

ANNUAL UPDATE NUMBER 1

Alderney Nature Diary

(included to bring records up to date)

Weather report for December 2005

A generally dull, cold, windy, month, with winds mainly in the South-west for the first week and East to North-east for most of the remainder of the month.

No temperatures were actually below zero at Platte Saline, but wind chill factors made it feel much colder in the later part of the month. Altogether a dismal end to a year in which August, (with 330.9 hours), was the sunniest month since 1955.

Rainfall total was 119mm below last year and 94mm below the 20-year average, whilst total sunshine, although well below the December average, was still 36 hours above 2004 and 135 hours above the long-term average.

Figures for comparison with December last year and the 20-year average

| Year | 2005 | 2004 | 20-year average |
|---|-------------|-------------|------------------------|
| | | | 1986-2005 |
| Rain mm. | 74.9 | 61.8 | 94.7 |
| Sun hrs. | 51.8 | 34.6 | 51.8 |
| Maximum temperature recorded °C | 12.7 | 13.2 | 14.3 |
| Minimum temperature recorded °C | 0.3 | 2.8 | 1.8 |
| Mean day temperature | 8.9 | 9.3 | 10.1 |
| Mean night temperature | 8.6 | 9.0 | 7.8 |
| Total rainfall for the year mm. | 639.6 | 758.8 | 733.6 |
| Total sunshine for the year hrs. | 1967.9 | 1930.4 | 1832.6 |

Annual Summary by month

Maximum figures in each line in red type, minimum in blue

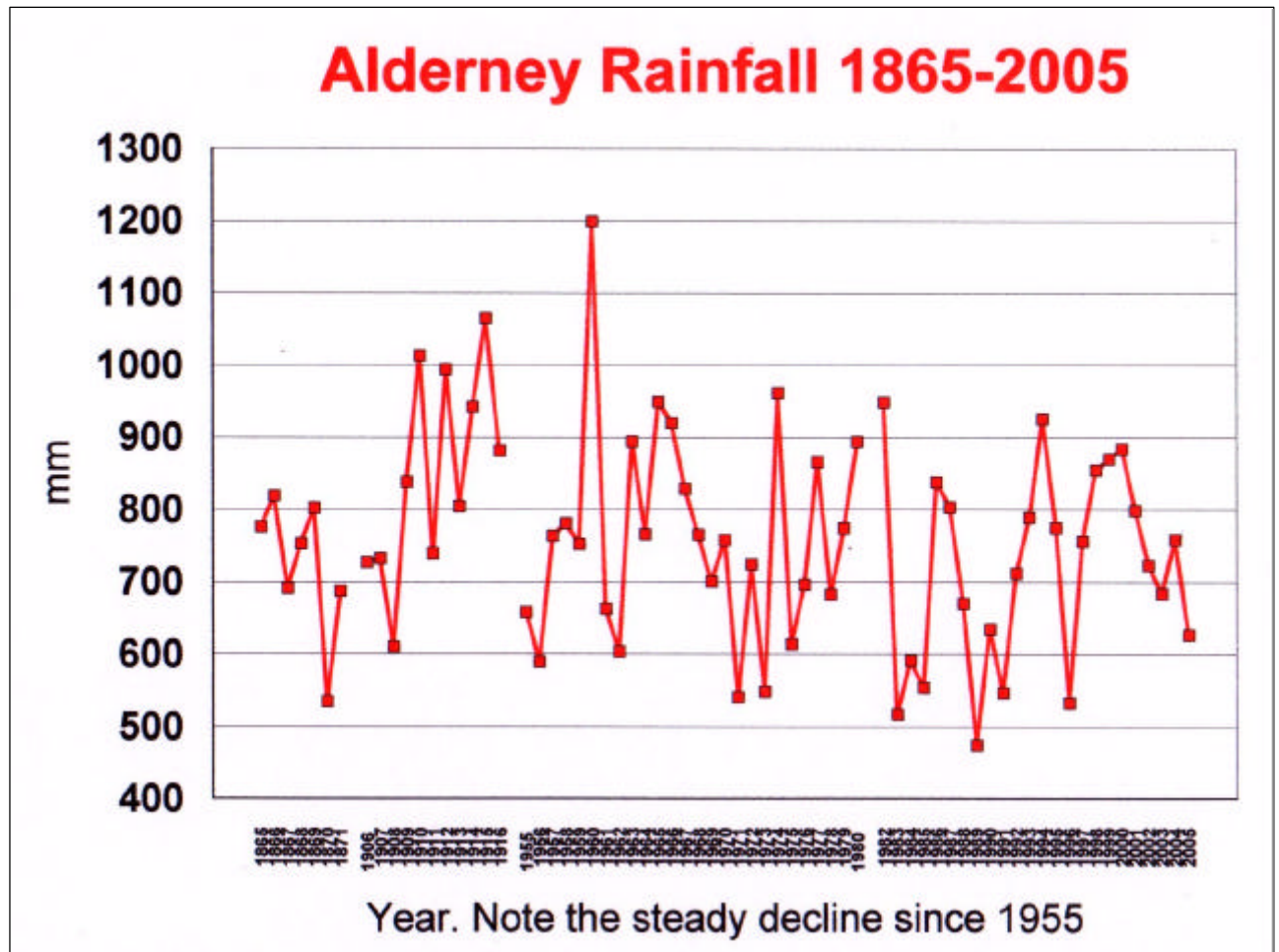
| Year 2005 | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | June | July | Aug | Sept | Oct | Nov | Dec | TOTAL |
|--------------------|-------------|-------------|------------|------------|------------|-------------|-------------|--------------|-------------|------------|------------|-------------|--------------|
| Temp. highest °C | 12.7 | 11.4 | 16.8 | 18.3 | 24.4 | 27.4 | 24.4 | 23.0 | 23.9 | 20.9 | 17.3 | 12.7 | |
| Temp. lowest °C | 4.4 | 0.4 | 1.2 | 4.2 | 3.2 | 10.5 | 13.2 | 10.9 | 9.2 | 8.4 | 4.0 | 0.3 | |
| Average daily Max | 9.2 | 6.6 | 8.7 | 9.9 | 13.2 | 16.6 | 18.1 | 18.7 | 17.7 | 16.2 | 11.0 | 8.9 | |
| Average daily Min. | 9.0 | 6.3 | 7.6 | 8.7 | 11.0 | 14.5 | 16.4 | 16.2 | 16.2 | 15.4 | 10.4 | 8.6 | |
| Monthly mean °C | 9.1 | 6.5 | 8.2 | 9.4 | 11.8 | 15.6 | 17.4 | 17.6 | 17.1 | 15.1 | 10.8 | 8.7 | |
| Rain mm. | 42.8 | 44.3 | 38.4 | 68.3 | 71.6 | 41.2 | 52.0 | 32.8 | 34.6 | 69.3 | 69.6 | 74.9 | 639.64 |
| Sun hrs. | 44.6 | 69.6 | 114.5 | 202.9 | 221.9 | 275.0 | 267.7 | 330.9 | 187.6 | 114.9 | 86.5 | 51.8 | 1967.92 |

