



Guernsey's Local Research, Natural History and Conservation Society



Société News

Tributes to Bridget Ozanne continue to come in. We have received an anonymous gift of £1000 in her memory to help La Société to continue her work. Council is deciding how best to spend this money.

The 125th Anniversary Dinner held at the Duke of Richmond Hotel was a great success. A number of representatives from the other learned societies in the Channel Islands accepted invitations as guests including The Société Jersiaise, La Société Sercquaise, and the Alderney Society. The guest of honour was the Bailiff Mr Geoffrey Rowland who gave an excellent talk comparing the contributions of two of the former Bailiffs who were presidents of La Société, Sir Edgar MacCulloch and Sir Havilland de Sausmarez. Radio Guernsey ran a series of extended interviews with the Section Secretaries and these were repeated at the New Year. CDs of these interviews are available at the Candie HQ if anybody would like to hear them.

The Guernsey Biological Records Centre has had a successful year in spite of the terrible loss of Bridget Ozanne, the joint manager. The Centre is paid for by the Environment Department of the States of Guernsey, and its funding has been extended for another year. This year it produced a pamphlet on the Gouliot Caves in Sark, which is selling well. The Gouliot Caves Ramsar site was inaugurated in the spring and the President, (then Richard Hocart) and I went to the opening ceremony. The Records Centre wrote a large part of the Ramsar Application in 2006. The Records Centre continues to provide essential data for the production of Environmental Impact Assessments, Management Plans and Ecological Surveys in the Bailiwick and serves as a single centre where people can ask about La Société's records on natural history, though these queries are often passed on to the Section Secretaries or other Société members.

In the autumn Planet Guernsey was published. This book was edited, and large parts of it written, by the Secretary of our new Climate Change Section. Many other Société members wrote chapters or provided photographs for this book. La Société contributed £1000 towards it. We must congratulate Andrew Casebow on a marvellous achievement.

La Société has appointed a part-time Executive Officer. He is Guernsey-born Philip Bush, who since retiring from the Royal Air Force as a Wing Commander in 1998 has worked in executive management of charities in the UK. He has now returned to the Island and will provide a range of managerial and organisational support to the President and Council.

Charles David

Annual General Meeting 2008

The AGM will be held at 7.30 pm on Wednesday 26 March at La Trelade Hotel for the purpose of transacting the following business:

- a. To hear the report of the outgoing President, Charles David.
- b. To elect a new President. Council will propose that Mrs Pat Costen should be elected as President. Any other nominations for President should be sent to the Secretary, supported by a seconder, to reach her by Tuesday 11 March.
- c. To receive the annual statement of accounts.
- d. To elect the officers and members of the Council. The three retiring members are Pat Costen, Alan Ritchie and Keith Fisher. Nominations for the three vacancies, supported by a seconder, should be sent to the Secretary to reach her by Tuesday 11 March.
- e. To appoint auditors.
- f. 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 6 March.
- g. The Council will be proposing that in future subscriptions should be raised in line with the rate of inflation, and that a direct debit payments system should be introduced with effect from January 2009.
- h. To receive the annual report and accounts from Guernsey Environmental Services Limited.

A full agenda together with minutes of the last meeting and a copy of the 2005 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 Saturday 8 March.

The meeting will be followed by a presentation on the work of the Astronomy Section.

Officers and Council Members

		Telephone Number	Email: please add @societe.org.gg to the name below
Officers:			
President	Charles David	238978	president
Vice-President	Vacant		
Executive Officer	Philip Bush	07781 125093	philip.bush
Secretary	Lawney Martin	237853	secretary
Honorary Treasurer	Peter Budwin	716134	treasurer
Editor of the Transactions	Richard Hocart	254693	editor
Hon Membership Secretary	May Teagle	724835	
Section Secretaries:			
Archaeology	Tanya Walls	727614	archaeology
Astronomy	Debbie Quartier	725760	astronomy
Botany	Rhiannon Cook	253705	botany
Botany	Jennie Grange	713403	botany
Climate Change	Andrew Casebow		climate.change
Entomology	Charles David	238978	entomology
Family History	Edith Le Patourel	721566	
Geology and Geography	Andrew Dorey	252123	
Historic Buildings	John McCormack	720303	
History	Bill Gallienne	265529	history
Marine Biology and Zoology	Vacant contact Charles David	238978	marinebiology
Nature Conservation	Jane Gilmour	700024	
Nature Conservation	Pat Costen	264500	
Ornithology	Nancy Ogier	268191	ornithology
Additional Council Members are:			
Geoff Allez, Mike Bairds, Pat Costen, Keith Fisher, Jamie Hooper (co-opted), John Nicolle, Nick Day, Alan Ritchie, Les Curtis			
Special Responsibilities:			
Scientific Committee	Charles David	238978	
Reserves Committee	Jane Gilmour	700024	
Conservation Officer	Jamie Hooper	266924	
Book sales	Lawney Martin	237853	book.sales
Volunteer Co-ordinator - Reserves	Vanessa Crispini-Adams	728799	volunteering
Librarians	Jean & Gavin Sampson	234430	
Affiliated Groups:			
The Alderney Society & Museum	The Secretary	823222	
Alderney Wildlife Trust	Roland Gauvain	822935	
Bats	Pat Costen	264500	
Guernsey Conservation Volunteers	Angela Salmon	721163	
Lé Coumité d'la Culture Guernésiaise	Hazel Tomlinson	255891	
Guernsey Meteorological Observatory	Martin Crozier	237766	
National Council for the Conservation of Plants and Gardens (Guernsey Group)	Tattie Thompson	239444	
Friends of the Priaulx Library	Gacin Lanoe	246715	
La Société Serquaise	Jo Birch	832788	
WEA	David Le Conte	264847	

