



COMMUNIQUÉ

The Newsletter of **LA SOCIÉTÉ GUERNESIAISE**

Summer Issue 2014 No.84

Guernsey's Local Research, Natural History and Conservation Society

President's Report



As I start my second term in this office to which I was honoured to be elected at the AGM, I must begin this report by paying tribute to Peter Budwin who tragically died on the 15th February. Although his death was not unexpected, the sadness felt by those of us who worked closely with him was in no way diminished.

Peter became our Honorary Treasurer in 1999, a job at which he worked tirelessly and with immense good humour. Then his illness and his wish to spend what he knew to be his remaining time with his beloved wife Carol and his family meant that he had to resign. Even then he spent many weeks ensuring a careful handover to David Cranch, his successor, and didn't step down until David was confident in the post.

I was particularly honoured, in 2011, to be able to confer well-earned Honorary Membership on Peter. Most of all, and I know everyone who knew him would agree, he was a lovely man and we extend our condolences and warm wishes to Carol.

A Changing Société

Marie De Garis once told me that many years ago, when she was a young woman, she heard that members of La Société were to visit St Pierre du Bois. She went along, hoping to join them, but when she found the group her courage failed her and she went home without making contact. Had someone told her then that she would eventually become President, she certainly wouldn't have believed them.

For well over a hundred years La Société appeared to an outsider to be rather elitist, august and very serious. It is no longer elitist but it is certainly serious and, hopefully, still, to some degree, august. What has changed most significantly is that we have seen many more young people joining, bringing with them enthusiasm, energy and Facebook. (Our Facebook page was actually established by the not- quite- so- young Richard Lord, but you get my drift). Jessi Jennings has brought Marine Biology back up to the significance it held under former Secretaries Roger Brehaut, Gene Rowe and Les Curtis while Julia Henney, working relentlessly to establish our Conservation Grazing Herd, is taking us in a new direction.

Then, just when it looked as though Botany, which has held predominant position within the society since it was founded in 1882, might eventually begin to fall into abeyance, the average age of the Botany Section has taken a massive tumble with the appearance of 16 year-old Elizabeth College student George Garnett. In the absence of any remaining Botany faculties in our universities, George hopes to go on to study plant taxonomy. He has been welcomed by the Section on their field trips and Rachel Rabey has taught him how to press flowers and establish a collection.

We do, of course, function as both a de facto Wildlife Trust and a learned society and the activities mentioned above fall into the former category. As one who likes to keep a foot firmly in each camp I was delighted to hear of the two books that are to be published: the late Hugh Lenfestey's long-awaited Guernsey Place Names, and John McCormack's equally long-awaited Channel Island Houses. Both books represent a quite phenomenal amount of work on the part of both authors and I would also like to pay tribute to Gillian Lenfestey who also worked on Hugh's book and has seen it through to publication. Details of both these books can be found elsewhere in this Communiqué, the latter on an inserted flier. The flier price includes postage which won't be charged if the book is collected. See Kate's note.

Alan Howell

After 28 years with the Guernsey Museum, Alan Howell retired as Senior Curator on the 2nd May. We wish him a happy and enjoyable retirement.

He is not leaving the service completely however and will be coming back once a week to oversee work done by volunteers from La Société, notably Peter Costen who is currently working on the Charles David collection and Jennie Grange who has begun looking at the Le Lievre herbarium. We have always worked closely with the Museum and volunteers Nicky David, Hazel Hill and Judith Keen regularly augment the team in the Archaeology Department.

The Shows

We have booked tables at the Viaër Marchi and the West and North Shows and will be looking for volunteers to help. If you can spare a couple of hours do please let us know.

For the Viaër Marchi and the West Show contact:

Pat Costen tel. 264500 or e-mail patcosten@cwgsy.net

For the North Show contact:

Rodney Collette tel. 249021 or e-mail rodney.collette@cwgsy.net

Pop-up Shop

We have reserved a slot in the Smith Street Pop-up Shop on Friday 6th June from 10am-2pm and 5pm-7pm. Volunteers are needed to promote the work of La Société. Please contact me **tel. 264500 or e-mail patcosten@cwgsy.net** if you can help.

