

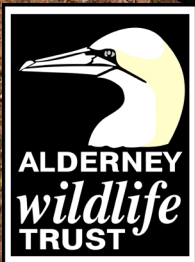
# Alderney Wildlife

## **ALDERNEY ROCKS**

Travel back in time and discover Alderney's rich geological history in this issue's special

## **A DOSE OF NATURE**

Keep your mind and body healthy by exploring Alderney's natural environment



**Spring 2021 | Recovery**

**Protecting Alderney's wildlife for  
the future.**



4 ALDERNEY | JOSHUA COPPING



8 LONGIS BAY | LORNA WEST



6 GANNETCAM | AWT



10 SOUR FIG REMOVAL, SOUTH CLIFFS | JACK HARPER



12 CLONQUE | LORNA WEST



15 BRAYE COMMON | AWT



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## Editorial

# Putting nature into recovery



Spring is my favourite time of the year—full of colour and new life. Daisies and buttercups carpet Braye Common, while the South Cliffs are a patchwork of purples, yellows and whites from the Thrift, Gorse and Oxeye daisies that grow there. Bird song fills the air before sunrise, brightening up the morning rain or shine. Bees and butterflies have also begun to appear, although this year's uncharacteristically chilly spring weather has meant a slow start for our small pollinating friends.

With all this beauty, and the flurry of spring activity around us, it is easy to slip into the illusion that all is well with Alderney's natural environment. Unfortunately, akin to the rest of the

world, Alderney's wildlife is under threat from climate change, invasive species, pollution, and land-use change. Some of these impacts are more obvious than others, such as the impact of Sour Fig on our native flora.

In this issue, we try to focus on the positives; Alderney has a rich diversity of wildlife, which in turn enriches our daily lives. It inspires us, makes us happy and keeps us physically healthy. In this issue, we've even created a list of some of our favourite sites which we suggest you explore when you get the chance!

We delve into the beauty of Alderney's physical landscape; the rocks that make up the foundation of our little island, and we explore how this landscape of beauty benefits our wellbeing.

Personally, I have fallen in love with Alderney's sandy bays, rugged coastline and wild flower meadows. There is a real sense of community here, and with that, a sense that together we can make choices, raise our voices and make a real difference.

By Lorna West

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# Manager's Report

## Putting Alderney's nature into recovery



Looking forward to the rest of 2021, and a year we hope will be dramatically better than 2020, wouldn't it be wonderful to focus on positives.

We all know it's not going to be an easy year; however, over the last 18 months we must have learnt a few new truths and discovered more about ourselves and how we respond to a crisis, so perhaps we can use this knowledge to make the coming 8 months better, more meaningful and simply positive.

The AWT has set itself a challenge to do just this, but not only for 2021, we need to look well into the future. This positive goal can be summed up by an objective of putting nature into recovery, and by the slogan "3oby30".

**The objective is reasonably clear, and the goal is a commitment to ensure that 30% of Alderney's wildlife and landscape is protected and thrives.**

In addition, as an organisation we are committing to reducing our carbon output by 25%, with a target

date for both by 2030 (at the very latest). Our longer-term goal is to see a rapid increase in both targets towards general carbon neutrality and recovery by 2050. So what does this mean?

I had a very interesting conversation with a politician last month who seemed challenged by this goal. They asked what the AWT was trying to achieve? They also were concerned that this wasn't a goal for a charity but a matter of government policy. Yet even if the government took the lead in these areas that doesn't mean individuals, charities and businesses should not commit. Unfortunately, in Alderney, the government has yet to deliver on a promise of basic anti-single-use plastic legislation - this needs to be addressed!

Finally, it was suggested that Alderney's wildlife was doing better than other parts of the Bailiwick, 'isn't nature already in recovery on Alderney?' and 'why do you think the AWT becoming carbon neutral is important in the bigger scheme of things?'

Whilst understanding where some of these questions come from, they are based on assumptions that are not correct. Alderney is no different from the rest of the world, we have our small victories but the battle is still very much in danger of being lost. As an island, we are not exempt from contributing to a global response.



SKYLARK | AMY LEWIS

**Whilst we have nature reserves covering almost 20% of the island, they have been created by the AWT and are voluntary. They have no statutory protection or government-mandate.**

Alderney is suffering significant species declines, and unchecked encroachment from invasive species, and the fact that new migrant birds are regularly recorded demonstrates the lack of historical data.



RINGED PLOVER | JOSHUA COPPING

All the while we are losing breeding bird species, with iconic species such as Skylark and Ringed Plover so close to local extinction. As an island community, we contribute much more than we should to acidification and plastic pollution within the marine environment. We discharge most of

our sewage raw directly into the sea, still dump significant amounts of waste over the cliff edge and allow the washing out of commercial cement mixers into our harbour.