Any member of La Société who is interested in joining one of the Sections or groups should contact the relevant Section Secretary.

Office Hours:

The office at Candie is normally open between 10.00am and 11.30am on Tuesdays, Thursdays & Saturdays.
Telephone: 01481 725093
Fax: 01481 726248

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'Out of Sight' Lecture on Microscopy

On Thursday 8th November 2007, Fred Giles, Area Manager of Nikon UK, gave a lecture entitled 'Out of Sight' in the Frossard Theatre. In his talk he plotted the social history of microscopy and described some of the work of early pioneers such as Dutchman Anton Van Leeuwenhoek who, in the 17th Century, did some significant research and development work. Fred Giles went onto to describe the evolution of microscopes and provided examples of the extensive use that they have on society today.



Anton Van Leeuwenhoek

Although the lecture was free and open to all it, attendance was poor and it is hoped that future La Société Guernesiaise events will be better supported especially by members. Thanks go to Council Member, Les Curtis, for arranging the 'Out of Sight' lecture.

Annual Subscriptions 2008 (January - December)

Members are reminded that subscriptions were due on 1 January. Your membership card is enclosed whether you have paid your subscription or not. As you can appreciate we cannot possibly check some 1,500 subscriptions by the middle of January! If you pay by standing order, please ensure that your subscription has been paid in the right amount. If you pay by cheque, please send your cheque payable to La Société Guernesiaise to us at Candie.

The correct rates for 2008 are as follows:

	Local	Overseas
Single	£18	£15
Double / Family	£25	£18
Student	£5	£5
Single life membership	£250	£250
Double life membership	£300	£300
Corporate	£100	£100

Members will wish to be aware that the possibility of introducing a system to enable members to pay their subscriptions by Direct Debit is presently being considered. This will not be introduced prior to 2009.

Communiqué - Spring 2008

Submissions for the Spring 2008 Communiqué should reach the Executive Officer by 15th March 2008.

A Thank You for the Website

As many Members will be aware, the website www.societe.org.gg has recently been redesigned and now presents as an easily-accessible and dynamic "shop window" giving comprehensive information on the extensive range of activities undertaken by La Société Guernesiaise. Its reconstruction and subsequent maintenance is being undertaken by a UK-based Member, Phil Atkinson who, by all accounts, has created an outstanding website. More impressively he has undertaken all of this work on a voluntary basis.

Phil was born and bred in Guernsey and was a member of the Young Ornithologist's Club from an early age and vividly remembers seeing his first Hoopoe when he was nine years old. He has since remained committed to bird research and conservation and, after doing a PhD on the effects of climate change on coastal bird populations, went to the RSPB to work on the Caribbean island of Montserrat where a volcanic eruption was threatening the endemic Montserrat Oriole.

He subsequently joined the British Trust for Ornithology where he works as a research ecologist. His recent and current projects have included developing a migration mapping tool to use in tracking the spread of Avian Influenza, looking at the effects of farming practice on bird populations both in the UK and Africa and research into recent Palaearctic-African migrant declines. His passion is for waders and their environments and he has been privileged to work in Delaware Bay in the north-east USA over the past few years. In spring, hundreds of thousands of water birds migrate to the bay from sites as far away as the southern tip of South America to stop over and feed up on the eggs of spawning Horseshoe Crabs before leaving for their Arctic breeding areas two weeks later. Getting to understand the effects of a harvest of crabs for bait on the birds has been a fantastic opportunity and challenge for Phil and, as part of a multi-national team, he has enjoyed the experience of working and interacting with scientists from virtually every continent.

Despite being based in the UK, he regularly returns to the Island and takes an active part in seabird ringing although with a growing family he is finding less time for other birding activities. He is an ardent supporter of La Société and sees it as a huge resource for those interested in all aspects of the history and natural science of the islands.