Averages for the 20 years 1986-2005

| | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | June | July | Aug | Sept | Oct | Nov | Dec | TOTAL |
|-----------------------|------------|-------------|------------|------------|-------------|-------------|--------------|-------------|-------------|------------|------------|-------------|--------------|
| Temp. monthly maximum | 12.8 | 12.4 | 14.6 | 16.4 | 20.6 | 22.8 | 23.1 | 24.1 | 21.8 | 19 | 16.2 | 14.3 | |
| Temp. monthly minimum | 1 | 0.8 | 2.3 | 3.6 | 6.4 | 8.7 | 11.1 | 11.3 | 10.3 | 7.8 | 4.8 | 1.8 | |
| (Max | 9.2 | 8.8 | 10.2 | 11.6 | 14.3 | 16.7 | 18.4 | 19.2 | 17.8 | 15.2 | 12.2 | 10.1 | |
| Average daily Min | 6.7 | 6.1 | 7.1 | 7.7 | 10.2 | 12.5 | 14.5 | 15.1 | 14.3 | 12.4 | 9.7 | 7.6 | |
| (Mean | 7.9 | 7.5 | 8.7 | 9.7 | 12.3 | 14.6 | 16.5 | 17.2 | 16.1 | 13.8 | 10.9 | 8.8 | |
| Rain mm. | 80.8 | 57 | 49.4 | 56.4 | 39.7 | 40.8 | 41.5 | 48.9 | 50.9 | 93 | 80.5 | 94.7 | 733.6 |
| Sun hrs. | 60.9 | 79.1 | 125.7 | 183.8 | 247.2 | 241.9 | 243.4 | 236.6 | 178.2 | 109.7 | 74.4 | 51.8 | 1832.6 |

At this point a comparison of the annual summaries of all the available Alderney rainfall figures since 1865, which I have collected over the years, makes an interesting demonstration of the declining rainfall figures across the British Isles generally and no doubt across many other areas. The first figures 1865-71 were recorded at the Breakwater during its construction, the next block 1906-16 were recorded at the Le Huret home in St. Anne of the island Greffier. The next block from 1955-1980 at the Airport and those from 1982-97 at the Lighthouse, using a Stephenson screen and the remainder at my house on Platte Saline using a new electronic recording system.

Alderney Rainfall 1865-2005



Alderney Botanical Report 2005

“Alderney is the top area in the British Isles for Wild Flowers !!”