Pat Costen

Jethou Trips

We have arranged 2 trips to Jethou this Summer. The first trip will take place on Saturday 21st June departing at 10am. The second trip will be on Saturday 5th July departing at 10am. According to demand there will be later boats on each morning. Please note there is a toilet on the island for visitors use near the jetty.

The cost per member will be £18. **Kindly e-mail secretary@societe.org.gg to book a place.**

Channel Island Houses by John McCormack

Please note this book will be available to Members priced at £40 if collected from Candie. Kindly complete the enclosed order form and return to John with a cheque for £40.

The Guernsey Star 1869-1900

In the course of his research, Société member Keith Pike, who works next door in the Museum, has downloaded copies of the Guernsey Star from 1869-1900. He has kindly made these available to members as PDF files. They are on a memory stick which can be borrowed from the office at Candie.

La Société Conservation Herd

A new section of La Société was established earlier this year - La Société Conservation Herd. This small herd of Guernsey steers will be used as a conservation tool to manage some of La Société's Nature Reserves.

At the beginning of the year its founding members were born. Named Charles and David in memory of the late Charles David, they are at present being reared at Cleveland Farm, with the support of Carol Allett and her team.

During their stay at Cleveland Farm they have been trained to walk on a halter which will allow us to take them to shows over the coming years. The purpose of taking them to the shows is three fold: to educate the public; to publicise the Herd; and to participate in traditional Guernsey events.



Charles - Photo Courtesy of Julia Henney

As this newsletter goes to press, we will be preparing to move them onto their first grassland where they will be joined by two steers from Meadow Court farm. They will first be grazing an area of well-fenced land without public access where they will be taught to respect electric fencing and their rumens will be given the time needed to develop and adjust to the rough grassland they will later be grazing on.

Later in the year they will be moved onto La Société's Nature Reserves where they will begin their conservation work. While on these sites they will be fenced in with temporary electric fencing which will be taken with them each time they move to their next site.

We are seeking to recruit a team of stock checkers to keep an eye on the herd while on the various sites. So, if you are interested in helping with the Herd or perhaps live near to one of La Société's Reserves, please get in touch. No prior experience is necessary as full training will be provided.

Over the past 6 months we have been applying for sponsorship to add to the hard-earned donation from Mike Meinke at the end of last year and there has been a very generous response. We were very fortunate to receive a £9,000 grant from the Channel Island Lottery and a further £2,640 from Sure Guernsey.

Local companies supplying the Herd with equipment have also been very generous – Farm Supplies and Gaudions have been very kind and offered a discount to La Société.

If you would like any further information or would like to get involved with the Herd contact Julia Henney at conservationherd@societe.org.gg or head to our Facebook page.

Julia Henney

Magic Lantern Show at Castle Cornet over Easter

A Magic Lantern slide show using some La Société Guernesiasse glass slides and an original magic lantern from the end of the 19th century was given to the public at the top of Gunner's Tower at Castle Cornet by Mike Deane with the help of Luci, his wife over the three day Easter holiday. The theme of all the entertainment at the castle was 'HistoryFest: Travel In Time' and proved popular with the public. The Spring 2014 Communiqué and membership application forms were available to take by the public.



Photo courtesy of Mike Deane

Each show lasted ten minutes and was repeated to an enthusiastic audience over two hours each day on the Friday, Saturday and Sunday. The Sunday being very wet, however did diminish the footfall!

Mike Deane

Section Reports Archaeology

Storms and high tides at the beginning of the year scoured beaches and eroded the coastline leading to a number of archaeological discoveries: from prehistoric flint and pottery at several sites, to a section of wall from a German gun position revealed in the dunes at Grandes Rocques. At Cobo an ancient land surface was exposed towards the top of the beach, between Saline Bay and Long Port, in an area usually covered with sand.