He is keen to promote the philosophy that La Société needs to keep up with technological developments and recognizes the importance of communication via the web. Outside of his regular job he designs websites and has enjoyed work on the development of the new website. His future plans include creating an online "Birds of Guernsey" section that would record details of every species recorded on the Island since the 1800s with a supporting photo gallery. He is of the view that other Section Secretaries might benefit from the use of these types of technology and he would welcome ideas on how the functionality of their part of the website might be improved.

In keeping with a protocol recently agreed by Council, anyone wishing to make suggestions or propose alterations to our website should forward these to the Executive Officer.

Rare Lichen rediscovered after 140 years

An amazing find has been made by Charles David, President of La Société Guernesaise, who whilst walking on a cliff path near Jerbourg noticed an unusual and orange-coloured lichen growing on a bush. When he looked at it closely he found it to be a species that was previously thought to be extinct. The last recorded sighting of this lichen in Guernsey was made by Jerseyman Larbalestier in 1867 and despite much searching has not been seen since. The species is extinct in the UK – it was last seen in Cornwall in 1998, and in Jersey – an orchard where it grew was cut down in 1966. This plant is so rare that it has no English name and bears the tongue twisting Latin name of *Teloschistes chrysophthalmus*. It can be recognised because of its orange colour and the spines around the dish shaped reproductive parts.

A lichen is formed from the mutually beneficial relationship between a fungus and an alga. Most people can recognise lichen – they look like shrubby outgrowths on trees or like paint on rocks or on a wall.

When news of this significant find was made during December 2007, Charles David was the subject of much media attention; his rare find featured in the local press, he appeared on local television and was interviewed on radio. News of his “rediscovery” was also highlighted on La Société’s website and an article subsequently appeared on the website of the British Lichen Society.



Teloschistes chrysophthalmus - Taken by Charles David

Legacies and donations in lieu of flowers

Members are reminded that it is relatively simple to leave money to La Société in a will. All that is required is a codicil to a member’s will which can be arranged by an Advocate or Solicitor. 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.

Forthcoming Events

FEBRUARY

Fri 15th – Archaeology Lecture - ‘Sacred Geographies, Landscapes and Megaliths in Neolithic Brittany’.
Taking place in Frossard Theatre, Candie at 8pm. Chris Scarre, Professor of Prehistory at the University of Durham.

MARCH

Wed 26th – The Annual General Meeting at La Trelade Hotel.

APRIL

Wed 16th – A Lecture on World Heritage Sites by Dr Christopher Young, Dr Young is Head of World Heritage and International Policy at English Heritage and is internationally renowned for his work on World Heritage Sites.

Date to be Agreed - The Guernsey Norman French Translations of Thomas Martin – A lecture by Dr Mari Jones.
Dr Jones has now completed her book on the Guernsey French manuscripts of Thomas Martin provided in part by the States Archives and in part by La Société.

MAY

Sat 10th – Annual Sale – Blanchelande Girls College at 2pm.
It is now 3 years since the Annual Sale was last held and this year, we are attempting to resurrect this event. Its success depends on the support of volunteers willing to organize the stalls and those willing to contribute items for sale at this fundraising event. Any Member wishing to assist with the Annual Sale should contact the Executive Officer. We hope to run the following stalls: Plants, Bric-a-brac, Books, Cakes & Preserves and Bottle Stall.

Who Wants to be a Millionaire?

The lyrics of “Who Wants to be a Millionaire” from the musical “High Society” follow with “I don’t” – but “Who Wants to be a Volunteer?” – we hope your reply is “I do!”

We are presently updating our database of prospective volunteers to support the work of La Société Guernesaise. If you are in a position to offer a little or a lot of time we would be more than pleased to hear from you.

We are seeking volunteer assistance in the following areas:

- Administration at Candie
- Sales at Fundraising Events
- Nature Reserves
- Distribution of Transactions

La Société Guernesaise has a unique role in supporting and promoting the Island’s past, its present and its future. Its ongoing success depends of the goodwill of people willing to dedicate their time and energy as volunteers.

Some say that volunteers are like fine jewels – they are precious, valuable and valued but volunteers cost nothing - it takes a millionaire to buy fine jewels so “Who Wants to be a Millionaire?”

Archaeology

This winter the Section has begun a new fieldwalking project. This technique involves a group systematically walking recently ploughed fields and scanning the surface for archaeological finds. The finds are collected and later cleaned and sorted. The results give an indication as to the past activity on that piece of land. Most Guernsey fields will produce a few flints and medieval sherds of pottery, but where concentrations of early material occurs it is an indication that there may be buried archaeology. The information gathered is entered onto a map-based database and is useful for research and to inform future planning issues. Thanks to the kind cooperation of land owners and farmers we have been able to walk fields in St Peter Port, St Andrews and St Peters; with a field at L'Erée producing some particularly interesting results. If there are any land owners reading who would be prepared to let us look in their fields please let me know, we would be most appreciative of the opportunity. It is particularly difficult to catch fields at the right time: as soon as possible after ploughing and before any planting takes place is the ideal.