**There is NO significant law or policy which offers practical protection to wildlife or the environment.**

During the last 4 months alone the AWT has had to raise issues of wildlife disturbance affecting breeding birds (theoretically protected but with a law so weak it can't be used) and mammals, including hedgehogs, disturbed during hibernation (totally unprotected), to a government which cares but has little or no power to take action.

So this is why we must aim to put nature into recovery, as without our wildlife and the ecosystems to support us we will find living on our island nearly impossible. Today Alderney's tourism relies very heavily on the island's wildlife and our community depends on natural systems including plentiful freshwater, soil quality, and marine water quality. Looking at the businesses of Alderney, many already understand the need to respond to the growing trend in 'responsible tourism' and can see there is an economic imperative as well as a moral one. 2021 could, and should, be a year where we see real change and that is what we will work towards.

By Roland Gauvain

# WILD NEWS

All the latest news from The Alderney Wildlife Trust

## New recruit



OUR NEW ECOLOGIST, DANIEL WHITELEGG

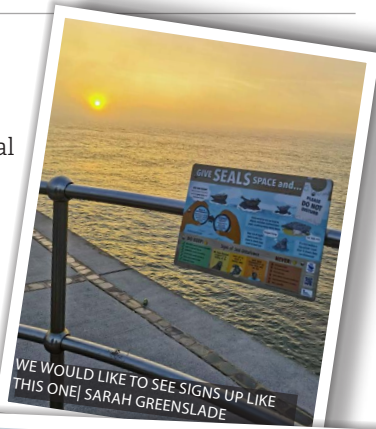
Our new Ecologist has joined the team. Daniel Whitelegg, 24, is an experienced birder from London. He has a BSc from Bournemouth University in Ecology & Wildlife Conservation. He has since worked on small islands in Greece and Denmark, looking at raptor migration and running the ringing scheme. He is now looking forward to his time on Alderney, getting to know the community, and making a real difference in the conservation and protection of Alderney's wildlife. His primary focus this year will be to study the Ringed Plover population and manage the Alderney Biological Record Centre, helping us to better understand Alderney's natural heritage.

## Ron the Seal!

In March this year, the AWT, with the support of other Environmental Charities such as the Guernsey Biological Record Centre and Green Guerns, launched a seal naming competition for 'International Day of The Seal'.

The competition was used as a platform to highlight the vulnerabilities of the Bailiwick's Grey Seal population to human disturbance and provide tips on how to watch them without causing harm.

The AWT hopes to keep the momentum going by using the now named 'Ron' as a way to remind the public to "give Ron a rest". We are hoping to produce posters and information points around the Bailiwick to promote this message, enabling us to protect them and ensure they remain part of our living seas for the future.



RON THE GREY SEAL | MEL BROADHURST-ALLEN

## Fight the Fig!

The war on Sour Fig continues, but this time we have an army of volunteers; the year 9 students of St Anna's School. As part of their DofE Award they are helping us hand pull and remove the Sour Fig smothering our native flora around Platte Saline and elsewhere, restoring diversity to our coast.



PIPISTRELLE | TOM MARSHALL



BAT DETECTOR | AWT

## Bailiwick Bat Survey

A new citizen science project was launched across the Bailiwick earlier this month, the

Bailiwick Bat Survey. The project gives you the opportunity to borrow - for free - automated equipment to record our local bats using methods devised by the BTO and aims to collect data to improve our understanding of the status and distribution of different bat species across the islands. To get involved check out the new Facebook page [BailiwickBatSurvey](https://www.facebook.com/BailiwickBatSurvey) or read all about the survey on the Guernsey Biological Record Centre: [www.biological-recordscentre.gov.gg/bailiwick-bat.../](http://www.biological-recordscentre.gov.gg/bailiwick-bat.../)

## GannetCam

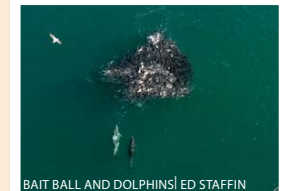
Our newest camera, 'GannetCam' looks over the Les Etacs Gannet colony, just 350 metres from the West cliffs of Alderney. GannetCam primarily focuses on Gannets nesting on 'Pyramid Rock', the closest rock in this magnificent seabird city to the mainland. Watch Alderney's Puffins and Gannets 24/7 by heading to [www.teachingthroughnature.co.uk/webcams](http://www.teachingthroughnature.co.uk/webcams)



GANNETCAM | AWT

## Top Sightings this spring...

A pod of 10-12 Bottlenose Dolphins were spotted corraling a shoal of Gilt-head Bream into a huge bait ball just off Fort Doyle - it definitely looked like something straight out of a David Attenborough documentary!!!