In March the sand temporarily washed away revealing an extensive layer of peat, below which was soil containing prehistoric flint. Vazon Bay has long been known for its peat deposits, formed by marine inundation of woodland and in which archaeological finds dating from the Neolithic to the Roman periods have been found.

However the peat at Cobo is different to that at Vazon, this being formed from reed marsh plants associated with La Mare de Carteret. We have not found archaeological material in this peat, but there were areas which had clearly been cut so that the peat could be used - probably for fuel and this could have happened at any time from the medieval period through to the modern times (see picture). In 1995 a core sample was taken about 400 metres further down the beach than the recent exposure and this allowed the beginning of the peat formation in this area to be dated to c3000BC.

In a patch within the recent exposure, the peat had itself washed away revealing a sandy soil from which 17 flints were recovered. Clearly this soil surface predates the formation of the peat and belongs to a time when sea levels were lower; the flints await further study but have tentatively been dated to the Late Bronze or Early Iron Age (c1000-700BC). If they do indeed prove to be of this date, then the peat in the recent exposure must have formed significantly later than that where the core sample was taken.



Peat at Cobo – *photo courtesy of Phil de Jersey*

In April we took the opportunity to fieldwalk opposite Les Frances farmhouse in Saviours. Parts of the current buildings date from the 16th century, but it is possible that there was an earlier farm on the site. The field is only about 150 metres north of the West of Airport site, where extensive evidence of prehistoric activity was found prior to the recent extension to the airport.

The field had been harrowed after having been used for keeping pigs and was due to be ploughed and then seeded. Most of the material we collected was post-medieval and modern in date, with tile and brick fragments making up the bulk. We recovered just nine flints and no prehistoric pottery; although it is not a large field this low density suggests that this area lay outside that of the prehistoric activity.

Astronomy

In the last newsletter I mentioned that Donovan Hawley and Laurie Waite, colleagues from the Clifton Antiquarian Club, had carried out a survey on the beach at Rousse looking at the cists excavated in 1916 and an enigmatic stone structure further down the beach. They will be returning in June to carry out a small excavation of the stone structure to try and establish whether it is really a ruinous prehistoric monument and to examine the land surface into which it is set.

In August the Section will take part in a research excavation at Les Tranquesous, just north-east of les Prevosts in St Saviours. This late Iron Age / Gallo-Roman settlement site was discovered in 1976 when an extremely dry summer revealed the outlines of round houses and ditches in fields (see picture).

The site was partly excavated that year confirming the existence of the settlement and supplying dating evidence in the form of pottery and other finds. Permission has kindly been granted by the land owners to investigate this site further.



Les Tranquesous – photo courtesy of Mike Hill, 1976.

Our project to renovate the Brother's Cemetery in St Peter Port has been progressing well. If you are interested in helping with this then do contact the Section Secretary.

Tanya Walls

Events

15th-19th June: Excavations at Rousse by the Clifton Antiquarian Club – visitors welcome.

Saturday 28th June: Guided walk of archaeological and historical sites at L'Eree. Meet at the car park with the public toilets at 2pm. It is anticipated that the walk will take about 1½ hours.

18th-29th August: Excavations at Les Tranquesous – an open day will be arranged nearer to the time and posted on the website.

2014 has started well at the observatory. Everything appears to be going to plan. Our first commitment was to work with the BBC in organising an open evening to coincide with the BBC Stargazing Live programme. This has become an annual event where we inform the BBC the evening we will open and they send us information packs to hand out to our visitors. This year we chose January 9th and received calendars with a detailed astronomical theme.

At our AGM on February 4th it was decided that our four times a year Sagittarius magazine would be more efficiently produced on line. We would retain a Christmas issue, but other news and events would be put on line as and when necessary throughout the year. Members without a computer would be informed by letter post. A vote of thanks was given to Colin Spicer for his editorship over many years.

February 6th was the first night of our six week Stargazing course. We hold this every year in association with the WEA. A number of us are involved but we rely on the experience of David Le Conte to organize and run the course.