Many Société members will be aware that States Archaeology Officer Dr Heather Sebire has left the Island to work for English Heritage. Heather made frequent appearances in the Guernsey Press describing recent discoveries. She worked enthusiastically to promote Guernsey's archaeology; sometimes a difficult and controversial task in the face of the relentless pace of development taking place across the Island. Her excavations in the Bonded Store were particularly valuable. Large amounts of Roman material were recovered, proving that there was a significant Roman presence in Guernsey. The project to excavate Lihou Priory was also of great importance and many of you may remember the 'Meet the Ancestors' BBC programme about Lihou. Heather was Secretary of the Archaeology Section from 1980 until 1996.



Dr Heather Sebire

It was fortunate that Heather was able to fit in a lecture before she went. In October she spoke on 'Recent Excavations at Kings Road', this is a fascinating site and some of the finds are still on display in the foyer of Guernsey Museum.

Heather is now managing English Heritage sites across the south and west of England and is based in Bristol. We wish her every success and happiness in her new venture. She will be missed!

Assistant Archaeology Officer, Dr Philip de Jersey has taken up Heather's duties. Philip will be known to some members as he has been involved in Guernsey archaeology for many years. He was formerly research assistant to Professor Barry Cunliffe and is an expert on Celtic coinage.

La Société's Archaeology Section operates in conjunction with the Guernsey Museum Archaeology Group. Members meet regularly at the museum archaeology store in St Johns Street and other events such as field walks and excavations are organised from time to time. New members are always welcome.

Tanya Wells

Astronomy

Members are advised that the Astronomy Observatory will be open to the public on:

Tue 15th April from 8.30pm and Tue 13th May from 9.30 pm

For more details, please contact the Astronomy Section Secretary, Debby Quartier, on 725760.

Astronomy - Fireball sighting

At about 10.57 pm on Tuesday 15th January 2008 a bright object was seen in the sky to the north-east of Guernsey. The first report which I received was from someone walking their dog, and the owner stated that the object was so spectacular that the dog stopped in its tracks. After a second, similar, report was received I issued a call to the media to ask for anyone else who had seen it to contact me, so that it could be identified as either a fireball or part of a satellite re-entering the Earth's atmosphere.

The response was excellent, with 30 reports, including two from Jersey and one from Sark. Most agreed that it was bright, probably not as bright as the full Moon, that it was visible for only two or three seconds, that it left a short trail, and that it was heading in a northerly direction. There were differing views, however, on its colour. Many said that it was green or blue, but many also said that it was white, with no discernible colour.

It appears likely that it was somewhere north-east of Guernsey, possibly quite far away. It seems surprising, therefore, that there were no reports from Alderney, as I would have expected it to be visible from there.

I enquired of the North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD) whether these sightings could correlate with any known satellite re-entry. They have advised that they have no record of any re-entry on that date. It seems likely, therefore, that it was a fireball.

Fireballs are defined as meteors with a magnitude exceeding minus 5. This is brighter than Venus at its brightest. They are caused by meteoroids which are larger than the normal few millimetres, and perhaps denser, the material possibly originating from asteroids rather than comets. Meteors appear at an altitude of 50 miles or so, and can therefore be seen over a wide area, and it is estimated that fireballs constitute about one in a thousand meteors.

I enquired of the Meteor Section of the British Astronomical Association whether there were any sightings from the south of England. There are indeed reports from Devizes in Wiltshire, and from Gloucester. At the time of writing we are exchanging reports, and hope to pinpoint the event location. In the meantime their best estimate is that it took place over East Anglia

David Le Conte

Botany



Korean Fir - *Abies koreana* - with cones

Jennie Grange and Rhiannon Cook jointly took over the role of Botany Section Secretary following the untimely death of Bridget Ozanne. Autumn outings took place as planned. The Cuckoo Lane meeting in October was a delight. The weather was sunny and warm and the hedgerows were bristling with insect life giving our accompanying entomologists plenty of interest. The insects were busy gorging themselves on the nectar of the Ivy flower which is the last British plant to flower. Autumn is a plentiful time for fruits as was seen on our Pleinmont walk in November. However, we were not disappointed as there were significant numbers of plants still in blossom. Alexanders and Autumn squill, which originated in the Mediterranean region and still retain their habit of growing and flowering in the shoulder months, were in evidence in leaf form. At the December meeting at Rue Paintain we saw few plants in bloom. However, this gave us an opportunity to admire the wonderful variety of trees. Many were losing their leaves which exposed a display of distinctive fruits, twigs and buds. The showy Ginkgo biloba was a splendid sight clad in its brilliant yellow characteristically-shaped bi-lobed leaves. We were also able to appreciate a number of fern, moss and lichen growing in the damp habitat. All three outings were very well attended and Jennie and Rhiannon wish to thank the members for their warm support and continued enthusiasm.

