

La Société Sercquaise

Founded in 1975 to study, preserve and enhance Sark's natural environment and cultural heritage



Summer News 2022

Creative Sark Festival 2022 at the Cider Barn by *Shakira Christodoulou*

The Cider Barn once again provided the perfect venue for well-attended Creative Sark events, this time over two June weekends for the 2022 Festival. Floral colour spilled onto the little grassy area outside for Ellie Clayton's relaxing floristry-class in the sunshine, while the thick stone walls provided an excellent cool-room for a stunning array of flowers kindly grown and donated by Mara Smith. Participants learned how to hand-tie a bouquet and arrange a free-standing table decoration, with really pretty and uplifting results. Sunday 12th saw an outing for the Sark Tapestry Triptych, where community weavers helped visitors add a few stitches; people are always amazed to see how far the panels have come on.

The following Saturday included a tuneful multi-part singing afternoon led by Sonneux, a talented musical group from Jersey, and participants performed the environmentally-

aware new shanty they'd learned at the Veille in the evening. Indeed, Sonneux drew out possibly the widest variety of audience contributors we've had at a Veille, also entertaining the audience with a gorgeous array of folk-music from the Channel Islands and further afield. Visitors joined long-term and new residents to present poems, readings, funny monologues, and songs – including a beautiful love song from China. It was a fun, lively and cheerful evening, with a bring and share supper and a small onsite bar kindly facilitated by the Mermaid Tavern. Creative Sark is so grateful for this sort of support, and to La Société, Sonneux, all the workshop leaders, and festival participants for a really successful fortnight of events. Do keep up to date with future activities on the website at www.creativesark.info or by following Creative Sark on Facebook.

Photograph by Susan Synnott



Archaeology

Notes on the excavations and fieldwork, May 2022 by Sir Barry Cunliffe



Although our main aim this year was to get up to date with the post excavation work, to enable us to write up the Manoir excavations, we had time to undertake a preliminary examination of the Manoir spring. The spring was clearly an important source of water from the sixteenth century onwards and it remains a strong possibility that it served the Roman settlement, now beneath the Manoir orchard, and may also have been throughout the prehistoric period. Our work here was limited to clearing and recording the stonework of the spring and its immediate surroundings and cutting a trial trench immediately to the west of it.

The well head was built at the time of the sixteenth century colonization and still retains its original lining of carefully worked blocks of red Jersey granite, though externally it has been refaced. It is fronted by a paved area with an open culvert running from it along the base of a revetting wall on the east side. The arrangement looks very much like the *lavoirs* of Brittany and Normandy which served as social centres where the local ladies washed clothes and chatted. Altogether it is an evocative monument illustrating Sark's early history.

The trial trench, dug to the west, identified the natural clay at about 0.6m at the west end. It was cut into by a small pit, containing barley grains, and a stone-built drain. Both are undated but may be medieval. The stony soil above accumulated as the result of hill wash and human and animal trample in the post medieval period. It contains prehistoric flints and pottery and also early medieval pottery, all reflecting

early activity in the general vicinity of the spring, much as one would expect. The question now is, can we identify how people used the spring in the medieval period and earlier? Did they settle close by and build structures? The springs of Sark have a great potential for understanding the earlier phases of the islands history.

The other small project we followed up was the continuing search to identify the quarries from which the dolerite, used to make axes in the Neolithic and Bronze Age, was acquired. The petrological work carried out on some of the axes found on the island shows there to have been a preference for medium grained dolerite of the kind coming from the middle sections of wide dykes (where cooling took longer and the crystal size is larger). This year we sampled three exposures, Harbour Hill, the cliffs below La Ville and the cliffs overlooking Les Fontaines Bay. We now have to see what the geologists make of the samples and how well they match with the axes. To be able to identify the actual quarry would be a major discovery.

Altogether it has been a good season with lots of work completed and a whole set of new questions to answer.