BAIT BALL AND DOLPHINS! ED STAFFIN

The first sighting of Corncrake in the Channel Islands since 1978 was made in April. It was spotted lurking in the tall vegetation at the Alderney Community Woodland!



CORNCRAKE! FERGUS GILL / 2020VISION

Look at this little Nudi-branch's amazing camouflage skills! He was spotted on a Pink Sea Fan at Queslingue early in April.



DUVAUCELIA ODHNERI | JUSTIN HART



**Alderney has perhaps the least commercialised tourism market of any of the Channel Islands.**

Yet in 2013-15, the Living Islands' Wildlife and Heritage Tourism Project, together with Leeds University, valued the market to be over £2 million per year. It also recognised the positive impacts this industry has on the quality of life for islanders. Our lockdown-tourism relationship with the rest of the Bailiwick has also demonstrated how significant Alderney's wildlife and natural environment is for those choosing to visit.

As we weather the storm of Covid and look towards a world struggling to cope with the need to decarbonize (re-affirmed at the virtual Leaders Summit on Climate

in April this year) we need to find ways in which we can respond to these global challenges on our remote and often inaccessible island. It is therefore vitally important that we look to where Alderney's tourism market is going, and what areas of tourism will best fit with the growing global and local trends.

In 2019, Booking.com, the Dutch online travel company which holds an estimated 28 million listings, began to assess the growing trends within the travel sector.

**In its Sustainable Travel Report, 70% of respondees acknowledged that they would like to book 'eco-friendly' accommodation regardless of the type of holiday they were trying to book.**

The same survey also acknowledged that 72% were unaware of the existence of eco-labels within the sector but 62% recognised the need to have such labelling.

**Looking at Alderney's historic advertising through tourism brochures, newspaper articles and television, much of the island's image focuses on its natural beauty and wildlife.**

Living Islands was a direct response to this interest, looking at how the island could further promote wildlife tourism. This project yielded some interesting results, not so much in an increase in the numbers getting to the island, but rather in directing marketing towards sections of the market prepared to pay more to access a British island with great wildlife and history. Until very recently these trends towards wildlife and heritage tourism were not accompanied by consideration of impact or sustainability.

The Center for Responsible Travel (CREST) produces statistics and analyses of trends in global tourism relating to what they describe as, 'Impact Tourism,' which seeks to positively impact communities and environmental projects.

**In its 2019 report, it acknowledged the dramatic growth in public interest in this 'Impact Tourism' market but the failure for the destinations to grow with the demand.**

On Alderney, there is a growing number of wildlife intrusive activities, and a lack of wildlife protection law or policy, meaning there is a real danger that businesses will create a direct negative impact on wildlife whilst selling themselves as being responsible.

The last few years have seen Alderney businesses start to consider the issues involved in meeting this trend in the global travel market, reducing their carbon footprint, proving their community contribution and reducing their ecological impact, and even enabling staff to actively volunteer in the community.

With 73% of global travellers who responded to the Booking.com survey saying that they intended to stay at least once in eco-friendly or green accommodation, now is the time for Alderney to recognise the opportunity and work as a community to take action!

By Roland Gauvain



# RECOVERY FROM A THUG!



Sour Fig and other carpobrotus species are hugely invasive, forming dense mats of thick fleshy green leaves which outcompete native species -

indeed a single plant can dominate an area up to 50m across, rapidly producing a monoculture at infested sites.

Its location can often make clearance very difficult, if not impossible; however, where it is accessible hand pulling can make a real difference. The AWT's Conservation Volunteers have spent many hundreds of hours

over the past 15 years hand clearing the plant. Historically the main area focused on has been within the Longis Reserve, primarily the east coast path stretch between Houmet Herbe and Raz Causeway and around Cats Bay, but over the last couple of years, other areas have been targeted too. Photos A and B show part of a patch cleared above Arch Bay at the end of last year – the image on the left showing what it looked like before we started, the one on the right showing spring flowers coming up just after Easter this year. There is a lot more work needed on

this particular site but it is rewarding to see the positive result of our efforts in such a short time.

The east coast path, other than some pockets of private land, is now mainly clear of the plant although regular visits are made to tackle any regrowth. An example of successful recovery is the area of grassland which resembled the above image when we started. A year later, it looked like this (photo C), with close up shots of some of the beautiful native plants now visible shown on the right.