As La Société Guernesiais recently celebrated a special birthday, we feel that it is apt to revisit the Botanical Meetings

of 25 years ago (as far as is possible) as a tribute to Patience Ryan who was instrumental in reviving and nurturing a thriving Botany Section.

Sat 1st March
at Saumarez Park
(2.15 for 2.30 p.m.)
Home Farm entrance
Perry's Guide 15 G1.

Sat 5th April
at Rocquaine
(2.15 for 2.30 p.m.)
car park at
Perry's Guide 26 A2.



Golden-scaled Male Fern - *Dryopteris affinis* - unfurling in woods near Petit Bot.

Climate Change

The Report "Planet Guernsey" masterminded by Climate Change Section Secretary Andrew Casebow has received a wide distribution throughout the Island with 8,000 copies being produced. A copy was also posted on La Société's website and, to date, in excess of 1000 downloads have been made. Anyone wishing to join the Climate Change Section should contact the Section Secretary via E-mail (See "Officers of La Société").

Entomology

For further information contact the Entomology Section Secretary, Charles David, on 238978.

Environment Guernsey

Although 2007 has been a financially successful year, it will be remembered for the personal sorrow that we all felt following the untimely loss of Bridget Ozanne. She was a friend to us all and had been with the company since its creation in 2000. Consequently the company has sought to make the necessary adjustments and has taken on new staff to ensure we meet our contractual responsibilities and continue Bridget's varied work. This of course, is what Bridget would have wanted.

Former teachers Jennie Grange and Rhi Cook have been appointed joint wardens of the Millennium Walk at St. Saviour's Reservoir. This footpath has become established as a successful public attraction in a wildlife-rich area and it is the wardens which help encourage its sympathetic use. They also keep the property free of litter and report back when maintenance work is needed. Such work is usually undertaken by the company's fieldwork team and walkers may already have noticed that the wooden fences, gates, benches and fishermen's stiles have all recently been painted.

Bridget was also responsible for working with schools on environmental matters and as Rhi Cook has considerable experience with teaching and the Education Department, we will be looking to develop this important aspect of work throughout 2008. Such work is varied and can range from giving advice on land management to leading classes on site visits.

In the Guernsey Biological Records Centre, Charles remains the Joint Manager. He is currently working by himself while the company looks to recruit other suitable people to assist him with the work. Two individuals have already expressed an interest in helping in the Records Centre and with other company projects. In the medium term, it is hoped that a team of 2-3 people can be trained so that the centre can continue to provide the high level of environmental expertise.

The fieldwork team, consisting of Peter Bourgaize and Pat McCarthy, has worked hard and tackled several new projects and contracts in 2007. During the second half of the year, the company was asked to maintain the properties of the National Trust. Both the Trust and the company received many compliments on the condition of the land following our work. I am therefore very grateful to Peter and Pat for their high standard of work.

Finally, following Griff Caldwell's retirement in April, the Board of Directors has appointed me the new Managing Director. It has been a very challenging first few months but with most of the re-organizing now complete and with all major contracts renewed or extended for 2008, it promises to be another successful year for Environment Guernsey.

Jamie Hooper

Environment Guernsey – Part-Time Job Vacancy

Environment Guernsey is seeking a part-time ecologist to join Charles David in the running of the Guernsey Biological Records Centre. This will be for up to 4 hours a week to suit the applicant. The work will involve specialist computer work to input, maintain and where relevant, interpret data on the Bailiwick's natural history. Collection of new local data out in the field will also be undertaken.

In order to meet the requirements, the applicant should ideally have a relevant scientific qualification to degree level or experience of similar work. Please submit your CV to Jamie Hooper, Old Tobacco Factory, La Ramee, St. Peter Port, GY1 1ET or by email jamie.hooper@cwgsy.net.

Family History

Forthcoming Meetings:

Wed 20th February at 7.45 pm
"Memories of a Tradesman in Guernsey"
a talk by Brian de Jersey

Wed 19th March at 7.45 pm
"Romans in Guernsey" a talk by Jason Monaghan

There will be no meeting in April

The meetings take place in the Frossard Theatre, Candie. All are welcome.

Edith Le Patourel

Geology

3 COASTS 3 EVENINGS

A chance to follow the Geological history of Guernsey in simple terms, visiting our geological highlights on the second Wednesday of each month. Starting in May, we will be picking the best locations along our coasts which help to explain the origins of Guernsey.

Wed 14th May - The Northern Igneous Complex

Wed 11th June - The Gneisses of the West Coast

Wed 9th July - The Southern Metamorphic Complex

The time and venues of the 3 Coasts 3 Evenings Programme will be announced later.