Photographs by Ian R Cartwright, Institute of Archaeology, University of Oxford

This summer we finally got the chance to return to Sark to work on the finds from the digs and Le Manoir and the 2019 season on Little Sark, with the focus on the pottery. We worked through the small assemblage from Little Sark to continue building our collection of earlier prehistoric pottery and although the sherds were small we identified another carinated vessel. There is a nice collection of medieval Normandy gritty ware sherds from Le Manoir, particularly from the trenches in front of the cottages and there may also be one or two medieval glazed sherds that we are still researching. In the area around the Cider Barn we also found Normandy gritty ware, but the focus there was on the Roman sherds. There are a number of coarse wares in fabrics similar to those already identified on the island, as well as samian and other finewares from northern France and amphora from

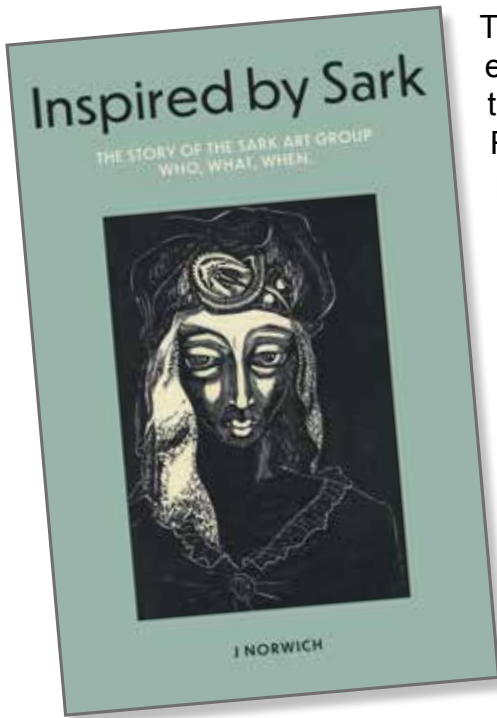
France, Spain and Italy. We are working to try and further identify the finewares if possible. In addition Philippa is working on the post-medieval assemblage to help improve our knowledge of the material imported to Sark from the sixteenth century onwards. As usual, Ian photographed interesting finds from the excavations as well as any found by Sark residents, while Simon drew the pottery and stone objects.

A Big Thank You to Sir Barry

Around 30 members of the Société gathered in the sunshine outside the Cider Barn on Saturday 21st May to thank Sir Barry and his team for all of their work over the years here on Sark. (He is seen here on the left.) We look forward to welcoming them back in the future and finding out more of their wonderful explorations into Sark's past.



Our Current Exhibition - The Sark Art Group *by Jane Norwich*



The current exhibition in the Heritage Room was put on display to coincide with the publication of the latest 'Sark Book' ***Inspired by Sark – the story of the Sark Art Group*** and at the request of our room guardians.

It covers the background to the group members, exhibitors, their activities on Sark and their work. It also highlights some of the amazing connections and stories associated with this dynamic group, who were undoubtedly the most significant art 'event' on Sark during the 20th century.

Not only did the group design and build the novel shaped gallery based on the curved roof of the nearby prison and is still a well-known landmark on Sark today, they created a significant amount

of artistic work, sadly most of which has been lost. They also attracted important artists of the inter war period to Sark both to paint and exhibit. The visit to Sark of Cyril Powers and Sybil Andrews in 1934 has been described in detail in the recently published landmark biography by Jenny Uglow and is laid out in their respective diaries and sketchbooks.

The group joined in with Sark life during their short time on Sark, including making a big impression at the Silver Jubilee Cavalcade in 1935. The photographs found in Dorothy La Trobe Bateman's album clearly show their attention to detail in the monks of St Magloire robes and the illuminated manuscripts and banners.

Newspaper reports cover the social activities at the Old Island Hall and the group are often mentioned as being at the dances and concerts there. The gallery too was a social centre outside the opening hours of the gallery, with coffee and light refreshments available alongside the use of the gramophone. In front of the west wing was a tea garden selling to tourists which irritated the Sarkees as they were concerned it would take away their custom. This seasonal tea garden carried on after the group left in late 1937, only to be interrupted by WW2.