By Lindsay Pyne

# A Dose of Nature - Green Space and Human Recovery

How would you react if your doctor told you to take a walk? Recommending patients take an early morning walk in their local green space may become a common treatment for patients suffering from illnesses such as chronic stress and anxiety. Our increasing understanding of how the quality of our immediate environment influences our physical and mental health has driven greater examination into the effectiveness of the use of 'green prescriptions'. A green prescription can be defined as "a prescription for an activity that involves spending time in natural environments for the benefit of human health and wellbeing". It is usually used to supplement orthodox medical treatments, particularly those that are aimed at addressing non-communicable diseases (not transmitted through contact with an infected or afflicted person) and mental health issues. Its proponents argue

that green prescriptions offer both a reactive (health care) and a proactive (health promoting) solution to public health issues. Whether you think this would work for you or not, spending time in green and natural spaces has been recommended for recovery for thousands of years. For example, during the time of Hippocrates (460–370 BC), when symptoms of disease were presented, a "change of habits and environment was advised, which included bathing, perspiration, walking, and massages". Furthermore, in appreciation of the potential benefits of green prescriptions, the UK government has recently announced a £4 million investment in a two-year pilot as part of its post-COVID-19 recovery plan. But how does spending time in local green space impact our health and recovery?

## Improved mental health

In a recent peer-reviewed study, childhood exposure to green space (nature reserves, woods, rural lands, etc) reduced the risk for developing a variety of psychiatric disorders during adolescence and adulthood. The researchers found that citizens who grew up with the least green space nearby had as much as a 55% increased risk of developing psychiatric disorders such as anxiety, depression and addictions in later years. The study concluded that regular access to green space was most effective at preventing the development of mood disorders, depression, neurotic behaviour, and stress-related issues. The total benefit of green space is also dose-dependent, with those who have longer exposures to green space experiencing the greatest mental health benefits.

## Benefits of a brisk early morning walk

Early morning light helps to reset our internal body clock and helps suppress the hormone melatonin (the hormone that encourages us to go to sleep). Exposure to bright natural light reduces your body's melatonin production and allows you to feel wide awake. Furthermore, the earlier you have exposure to daylight the greater the impact of the quality and quantity of your sleep. Waking up earlier has also shown to promote deeper sleep, reducing the number of times you wake up during the night. Exposure to daylight triggers the production of serotonin (the feel good hormone!). This is the hormone that antidepressant medication boosts, it's such an influential hormone that it can reset your brain's chemistry potentially helping you take a fresh outlook on daily challenges.

The brisker the walk the greater the benefit to your health. Walking at a brisk pace (slightly raised heart rate but still able to talk) during a daily walk



LONGIS BAY | LORNA WEST

THE GUNS/LES ETACS | LORNA WEST

can reduce the risk of developing cardiovascular disease by between 10-20% when compared to the same amount of walking done more slowly – with a minimum 30 minutes of brisk walking a day recommended.

### Make sure to get your daily dose!

We are blessed to have an abundance of green space on Alderney, all within walking distance! Here are a few of my favourite spots to walk and relax (enjoy!)



WILDLIFE BUNKER | LORNA WEST

### **The Guns**

Say good morning to the thousands of Gannets breeding on Les Etacs.

### **Bonne Terre**

Kick start the day in the peaceful valley of Bonne Terre.

### **Ladysmith**

Only a few minutes walk from the centre of St. Anne, the sound of running water and green surroundings help ease the anxieties of the coming day.

### **Longis Bay**

Watch the early morning light spread through this stunning and biodiverse landscape.

### **Mannez Garenne**

Surrounded by the bright flowers of Gorse experience the dawn chorus of Longis reserve.

By Jack Harper



BRAYE COMMON | LINDSAY PYNE

Before 2015 Braye Common was managed by the States primarily as an amenity site, with frequent repetitive cutting limiting the display of wild flowers during the visitor season and, in the longer term, potentially leading to a decrease in wildlife diversity due to lack of seed replacement.

The Living Islands initiative, started in late 2013 as a joint effort between the AWT, the States of Alderney and the Alderney Society, and subsequently taken on by the Joint Working Group and now Visit Alderney, set out to ensure that people visiting the island got the best possible impression of its environment and heritage. One way of meeting this goal was by reducing the cutting effort in the countryside and common areas during the flowering season, allowing

wildflowers to grow and in turn attracting other wildlife with high aesthetic value like butterflies and birds.