The Geology Section Winter meetings are as follows:

Wed 5th March at 8 pm at Candie. - Planning venues for the summer.

Wed 2nd April - Venue to be arranged - Out and about somewhere on the coast.

As always anyone is welcome to join us at any of the above events. For more details please contact the Geology Section Secretary Andrew Dorey on 252123.

Marine Biology

Sat 8th March at 1 pm – Petit Bôt Slipway

Sat 19th April at 1 pm – Lihou Island Causeway

If weather is doubtful please phone Lesley Bourgaize on 710737 late morning on day of visit, by which time a decision will have been made.

Nature Conservation

The 'Nature Conservation Section and Bat Group' has now taken the Marine Biology Section under its wing for the time being as they need a co-ordinator and are short on people/time. The Section was very happy to be encouraged on to the beach as we have had some excellent outings investigating the inter-tidal zone. Lesley Bourgaize (a keen beach-goer herself) has kindly agreed to organise some meetings (please see elsewhere in the Communiqué for details).

Our other Section meetings continue on the third Monday of the month, except for February, when we are going for a meal at the Imperial and later in the month, we will be out on the beach. In March, Pat is giving a talk on where bats roost.

Please contact Jane Gilmour on 700024 or Pat Costen on 264500 for more details.

Historic Buildings

The Jersey Heritage, together with that island's Planning and Environment Department, has just sent me for comments a CD containing the results of their joint commissioning of Jeremy Lake to produce a report on 'The Character of Historic Farmsteads in Jersey'. Jeremy Lake is well-known in English Vernacular Architectural circles for his expertise on farmbuildings in their landscapes, and he has certainly provided Jersey with an absolutely superb assessment of their heritage and of the practical implications that arise in planning terms for the future. He has, to my great joy, put the whole matter into a perspective not only of buildings and landscapes in Great Britain but of those in the neighbouring parts of France as well - a most important aspect of our heritage usually completely overlooked by 'experts' from the northern 'mainland'. Of course I am in no way qualified to comment on the farming part of this very detailed report, but was able to provide a couple of pages of observations on Jersey farmbuildings arising from the survey that I have been doing over there for the last ten years.



Kings Mill Farm

Jeremy Lake was much taken with the corbelled pigsties sometimes found above ground in Jersey but not at all, as far as I know, in Guernsey, although there are two groups of them in Sark: one once attached to the vanished tenement of La Genetière near La Tour, in the north of the island, and the other alongside the Rue Hotton. These sties are virtually the same as those we are used to here, except that instead of being pantiled, the roofs are of corbelled stone, rising to a point. Each sty has its 'pavé' or paved yard attached. But what the Report fails to realise is that these interesting structures themselves derive from pigsties that are much older, also stone-roofed, but entirely underground. And the oldest and best of these is in GUERNSEY. It is part of La Maison de Haut at Pleinheume, in a building that is unique. Built into a steep slope, three sides of the lower floor are below ground level, and are approached from a yard through three arched doorways that are no later than the early fourteenth century. But from the rest of the structure it is clear that this building has been narrowed, and that the wall with the arched doorways is secondary. The original build is older yet and it is from the older part that there opens, underground at one gable end, a beautifully domed sty, larger than any other in the Channel Islands, whilst nearby is a manger for cattle and nesting boxes for fowls, all built into the masonry.

Such circular, domed pigsties are related by Iorwerth Peate in 'The Welsh House' (Liverpool, 1946) to the circular huts of the Iron Age and before, and there is a free-standing domed

pigsty re-erected at St. Fagan's Welsh Folk Museum in South Wales. Guernsey has two more of the underground sties in Le Coudré and Jersey also has a couple in St. Ouen's. Sark has several, almost all those presumably dating from the time of the resettlement of that island in 1565, though one in a field bank is probably as late as the splitting off of Le Vieux Clos from Le Manoir in 1719. For these subterranean sties we therefore have a date-range of perhaps the twelfth century to the early eighteenth, and it is clear that the first above-ground sties continue the familiar stone construction. For instance, the group at Les Ruettes in St. John's parish, Jersey, are almost certainly contemporary with a major rebuild of a house in 1756. Our earliest pantiled sties belong to the very end of that century at the earliest, built of uncoursed rubble masonry, unlike the standard Victorian ones.