There were other artists on Sark at the time the

The Sark Art Gallery 1934, now the Post Office & Gallery Stores





Husbands and Wives by Alfred Waldron

group was active and they have a display of their own. Their style was much more traditional and for Arthur and Alice Waller they had their own gallery studio near to The Mermaid, so had no need of Sark's new gallery.

The Sark Art Group were always something of an enigma in Sark's history and little factual evidence was found in the initial searches. But there were small clues that led to the shining of

a light on this vibrant period in Sark's history. The exhibition gives a taste of the wealth of information and stories that have emerged from records scattered across the globe.

Inspired by Sark, the story of the Sark art group - who, what, when is available for purchase in the Heritage Room and the Gallery Stores.

Marine News - FishIntel Project Update by Sue Daly

Last year the Société Sercquaise and Sark's Agriculture, Environment and Sea Fisheries Committee agreed to share the cost of taking part in a three-year research project called FishIntel led by Plymouth University. The project covers the south coast of England, the adjacent coast of France and the Channel Islands and uses acoustic underwater receivers to record tagged species of Bass, Pollack, Bream, Crawfish and Atlantic Blue Fin Tuna as well as cetaceans. The project is being led in the Channel Islands by Jersey's Sea Fisheries team who deployed the receivers around the Bailiwick on 13th April this year. Sark's receiver has been placed just south of Baleine (the rock southeast of the Coupée) and marked with a yellow buoy. The Jersey Sea

Fisheries team will be replacing the batteries in our units in August and downloading the data recorded so far.



Sark's FishIntel buoy in position off the east coast

Pollinator Project Update by Lynda Higgins

Société Sercquaise is taking part in the research for the Pollinator Project again this year. This will be the third year of this exciting seven year project. Insect data is gathered from Charles Maitland's garden and also from the meadow site at Le Vallon d'Or. This year the study will take place between 11th July and 8th August 2022. The project is to be widened this year to incorporate moth and bat data and the correlation between them.

Dr Miranda Bane (Head of Pollinator Research) and Andy Smith will be visiting Sark again in late July/early August. Miranda has been analysing the insects collected over the last two years and studied the butterflies, bees and parasitic flies. She will give a talk to present her findings from the first two years during her visit. Early indications suggest that we have a very healthy insect population compared to Guernsey and even Alderney.

Andy Smith completed a full butterfly survey over a three day visit at the end of June. He was also able to take the Sark Watch Group (Primary) on a butterfly walk. Andy was impressed at how engaged the children were and how searching the questions asked.

It is hoped that there will be time to arrange a butterfly walk during Andy's visit with Miranda. Watch out for posters and Société Sercquaise emails nearer the time.



Dr Miranda Bane & Andy Smith with one of the two tent traps used in the survey.

The Bailiwick Bat Survey by Lynda Higgins

Société Sercquaise is taking part in the Bailiwick Bat Survey again this Summer. With the help of volunteers 17 out of the 24 mapped areas (500 meter squares) have been surveyed over 4 nights between April and the beginning of July. A second recording will be taken at each site between July and October. Attention has been focused on areas where surveys were not carried out last year and Brecqhou will be included this year. The Song Meter Mini Bat recorders are set to start recording half an hour before sunset and switch off half an hour after sunrise. Every time a bat flies past and makes an ultrasonic call a recording is made. The data is then recorded on an SD card and when this is uploaded the software converts each call into both a sound recording and also a picture called a sonogram. The sonogram shows the pitch of each call, how this pitch varies up and down over time, how long each part of the call lasts, and how intense

each part of the call is. The call is then classified into the most likely species of bat. The majority of the calls are from the Common Pipistrelle bat which makes up 95% of the data and these are our most common species. Small mammals and crickets are also detected. Lesser White-toothed Shrews are appearing in greater numbers this year. It is hoped to develop the software so that the classifier will be able to distinguish between the Greater White-toothed which is present in Guernsey and the Lesser White-toothed Shrew which is unique to Sark within the Bailiwick. Results from 2022 will be released in 2023. The research is being run by Professor Philip Atkinson (Head of International Research at BTO) in conjunction with States of Guernsey.

The 2021 Report can be found at <https://www.bto.org/our-science/publications/research-reports/bailiwick-bat-survey-2021-report>

Subscription Information by Caroline Robins, Membership Secretary.