Braye Common is now usually only cut 3-4 times a year, Mid – late March, before the flowering season starts, late June - mid July, allowing seeds to settle in and leaving the site

ready for Alderney

Week events and

Autumn – early winter, preventing

scrub encroachment. Sometimes

an additional cut

is carried out in late

May once the Butter-

cups have gone over but

as long as this is done carefully -

early enough and sufficiently high - little harm is done to the emerging orchids or

to the colourful shorter flowering

plants such as clovers and cranes-

bills beneath. As a result, in recent

years we have seen magnificent

floral displays during late spring

and early summer, complimented

by a profusion of butterflies, bees

and other invertebrates.

By Lindsay Pyne

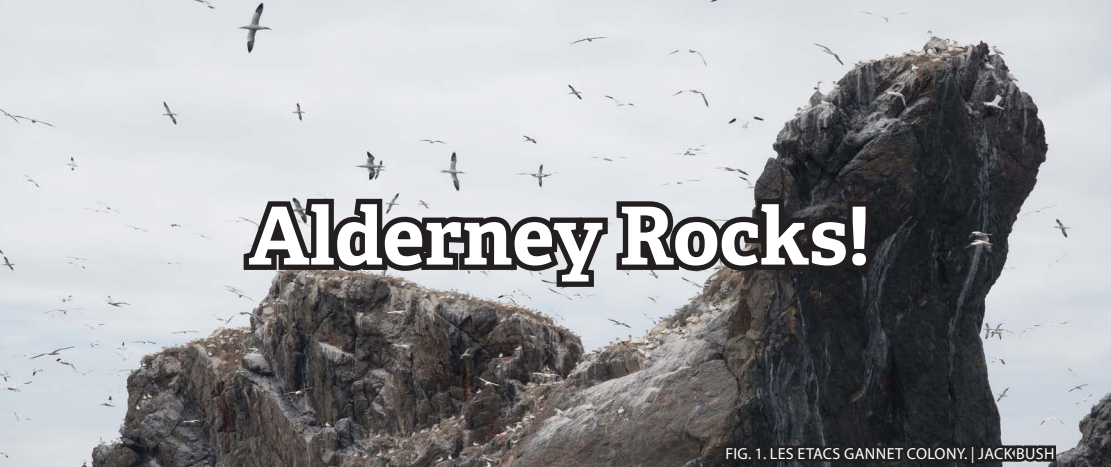


PYRAMIDAL ORCHID | AWT



BRAYE COMMON | LINDSAY PYNE





# Alderney Rocks!

FIG. 1. LES ETACS GANNET COLONY. | JACKBUSH

Perhaps the most iconic feature of Alderney's natural history are the Gannet colonies of Les Etacs and Ortac, Fig.1.

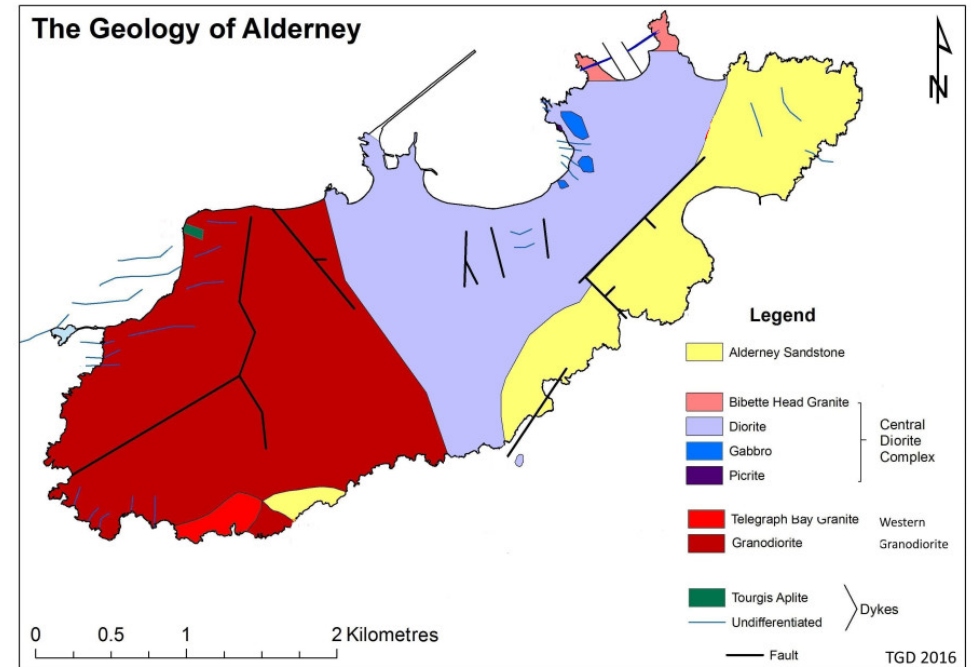
But what about the rock beneath their webbed feet? Have you ever considered it and wondered what type it is, where it came from and how old it might be?