None of the circular underground pigsties is associated with an enclosed yard, so that we can see that when they were in use pigs followed the age-old tradition of wandering freely, keeping the countryside and the farmsteads clean by scavenging no doubt augmented by scraps from the house. Indeed, some of the rather shapeless troughs that we see around, always of immense age indicated by their weathering, may well have been always lying in farmyards for swill from the kitchen and dairy. Troughs for the later sties with their paved yards are always carefully made and usually rectangular. The arrangements at La Maison de Haut indicate that it was not only pigs that wandered freely but cattle, just as both do to this day quite satisfactorily in India. The only waste not consumed by one or other of these animals is the modern garbage of newspaper and plastic bags. In the uplands of Romania, too, the countryside is as if it is manicured, kept clean and tidy almost entirely by animals. It is interesting that in the Iron-Age brochs of Scotland, the enormously thick walls give entry to a ground floor acting as a sort of shelter for animals. Within the thickness of the walls is again a domed sty, and the entry to the broch has provision for two doors, one aligned with the outer skin of masonry, one with the inner. Between them is another opening in the masonry that might be for a dog-kennel. The ground floor of these brochs thus does not differ greatly from the ground floor of La Maison de Haut. And what all these most ancient farm 'accessories' show us is exactly how different the countryside itself was when they were built; why it was that there were endless medieval lawsuits about cattle allowed to go beyond the bounds of banon (grazing on the stubble of harvested crops). But what about sheep? Cattle and pigs do not need herding: they come 'home' in an organized way each day: but sheep need shepherds and what evidences should we be looking out for of the former keeping of sheep, as shown in the 1851 panorama from Victoria Tower grazing in what is now Monument Gardens, and necessary in times past to supply the lucrative knitting industry? Any answers would be welcome!

The 2008 programme of the Historic Buildings Section is now out, on the great website and humbly pinned to the notice board outside the Section Room at Candie. There is also notice of the Vernacular Architecture Group of England and Wales' Spring Conference in Jersey, April 14th-18th in 2009: but to be invited to that, you have to evince some interest in ancient architecture. So come along and make a start with the talks on our churches in February and March. We shall be pleased to see you.

John McCormack

Ornithology Section to Support British Bird Atlas Project

Bird Atlas 2007-11

Mapping Britain and Ireland's birds



The British Trust for Ornithology is embarking upon on a mammoth task by producing a Bird Atlas that will cover the Channel Islands alongside the rest of the British Isles. This work is likely to take a number of years to complete and is expected to cost in excess of one million pounds. La Société Guernesaise has made a modest financial contribution to this work and the Ornithological Section will be working closely with the British Trust for Ornithology in supporting this project.

What is a Bird Atlas?

Bird atlases provide a fascinating periodic insight into the status of all of the bird species of an area. Their scope varies from small counties up to entire continents, but what they all have in common is a series of maps that depict patterns of distribution of every bird species present, whether it is breeding, wintering, or even year-round. For the casual birdwatcher they provide indications of what can be seen where - indeed they are the basis of distribution maps in bird books. For the scientist they provide a means of understanding the processes shaping bird communities and the factors limiting bird distributions. And for the conservationist they provide indications of changes in distribution that might be indicative of wider issues.

Why is a new Atlas needed?

It is 20 years since the last breeding atlas was prepared (40 years since the first) and 25 years since the last winter atlas. Bird distribution patterns can change such that it is an appropriate time for a stock take.

The BTO 2007 -11 Bird Atlas will neatly complement existing surveys. Existing schemes that monitor the population levels of birds in Britain and Ireland rely on volunteers visiting randomly selected squares on an annual basis. These schemes provide valuable information in their own right by producing population trends and warning 'alerts'. However, atlas projects provide more comprehensive information, covering far more squares and more species than the random sample schemes can achieve.

What will Bird Atlas 2007-11 tell us?

Looking at the 1988 - 1991 Atlas of Breeding Birds it is interesting to note how distribution patterns have changed during the past 20 years. For example, Buzzards are now far more widespread than they were then. It is anticipated that the new project will reveal some surprises and highlight many all-



Shag

too-familiar problems. One area of interest will be related to farmland birds and determining whether the downward spiral persists or whether agri-environment measures have had any positive impact. As far as the Bailiwick is concerned it is interesting to note the "good news" including the spread of Little Egrets, Dartford Warblers and Barn Owls.

How can Guernsey People be involved?

Guernsey people can do one of two things. Firstly, they can assist by agreeing to taking on a Timed Tetrad Visit. Individuals will be allocated a specific square in the island. They need to make two visits per season, one early and one late. The two winter season visits will take place, first, in November/December and, second, in January/February. In the breeding season first visit should be conducted in April/May and the second in June/July.

Such visits are of a minimum of 1 hour, or optionally 2 hours duration. Whichever is chosen, the aim is to survey all the major habitat types present in the tetrad and count all individuals of all species you see or hear. Alternatively people can submit Roving Records. These are sightings that you have been made anywhere and at any time in Guernsey, and not just one specific area.

For more information, people are encouraged to contact the local representative Mr Phil Alexander on Tel 726173 or e-mail at alybru@cwgsy.net

Why is Guernsey Participation Important?