It has been brought to our notice that some members have had trouble in setting up bank transfers or standing orders for payment of their subscriptions. When the La Société Serquaise account was set up some years ago it transpires that Serquaise was spelt with an additional i, Serqu~~ai~~ise and not La Serquaise. We apologise for this problem and are trying to resolve it but, in the meantime, if anyone has this difficulty we suggest adding the additional 'i' to the name.

Thank you to all those who have paid their 2022 Subscriptions. May we take this opportunity to remind those that have not that subscriptions are due on the 1st March each year.

Sark Watch Group by Lynda Higgins

The Enrichment programme has continued at Sark School for the Seniors over the winter and spring terms and the Primary class this summer. A wide range of subjects are embraced with particular emphasis on conservation. Lessons are timed around International events of such as 'Plant a Tree for Climate Change' during the COP26 Conference, bird watching in the Seigneurie Gardens during the RSPB's Big Garden Watch in January and the beach clean in Creux Harbour during the Channel Island Beach Clean in February. Other subjects covered include pollination, re-wilding, deforestation, and climate change. Sark Watch Group have also been involved in the Bailiwick Bat Survey and the work of the Pollinator Project.

On a recent trip to the archives in the Société Sercquaise Heritage Room I discovered that there is very little by way of records held about our bugs and beetles so to put this right recent classes have been focusing on our beetle population. Last year saw the first records of the Minstrel Bug *Graphosoma italicum*. Two were found on Harbour Hill on 17th July 2021, a first



Minstrel Bugs

record for Sark, and a further three were found at Port a la Jument in August. A scarce Seven-spot Ladybird has also been found recently. I have also been recording the beetles and bugs that find their way into the moth trap. One of the carrion beetles *Nicrophorus Investigator* was found in the trap on 15th August 2021 and two appeared this last weekend. The children are very engaged and eager to learn and armed with collecting pots they have been collecting specimens and returning them to safety once identified. It is a pleasure to help them on their voyage of discovery.

Wildflower Walks by Susan Synnott

The wild flower walks went under the umbrella of La Société this year rather than Tourism. Four walks took place between 27th April to 4th May, to Dixcart Valley, Hog's Back, Gouliot Headland and Pilcher Monument. The Bluebells were at their best, particularly those in Dixcart Wood and on the Gouliot headland which usually amazes visitors as most people are used to Bluebells growing in woodland, or in shade, rather than on a headland. A slightly depressing point was the fact that the Three-cornered Garlic *Allium triquetrum* is encroaching on the Bluebells in Dixcart Valley, unlike those on Gouliot Headland

which are free of that plant, but which intermingle a certain amount with Primroses to give a stunning sight.



The Heritage Room by Susan Synnott

The Heritage Room opened for visitors from Easter Monday, Monday to Friday, 11 to 1pm. Compared to last year when we opened for the first time since the pandemic the visitor numbers have doubled up until the end of June, but still below the pre pandemic levels.

A certain number of photographs in the Heritage Room needed naming and dating, so a gathering of those residents with knowledge and interest met in early March to see what they could contribute. Some of the photographs were not that old, e.g. the Queen's visit in 2001, with many locals in the background whom we all know now but in thirty years' time or more the younger generation would not recognise these

people. It was a jolly and useful morning with only a few "too difficult" photos left over.



Tales from the Moth Trap by Lynda Higgins

Roger Long of Société Jersiaise donated the Heath Actinic moth trap which I have been running for nearly two years to re-establish moth records in Sark. Last year the first survey took place on 31st March. Moths become active once the night time temperature reaches seven degrees celsius which happened a week earlier this year on 23rd March. Many of the moths caught are as expected and reflect the food plants found in the garden and surrounding woodlands. Comparison of last year's results with this year is interesting. One distinct change has been the increase in the number of moths caught each night and different species have appeared this year. Last year average catches in April were 13 moths/6 species, in May 16 moths/10 species and in June 32 moths/17 species. This year average catches in April and May were very similar but the moth population seems to have exploded in June with over 300 moths caught in six surveys giving an average of