Alderney's geology may not catch your attention like the spectacle of a few thousand Gannets but it's still worth a second look. Whilst the Gannets are a recent feature of our landscape and have only been present over the last 75 years the rocky stacks they have chosen to nest on have been around 2.2 billion years! Yep, the age of Alderney's rocks span half the life time of the Earth and, despite the island's small size, comprise a fascinating assortment of different types including those of both volcanic and sedimentary origin.

A couple of billion years ago the

world was a very different place. Back then we were in a time geologists call the 'Proterozoic Eon'. In this era life had evolved but it was still very simple and only consisted of simple bacterial microbes. Some of these bacteria evolved the ability to harness the power of the sun using photosynthesis, the by-product of which is oxygen. At this time, oxygen was scarce, making up only 2% of the earth's atmosphere, a mere tenth of today's value, but the ongoing process would eventually enable all multicellular life, including us, to evolve.

During this time, the Earth's crustal plates were still accreting and were much smaller than they are today. It was tectonic activity (movement of the Earth's plates) during this period that created the oldest rocks on Alderney. Forming much of the western half of the island, including Les Etacs, they



comprise part of a sequence of volcanic (or igneous) strata called the Armorican Massif that can be found elsewhere in the Channel Islands and throughout north-western France.

On Alderney these ancient rocks mainly consist of a volcanic rock called granodiorite (see map), Fig. 2. This rock was formed when two plates of the Earth's crust collided causing one to be subducted or forced beneath the other. On deep burial, the subducted plate underwent partial melting due to great pressure and high temperatures. The resultant magma then accumulated to form a pluton with a granodioritic composition of

minerals that, as it rose towards the surface, likely fed some explosive volcanism at the surface.



FIG. 2. CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT, GRANODIORITE, TELEGRAPH BAY GRANITE, MICROGRANITE AND APLITE. | JUSTIN HART

In one or two places on Alderney there are also the remnants of the even older rock that this magma lay within. These ancient relics comprise 'xenoliths' or unmelted

fragments of the intruded rock embedded within the granodiorite



FIG. 3. METASEDIMENT XENOLITH WITHIN THE GRANODIORITE – ALDERNEY'S OLDEST ROCK? | JUSTIN HART

magma. They comprise meta-sediments (old sandstones or mudstones partially altered by high pressures and/or temperatures), Fig. 3, and are of unknown age.

**Tectonic activity around this time also produced other volcanic intrusions including a granite that today forms part of Telegraph Bay and the Twin Sister stacks.**

This granite likely underwent slower cooling than the granodiorite and as a result has a coarse grain and larger crystals, notably pink feldspars, Fig. 2.

After this tectonic activity there then followed an extended period of time during which the volcanic rocks were buried and suffered some alteration due to high pressure and/or temperatures or metamorphism. This led to some foliations as well as minor volcanic intrusions or dykes. These are clearly visible around the western end of the island, off Tete de Judemarre and in the cliff face of Hanaine Bay, Fig. 4. They comprise microgranites and aplites, Fig. 2.

The next major rock complex that is present on Alderney did not form until well over 1.5 billion years later, between 690-500 million years ago. It comprises a volcanic rock called

diorite that forms much of the centre and mid-northern section of the island, see map. This 'central diorite' was formed under similar circumstances to the much older 'western granodiorite' but has a finer grained and darker appearance, Fig. 5



FIG. 5. CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT, DIORITE, BIBETTE HEAD GRANITE, GABBRO AND PICRITE | JUSTIN HART

It has been extensively quarried on the island and was used to help construct the Victorian forts. It was created during more tectonic activity when two crustal plates collided along the northern margin of the ancient continent of Gondwana. The resultant uplift or 'mountain building' episode is known as the Cadomian orogeny.

**During this orogeny ongoing volcanism produced other magmas with varying chemical composition and mineral content producing not only the island's diorite but also the more felsic (pale coloured volcanic rock, more silica rich with abundant quartz and feldspar) Bibette head granite,**

Fig. 4, as well as the outcrops

of more mafic (dark coloured volcanic rock, less silica rich with abundant pyroxene and olivine minerals) gabbro and picrite, Fig. 5, found around Roselle point, see map. Around this location it's also possible to find excellent examples of orbicular diorite, a rare form of the rock that exhibits concentric bands of alternating pale feldspar and dark hornblende crystals, Fig. 6. Following the volcanism associated with the Cadomian orogeny the landscape continued to be uplifted and the island's rocks suffered some fracturing, faulting and deformation. Erosion at this time also over washed these rocks with a coarse sandstone that would become the island's third major rock complex the 'Alderney sandstone'.