March has become a popular month for group visits. A group visit is where a group of people ask if they can visit us for an evening as opposed to coming to an open evening where everyone is invited. This has become popular with schools, Brownies, Scout groups, social clubs and more. We are more than happy to entertain groups in this way. March has probably become popular as February is still a bit cold and the clocks go forward at the end of March making the sunset later. During March this year we welcomed Ladies College, Beaucamp High, Notre Dame and 10th Guernsey Scouts. We do not charge for any of our events, but donations are always welcome.

Also in March we held an open evening to coincide with National Astronomy week. This is an event which does not take place every year, instead it comes together to promote a significant happening. This year it recognized that the large planet Jupiter was in the best place for viewing for many years. We held this open evening on March 7th. The national organizers sent us excellent star charts to hand out to our visitors.

On the evening of March 31st Sue Daly gave us a talk on photographing and filming the dark skies of Sark. Sue lives in Sark and enjoys worldwide acclaim for her filming. This was an inspiring, highly entertaining account of Sue's professional approach to her work with stunning pictures of Sark's night sky. We invited members of the photographic community to join us at the Frossard theatre at Candie Gardens, an evening enjoyed by all.

Sark enjoyed an astronomical festival over the Easter week end. Val and I were fortunate to have been invited to attend the festival, which included a dinner with Annie Dashing, a tour of the night sky by visiting astronomer Bob Bower using Sark's new telescope and two talks by visiting Public Astronomer from Greenwich Observatory Dr Marek Kakula.

We thoroughly enjoyed the hospitality and friendship of the Sark Astronomy Society SASTROS. The Sark skies truly are dark and we were able to look at a cloudless sky full of stars.

Between leaving Sark on the Easter Monday and returning to London Tuesday morning, Dr Kakula found time to give us a talk at the Candie Gardens theatre on the Monday evening April 21st entitled 'Do Black holes really exist'. It was well attended and we are indebted to Dr Kakula to have found time within his busy schedule to have done this. We all listened intently as Dr Kakula is known to be an authority in this field.

It has been a good start to 2014. We have had excellent viewing of Jupiter and Mars. Once again I must thank SASTROS for their excellent festival and helping to organise our talks by their very own Sue Daly and Dr Marek Kakula.

Frank Dowding

See the Stars with Large Telescopes

See the Stars with Large Telescopes

Visitors are welcome at Guernsey's Astronomical Observatory on the following dates:

Thursday 24th July - 9pm

Thursday 31st July - 9pm

Thursday 7th August - 8.30pm

Thursday 14th August - 8.30pm

Thursday 21st August - 8.30pm

Thursday 28th August - 8.30pm

Visitors will be shown how the telescopes operate with viewing if clear and given illustrated talks on space related subjects. Donations are welcomed and assist with running and maintenance costs. We suggest adults £2, children £1. The Observatory is in La Rue du Lorier, St Pierre-du-Bois. Perry's Guide reference 21 E3. Parking is usually 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 and directions see www.astronomy.org.gg, or call 255215.

Entomology

Any queries kindly contact Rich Austin on **Tel: 721915** or **e-mail richmond.austin43@gmail.com**

Botany

Events

Saturday 7th June - 2.15pm, Les Vicheries, Bridget Ozanne Reserve, Orchid fields. Perry's Ref. Pg. 20 C3

Saturday 5th July - 2.15pm, Fort Hommet, car park below hill for headland plants. Perry's Ref. Pg. 14 B1

Saturday 2nd August - Herm, on 2.15pm boat for Common, Ploughman's Spikenard etc.

Saturday 6th September - 2.15pm, Petit Bot, beach and valley walk. Perry's Ref. Pg. 29 F4

Saturday 4th October - 2.15pm, Fort.Le Marchant, Umbellate Hawkweed etc. Perry's Ref. Pg. 7 F1

All venues provisional. Please refer to the previous month's newsletter for confirmation.