55 moths and 22 species. Some of the difference may be attributed to better weather conditions. Last year on 30th April there was a severe frost and this resulted in only one moth in the trap, whereas this year 11 moths and 4 species were caught in a balmy 8 degrees celsius. Warm dry weather continued in May and June producing good results. The record number of 80 moths was achieved last year on 22 July. That record was broken a full month earlier on 18th June 2022 when 118 moths were trapped. The haul included colourful species like Cream-spot Tiger Moth and Blue-bordered Carpet, Privet Hawk Moth and paler Poplar Hawk Moth with the well disguised Lappet which looks like a leaf and Portland Ribbon Wave along with tongue twisters such as *Endotricha flammealis*. Another change has been the reduction in mowing and this seems to have increased biodiversity.

We have had our fair share of rarities this year. A Silver-barred Sable *Pyrausta cingulata* was found feeding on wild thyme in Little Sark on 20th April by Trevor Bourgaize of La Société Guernsiaisie and a few weeks later three further specimens were seen on the Gouliot Headland proving that they are undoubtedly breeding here. Shakira spotted an *Anania Stachydalis* (left) recently which is a rare moth now recorded annually in Guernsey. In the moth trap on Saturday 24th June two Grey Arches were trapped - another rarity now also appearing occasionally every year. Another exciting find was the larvae of the Scarce Merveille du Jour.



One was found near La Forge and Reg Guille found one curled up in his greenhouse. My thanks go to Trevor Bourgaize from La Société Guernsaise, and Andy Smith, Andy Marquis

and Janey Cleal from the Pollinator Project for their help in identifying difficult species. Results are posted on the Sark Entomology Facebook page.

Ornithology News

Spring Migration by Lynda Higgins

Trevor and Lesley Bourgaize and Julie Davis, from Société Guernesaise, joined us again for a week at the end of April to carry out bird ringing. The weather was very fine and therefore in line with Alderney and Guernsey migrants stopping over for a rest were thin on the ground. We saw mostly female Blackcaps in the nets (the males having gone on ahead to pick out the best nesting sites) although a flock of siskins called in briefly one morning and Chiffchaff, Cetti's and Willow Warblers were present as one would expect. A good spot for seeing the migrants arrive is Les Laches and Wheatear, Linnet, Alba Wagtail, Stonechat, Skylark and Meadow Pipit were all seen. As the week progressed it became more of a breeding bird survey rather than recording grounded migrants which was very frustrating although a retrapped female Long-tailed Tit was found to be the first bird ringed by Trevor and Julie at Vallon d'Or on 19th October 2020. This year she had returned with her mate.

A lack of birds in the net did enable us to go off for walks around the Island to record birds that could be seen. Trevor Bourgaize spotted a *Zittang cisticola* at Sark Henge and a Nightingale at the Hog's Back. On the penultimate day

conditions were too windy but although cloudy at first it soon brightened into a breezy day. By the afternoon it became clear that Swallows and House Martins were coming in off the sea as they were seen feeding above fields behind La Peigneurie. With talks of falls in Guernsey and across the Channel and as the rain clouds gathered the nets went up in the hope of a late fall but this did not materialise. It was all left to the last day as the weather deteriorated and the nets were furled early because it was too wet for ringing Charlotte Burgoine the trainee ringer heard a Grasshopper Warbler and Trevor Bourgaize heard it too. And finally a big tick; a lesser-whitethroat in the net.



Long-Eared Owllet by Sue Daly



A Long-eared Owl chick, estimated to be around two weeks old, was found on Sark on the ground beneath its nest on 15th May. As the nest was too high up for the chick to be returned it was taken to Guernsey, with help from Sark Shipping, where the GSPCA have done a wonderful job of rearing it in their wildlife unit. It was 'soft' released in July when the roof was removed from its flight pen allowing it to return for food when it needs to until it can fully fend for itself.

Sadly another slightly older chick was found dead beneath the nest but three other chicks from the same nest successfully fledged. It is thought that the smaller chicks might have been pushed out of the nest either by larger siblings or by the parents who were struggling to feed so many chicks.