Around this time, life in the oceans was changing rapidly, new multicellular organisms were evolving. In geological history we had left the Proterozoic Eon and entered



FIG. 6. ORBICULAR DIORITE EXPOSED AT ROSELLE POINT | JUSTIN HART



FIG. 4. VOLCANIC DYKES INTRUDING THE GRANODIORITE, HANAINE BAY. | JUSTIN HART

the 'Phanerozoic Eon' – the era of life.



FIG. 7. LAYERING AND CROSS-BEDDING IN ALDERNEY SANDSTONE | JUSTIN HART

In the earliest geological period of this new era, called the Cambrian period, there was an explosion of different life forms and for the first time in the geological record, fossils became not only common but also diverse in form.

**No fossils can be found within the Alderney sandstone. This is because the sandstone was deposited by turbulent streams and rivers running off rapidly eroding mountains.**

Also, on land there was still no life and conditions in the flowing water would not have been suitable for the preservation of fossils anyway. Alderney sandstone covers the south-eastern side of the island between Fort Corblets and L'Etac de la Quoire on the south coast (see map). There's also a small enclave further to the west on the south coast near Les Couriaux. In places the deposition of layers of different grain size are clearly visible within the rock, Fig. 7, and the remnants of ripples or cross-bedding allow geologists to determine that the 'paleo-current' likely flowed from the north-west.

Following the deposition and diagenesis of the Alderney sandstone, just prior to the age of the dinosaurs be-

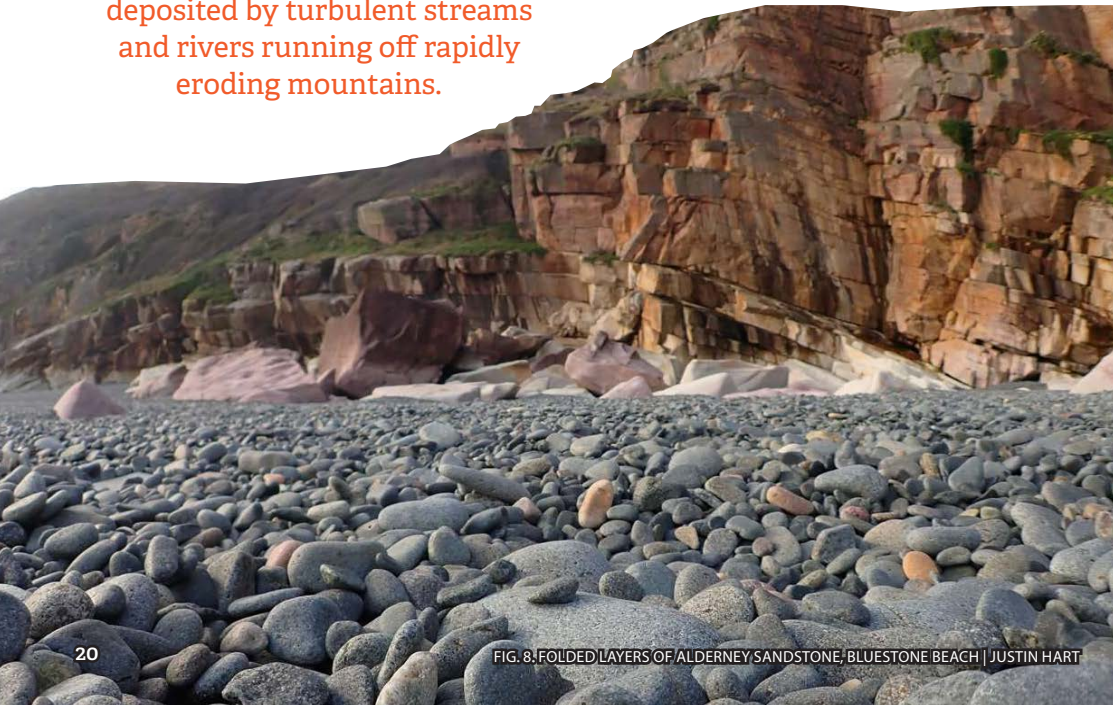


FIG. 8. FOLDED LAYERS OF ALDERNEY SANDSTONE, BLUESTONE BEACH | JUSTIN HART

tween 380-280 million years ago, there was another period of tectonic activity called the Variscan orogeny. This 'mountain building' episode entailed the collision of the old continents of Gondwana and Laurussia (Euroamerica) to form the new super-continent Pangea. The effect was the tilting, folding and faulting of the Alderney sandstone, Fig. 8, and some minor volcanic intrusions, including dykes (or thick 'veins') of lamprophyre and dolerite, Fig. 9, that can be found in Hanaine bay and around Bibette Head, Fig. 4, see map.