Contacts

Hazel Hill Tel. 244879 or Hazel Gray Tel. 239449

Members will receive a monthly newsletter, either by post or email. Please send a cheque to Soc. Guernesaise Botany Section with your details to Jean and Gavin Sampson, The Ferrers, 1 Milton Gardens, Rue Cauchée, St. Martin, Guernsey GY4 6NU

Tel: 234430 or e-mail: gavsampson@cwgsy.net

Please send your name, address, postcode and telephone number, and your email address if you wish to receive your newsletter that way.

Family History

Events

Wednesday 18th June – TBA

Wednesday 16th July – Checking grave inscriptions at Castel Church **7pm – outdoor meeting.**

*The Section Room at Les Vauxbelets will be open for research on the first Saturday of the month from **10am to 12 noon and on Wednesday afternoons from 2pm to 4pm, except for August when it is closed.***

Any Family History queries should be addressed to The Family History Section, PO Box 314, St Peter Port, Guernsey GY1 3TG.

Geology

Events

Thursday 5th June – Looking at the Granite at Fort Houmet. Please meet at Fort Houmet car park at 6.30pm sharp as the tide will already have turned. **Contact Andy Dorey Tel 252123 or e-mail andydorey3@gmail.com**

Historic Buildings

The Oldest Fireplace In Alderney

This month, I had the best excuse possible for a trip on the Bumblebee to Alderney and back. To my mind, this mode of transport always gives one the best value possible for one's money – but only if you like the sea. This time, it was really rough in the Little Russel, choppy, in fact, all the way across, but miraculously dead calm in The Swinge.

My excuse was to have a look at a damaged fireplace in Hauteville (yes, there is another Hauteville in Alderney) that had come to light a week after I thought I had completed my research on Alderney houses last year. This, if it really were as old as photographs suggested, would be 100-150 years older than the most ancient house in the island capable of approximate dating, which is La Trigale, with its arch of c.1450-1475.



Left corbel with broken shoulder stone above and remains of lamp bracket on the left.

Photo courtesy of John McCormack

I was not disappointed. For although the top of the fireplace has gone, its shoulder stones snapped off in line with the tops of its corbels, those corbels are very rare examples of simple, forward sloping designs with chamfered edges which in France could be thirteenth-century. Maybe they are here, too, but, erring on the cautious side, at least they are before c.1350. The rather rough chamfering, continuing down the tall jamb-stones, one presumes (although the fireplace recess is still blocked), is similar to that on the hall fireplace at La Maison Galopie in Le Coudré, another very early house that has arches behind windows and an évier in Caen stone. At that house, the shoulder stones are intact, and are cut to receive, not a joggled lintel, but a segmental stone arch, the curve of which can be reconstructed by the angle of the the housings.

No doubt the Alderney fireplace would have had an arch of small stones also, because the purple sandstone with which it is built would not have produced a lintel reliable enough to span a fireplace recess without breaking.

To the left there project the remains of a lamp bracket, another feature found in early hearths. What is unusual about this Alderney fireplace, though, is that there are two recesses to the right of it.

A single cupboard is often found, and here the cupboard recess is carefully rebated all round for double doors, the rusty remains of whose hinges are in all four corners; inside, it is almost twice as wide, and extends almost through the gable end. But between this cupboard and the right-hand jamb of the fireplace is another recess, larger than the usual 'salt-hole' of our hearths, which are usually within the fireplace itself.



Rebated cupboard on right; open recess on left.

Photo courtesy of John McCormack

We cannot see whether a 'normal' salt-hole exists here, of course, and in Jersey such holes are sometimes found within the masonry of the jambs themselves. But this recess in Alderney, because of its size, may well have been in addition to such a salt-hole, rather than an alternative position.

One knows that St. Anne must have been laid out as a nucleated farming village, unique in the Channel Islands, sometime during the early medieval period, and it is possible that the fireplace might belong to one of its earliest houses. On the other hand, the church was recorded at the heart of the present settlement as early as 1056, so the 'old town', traditionally and very plausibly said to have been around the Roman fortlet at Longis, might have moved uphill at least by that time.