This work is important for Guernsey and to place this in context, the leading UK governmental and non-governmental conservation organisations have reviewed the population status of 247 bird species that are regularly found in Britain and have classified them into one of three lists - red, amber or green. The classification is based on population size, range size and temporal trends in each. Atlas data were used for range size information and clearly Bird Atlas 2007-11 presents an opportunity to revisit range size issues. For information, 40 species are currently red-listed, 121 are amber-listed and 86 are green-listed.

Guernsey participation will assist in the gathering of invaluable information about the current status of the Island's bird populations. Those who assist in gathering the information will enjoy the benefits of outdoor life and, maybe for the first time, witness the amazing flora and fauna that makes Guernsey the very special place that it is.

Rod Ferbrache



Robin

Guernsey Conservation Volunteers

2007 was a very successful year for the Guernsey Conservation Volunteers. The group had an influx of new members, mainly in the last quarter of the year, bringing the total number of members up to 38. This is a record number of members in the group. This high number of members had an effect on the man hours worked last year and they hit a fantastic 1131 hours! This also beats all previous records.

GCV carried out 29 work parties in 2007 and hope to do a similar number in 2008. Our first work party of the year was at La Garenne Nature Reserve where we cut back some large patches of very leggy gorse and opened up some of the footpaths which were getting rather overgrown.

The rest of work parties for this quarter are:

Saturday 16 February at 10am

Private Nature Reserve in St Peter's – maintenance work.

Saturday 1 March at 10am

Cuckoo Lane, Vale – gaining access to a wooded area.

Saturday 15 March at 10am

Chouet – clearing bramble from the headland.

Saturday 29 March at 10am

Ron Short Walk, Talbot Valley – maintenance work.

Although we are very pleased with the number of members in GCV we would always welcome more! If you would like to come along to a work party, or just find out more about the group, please contact Angela Salmon on 721163 or through the GCV website www.gcv.org.uk

Bat Group

Leader: Pat Costen

General enquiries tel 264500 Evenings (before 9pm)
e-mail: patcosten@cwgsy.net
Sick or injured bats tel 07781 461648

The Bat Group operates under the aegis of the Nature Conservation Section; Section members are members of the Bat Group.

Species found in the Bailiwick (identified in hand)

Common pipistrelle - *Pipistrellus pipistrellus* -
Common, widespread

Grey long-eared - *Plecotus austriacus* -
Fairly common, widespread

Nathusius' pipistrelle - *Pipistrellus Nathusii* - Rare

Brown long-eared - *Plecotus auritus* - 4 only

Kuhl's pipistrelle - *Pipistrellus Kuhl* - 1 only

Natterer's - *Myotis nattereri* - 1 only

The Bat Group owns seven bat detectors. These are used on bat walks and may be loaned to members.

Details of bat walks will be given on the website.

Guernsey's Weather September - December 2007

In contrast to the summer, when the weather pattern was dominated by low pressure, giving wet conditions, the autumn saw high pressure dominating. This brought several long spells of dry weather and a good deal of sunshine. In September there was no measurable rain until the 14th, which ended a 22 day dry period. This was also a very sunny time with a daily average of 9.2hrs in the first half of the month. Temperatures, though, were not particularly high and towards the end of the month it became rather cool. There was also a hint of what we can often have in the autumn with the wind gusting to 53kt (61mph) on the morning of the 24th. October began with a warm day, the temperature reached 20.5°C on the 1st, and for virtually the whole month it was dry. Only three days during the month had more than 1mm of rain, with almost two-thirds of the rain falling on the 28th. October overall was the driest since 1978, although in that month we had just 3.4mm of rain. This was sunnier than normal with the highest total since 1997. Temperatures were, however, only slightly above average. Noticeably missing from this month's weather was wind. Some of our severest storms have occurred in October, but this year the highest gust was just 31kt (36mph).

November was again mainly dry for the first two weeks, then rather wet thereafter. It was mild for the most part, with the chillier conditions confined to the period from the 16th to 24th. Gales were once more absent, with the highest gust 43kt (49.5mph). Sunshine was close to the long-term average, but about 15hrs short of the average for the preceding 12 years. The autumn was much drier than normal, with the second lowest rainfall total on record. The 132.8mm of rain recorded was the lowest since 1978. In that year just 29.3mm of rain fell throughout the autumn, something that might never be beaten.

Early December made up for the lack of wind and rain seen during the autumn. In the first 10 days we had six days of gales and 94.8mm of rain. There were two damaging gales on consecutive Sundays. The highest gust of 71kt (82mph) on the 2nd was the highest since the Burns Days storm of 1990. On the 9th a gust of 69kt (79mph) was recorded. 12 completely dry days followed, but it became much colder, with a number of ground frosts experienced and even a minor air frost for a couple of hours before midday on the 19th. Christmas saw unspectacular weather, with temperatures above normal and several hours of rain. Sunshine for the month was the highest for six years, with the fifth highest total on record.

David Cunningham - Guernsey Met Office

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