive bird – the first one since 2013.



A single male Cirl Bunting was seen at Mont Herault on 22<sup>nd</sup> September.

To see a comprehensive list of sightings and recorders, please visit our website [guernseybirds.org.gg](http://guernseybirds.org.gg)

If you are a Section member and don't record your sightings, please sign up!

Julie Davis  
Section Secretary

## Entomology Section

Winter is normally a quiet time for the Entomology Section, so we use the opportunity to gather all our 2025 records and identify those difficult finds we left for a rainy day!

If you have any moth records, or indeed any casual insect or other invertebrate records for 2025, and have not already sent them in, please send them to [entomology@societe.org.gg](mailto:entomology@societe.org.gg) as soon as possible for inclusion in the Transactions.

We had a busy end to 2025 continuing with surveys of La Société owned and managed land, with several moth traps being run and leaf litter searched. It has been shown to be important to trap later into the year than the traditional dates, as some moths only fly late in the year from October onwards. The weather can be more of a challenge but worth the effort.

On the 27th September we ran four traps across the fields at Les Vicheries. These proved to be very busy in the morning, the final count being 507 moths covering 57 species. Not a high species count, but a high number of moths. The highlight was Plumed Fan-foot (photo), which was the second record for Guernsey, last seen in 2014. Trapping locations away from our gardens might show us that we have more species here than we think, or that they might be more common. Only time



Figure of Eight Moth, Andy Marquis

and recording effort will answer such questions.

The 30th of October saw us team up with the Bat Section and the Astronomy Section at the David Le Conte Astronomical Observatory for a Halloween event. I had pre-caught some moths at home to take along and set some traps up in the corner to see if anything would show whilst we were there. The most interesting moth to arrive at the Observatory was an Oak Rustic, a species which seems to be becoming more common in recent years. It turned out to be a very busy evening with a lot of interaction with the public, showing off moths and explaining how moths live. Thanks to Elaine and the team for organising.

Heading into November, I made a last-minute decision to run some traps at Pleinmont targeting late-flying species on 8th. We placed traps in the East Seed-fields on Rue des Plains and one trap in 'Vic's Field' on Rue de la Clôture. Unfortunately, one of the inverters tripped and the two seed field traps must have run for only part of the night, which meant there were only a small number of moths. The trap in 'Vic's Field', however, fared well and amongst the more regularly seen species we caught two Feathered Thorn and Guernsey's fifth record of Figure of Eight (photo). This is a species which flies in October and November; the foodplants are very common all over Guernsey, so perhaps they are hiding in

plain sight. Trapping efforts later in the year in 2026 might tell us more.

At the end of November, I ventured down the cliffs on the East Coast to some Société-owned land to collect a leaf litter sample. After sorting through this, I found most of the commonly seen species in Guernsey leaf litter samples, but also came across the woodlouse *Haplophthalmus danicus*, which is not commonly seen, the pseudoscorpion *Chthonius ischnocheles*, and the rarely seen Collembola *Neelus murinus* (photo), one of our smallest invertebrates at just 0.5 mm long.

There is an extensive plan for events in 2026, including 19 planned moth trapping sessions, nearly all of which will be on La Société land, to continue to build our knowledge of the associated biodiversity and better inform our management practices.

The Entomology Section AGM was held on 5th January. I was re-elected as Section Secretary for 2026 by the 11 members present. Rich Austin gave a fascinating talk about the Rothamsted Trap situated at Burnt Lane.

Membership of the Entomology Section is free for La Société members. Email [entomology@societe.org.gg](mailto:entomology@societe.org.gg) if you would like to join .

Andy Marquis  
Section Secretary

Plumed Fan-foot Moth, Andy Marquis



*Neelus murinus*, Andy Marquis





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## 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**

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