John McCormack

Events

Saturday 12th July – 2.30pm - *A visit to Les Sages, Saint-Pierre-du-Bois.*

Saturday 9th August – 2.30pm - *A visit to Les Profonds Camps.*

New members or visitors are always welcome to attend, but should contact **John McCormack, the Section's Secretary, on 720303 or e-mail mrjam@cwgsy.net** beforehand, in case of alterations or final instructions. An annual charge of £10 is due at the beginning of the year, payable by those who expect to attend regularly.

Marine Biology The Shore Thing

The Marine Biology Section carried out surveying on three of our four chosen sites for The Shore Thing in April this year. The data is currently being collated by Project Co-Ordinator Will Hughes so that we can upload the information recorded to The Shore Thing Database. Our aim is to survey all four sites twice a year, so we hope to be heading back to Port Soif, Belle Greve, Lihou intertidal and Moulin Huet towards the end of the summer to complete our first full year of intertidal surveying. The Section has a number of other events going on throughout the year. For more information visit the website, the Facebook page, or **e-mail Jessi Jennings marinebiology@societe.org.gg**



Section Members count winkles within a quadrant at Belle Greve Bay - photo courtesy of Jessi Jennings

Ornithology

After the worst Winter on record it is heartening to welcome Spring and all that it traditionally brings. Its signs have been around us for some time, not least in the sounds of the songs of our resident and breeding birds. It is almost as if they too are welcoming the brighter and warmer days as they sing with gusto from the hedgerows, bushes and trees.

Male chaffinches, greenfinches, blackcaps, chiff-chaffs and many others are all singing – not to welcome Spring but to declare ownership of a territory to other males and also to attract a female and her convey to her his age, experience and ability; he has to be energetic to feed their young when they arrive.

Although birds of a certain species may all sound the same to us, they do not to the birds themselves; for, just as we have our own distinctive voices, so do birds, who identify themselves to each other via their song.

To the inexperienced birdwatcher the way in which the more practised can pick out and identify birds songs seems an impossible task. It is possible and with the help of someone more experienced you can learn "the tricks of the trade". To do this why not come to our monthly meetings held at 8pm at Candie on the first Thursday of each month.

Nancy Ogier

Corporate Membership Sponsors for 2014

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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.



Environment Guernsey is the wholly owned company of La Société Guernesaise. • We manage La Société's nature reserves and undertake numerous land management contracts for various States of Guernsey Departments, the National Trust and private individuals. • We also run the Guernsey Biological Records Centre and provide an environmental consultancy service. For all aspects of conservation advice and contracting, please contact us.

Guernsey Tobacco Factory, La Ramée, St Peter Port, Guernsey GY1 2ET
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Officers and Council Members

Officers:

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The Alderney Society & Museum	The Secretary	823222	
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Bat Group	Pat Costen	264500	
Blue Dolphins Sub Aqua Club	Jessie Jennings		bluedolphinssac@gmail.com
Guernsey Conservation Volunteers	Angela Salmon	721163	
G.S.P.C.A.	Steve Byrne	257261	
Friends of the Priaux Library	Gavin Lanoe	246715	
La Société Serquaise	Jo Birch	832788	
National Council for the Conservation of Plants and Gardens (Guernsey Group)	Tattie Thompson	239444	
Lé Coumité d'la Culture Guernesiaisie	Dr Harry Tomlinson	255891	
Guernsey Meteorological Observatory	Martin Crozier	237766	
WEA	David Le Conte	264847	
The Guernsey Botanical Trust	Ivan Le Tissier	07911 719115	
The Guernsey Beekeepers Group	Chris Tomlins	07781 100311	

In addition to the Section Secretaries being Council members, other Council members are:

J. Hooper (co-opted), Miss Jane Gilmour (co-opted), Mrs Sylvia Brouard, Ms Judith Keen, Richard de la Rue, Michael Deane, Miss Jessica Jennings, Adrian Nicolle, Mrs Lawney Martin and Miss Julia Henney.

Office Hours: Please note that with effect from 1st June 2013 our office at Candie will be open to the public on a Tuesday and Saturday morning between 10am and 12 noon. The office will be closed on Thursday mornings.

Tel: 01481 725093

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