Since then there has been some further uplift and erosion but no more recent rocks are present on Alderney.



FIG. 9. PORPHYRITIC MICROGRANITE (LEFT) AND DOLERITE (RIGHT). | JUSTIN HART



FIG. 10. RAISED BEACH DEPOSITS, CLONQUE BAY | JUSTIN HART

**The 'soft strata' on Alderney that forms the soil beneath our feet was deposited in relatively recent geological time during the Pleistocene period, over the last 100,000 years during last great ice age.**

Changes in sea level caused by the repeated freezing and thawing of the great ice sheet, during glacial and interglacial periods, have left the remnants of raised beaches, Fig. 10. These can be seen most easily along the cliff face in Clonque Bay but their formation and history is another story..

By Justin Hart

## WATCH NEWS

Spring is one of the most exciting times to observe the natural world, especially in Alderney. Hedgehogs are courting, gannets, guillemots and puffins are breeding, and the countryside is full of wildflowers, bees and butterflies.

At the playgroup, we've been making weekly trips to the allotment. The children have helped to plant veg, build bumblebee homes and to make bug buckets. They find the smallest of creatures (woodlice and ants) fascinating and have yet to find spiders scary or slugs gross. Instead, they want to hold them or feed them leaves - one lucky snail was offered six big dock leaves to satisfy his hunger.

The children of St Anne's school have also been exploring the great outdoors this spring. So far we've been rock pooling at Braye, pond dipping in the school's secret garden and searching for mini beast at the community woodland. The ponds were full of life and the students were keen to show me everything they found, from newts to worms, to beetles and pond skaters. One student caught seven newts with

a single dip of the net - imagine the excitement that caused! Wildlife week (which ran during the May half-term) was a big success with many of the local children as well as those visiting from Guernsey. The children got stuck in, creating some fantastic wildlife inspired artwork, from coral reefs made out of egg boxes to beautiful cork butterflies. It was great to watch them searching for mini beasts at Essex Farm during our Bio-blitz event (which also involved chasing our Ramsar Officer around with a net), they were ecstatic!

Summer is now almost here and there are lots of events for our Watch members to get involved with, including nature walks, moth traps and rock pool sessions! These experiences are so important for the children of Alderney; inspiring and empowering the next generation to care about, and bring about positive change for the environment.

To keep up to date with all the latest events and activities head to our events pages on [www.alderneywildlife.org](http://www.alderneywildlife.org).



ARTS AND CRAFTS SESSION AT ALDERNEY MIND CENTRE FOR WILDLIFE WEEK | LORNA WEST

## Visiting a UK reserve

I discovered Lymington and Keyhaven Marshes Nature Reserve during lockdown last year while I was living in Southampton and needed an escape into the country.

The drive there was beautiful; it takes you through the winding roads of the New Forest, passing quaint villages, rich in history, with old thatch-roofed cottages and traditional pubs. Ponies, donkeys and cows roam free, occasionally stopping traffic as they pause lazily in the road. The countryside turns from dense forests, with ancient oak trees and their drooping limbs, to vast areas of open heathland, purple in the summer months. Eventually, you arrive at Keyhaven, a small village with a very pretty harbour.

The reserve is stunning. The first time I went was during sunset at high tide. The sea was still and the sky was turning purple. I could hear the calls of Oystercatchers and the gentle sound of waves lapping against the seawall - a huge contrast to the sights and sounds of Southampton City Centre. It was the perfect place to escape, relax and reconnect with nature. My new wildlife 'haven'.

The site is great for wildfowl and waders, so it's worth taking a pair of binoculars with you! In winter, the lagoons are home to Mallard, Shoveler and Teals, while in spring and autumn, you can expect to see Whimbrels, Curlews, Sandpipers and Little Stints.

Sometimes you get lucky and spot something unusual! Last October a Grey Phalarope and Wilson's Phalarope decided to visit the reserve. They caused quite a stir in the birding community, attracting crowds of people with large binoculars and cameras, excited at their unexpected arrival. Wilson's Phalarope is a very rare visitor to the UK, with only one or two seen each year! So I count myself very lucky - I just happened to be at the right place at the right time!

It's not just the birds that are amazing, the site also supports a rich diversity of highly specialised and nationally scarce flora and fauna, including the rare Foxtail Stonewort, Lagoon Sand Shrimp and Starlet Sea Anemones. All in all, it is a truly inspiring place, and well worth the visit if you happen to be in the area!!

By Lorna West



WILSON'S PHALAROPE | SAM COSHAM



GREY PHALAROPE | SAM COSHAM

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