As many readers will know, for the purposes of wildlife recording the British Isles have been divided since Victorian times into 113 Vice-Counties (VCs). These largely follow the old county boundaries, with very large counties like Yorkshire divided into two VCs.

The Botanical Society of the British Isles, (BSBI) follow this system, with the whole country divided into "hectads" of 10Km. squares, more or less following the physical (former) county boundaries and each VC has one or more "recorders" Our duties are to confirm, correlate and record the records of plant sightings submitted by both local and visiting botanists. The Channel Islands are all lumped together as VC 113, or "S" (for Sarnia), originally for 40+ years under a single recorder, the late David McClintock, to whom the leading local botanists submitted their records, but, for the last 12 years or so, each now has their own recorder(s) of whom I act for Alderney, Bridget Ozanne for Guernsey and Roger Veall for Sark. Jersey has two recorders.

In 2003 Prof. Stace of Leicester University and 3 other eminent botanists published a 405 page *"Vice-County Census Catalogue of the Vascular Plants of Great Britain, The Isle of Man and the Channel Islands"*, to which all of the BSBI recorders submitted their records of the plants found in their areas over the many years of their records.

A summary of the overall findings appeared in the September 2004 edition of BSBI News. This shows the total numbers of Wild Flowers recorded in each VC, divided into Native and Alien (naturalised) species (or taxa); the area of each VC in square kilometres; and the ratios of the number of plants per sq. km.

Surrey, with 2,409 taxa has the highest number of different species recorded in its 1,960 sq. km. area, giving a ratio of 1.229 species per sq. km., whilst Wester Ross in Scotland has only 902 taxa recorded in its huge area of 3,360 sq. km. and a ratio of only 0.275 species per sq. km. The average ratio for the whole UK is 0.955 species per sq. km.

The Channel Islands between them have 1,725 species found in their total area of only 194 sq. km. and thus have a ratio of 8.89 species per sq. km. The nearest similar number of taxa found in a UK VC is in Nottinghamshire, with 1,727 species in 2,180 sq. km. and a ratio of 0.792 species per sq. km.

Alderney with 1,042 species recorded since the first records were published in 1839 and approximately 900 still to be found today in its approximately 9 sq. km. area, thus has a ratio of at least 100 species per sq. km. if one includes only the current flora, rather than all the species ever recorded as is probably the case with the figures in this article for the UK and other Channel Island VCs.

It is therefore obvious why Alderney, with a wild flower density more than 100 times that of the average UK VC and almost twelve times that of the other CIs, is of such interest to visiting botanists and other naturalists and, with the appropriate publicity, is therefore in an excellent position to attract large numbers of "wildlife tourists".

This has long been noted and, in Marquand's *"Flora of Guernsey and the Lesser Channel Islands"* published in 1901, he was able to write; "Alderney is in several respects without a rival, even in this favoured archipelago.....and a visitor will find here in a single day's botanising a larger variety of really rare plants than in either of the other [larger] Channel Islands. There are certainly not many places in England where, within an area of four square miles, a dozen plants may be found equal in rarity to the following:--" (a list followed, all of which and several more, now on the Endangered Species lists for the UK, are still to be found in the island today).

The Alderney Wildlife Trust

2005 has been a very busy year for the Alderney Wildlife Trust, of which I am a Director and was the Hon. Treasurer from its formation in May 2002 until the AGM in May 2006, when I was elected President. We have acquired a new tractor with transport box, mower and trailer, etc., well suited to the many tasks required to improve and maintain some very rough and uneven ground, thanks to a generous interest-free loan from one member and the purchase of some additional equipment for it from another. Considerable progress has been made in the Trusts two Nature Reserves, designated by The States; (see the map elsewhere on this site to note their positions or click here for a link) Longis Common and most of the East coast, (the habitats of several rare and endangered species) and Val du Saou on the South coast, in removing encroaching bracken, gorse and bramble scrub in some parts, to allow the smaller (and more internationally important plants) to thrive in their proper habitats either of short, rabbit cropped turf, or under the indigenous deciduous trees which have been planted in newly cleared areas in Val du Saou. Several kms. of footpaths have been created or opened up again and marked in the reserves and grazing animals are helping to keep the invasive plants at bay. Much of the widespread and encroaching Reedmace or Lesser Bulrush, (*Typha angustifolia*) and New Zealand Pigmy-weed (*Crassula helmsii*) has been removed from Mannez pond when it was dry or almost dry and the latter has now been sprayed to try and prevent the *Crassula* recovering or spreading back in from the banks. Steps have been taken to raise the bank

at the NE end of the pond, which should help to reflood the tiny meadow at the SW end in the winter and perhaps enable the former and only known colony in Alderney of *Ophioglossum vulgatum* (Adder's-tongue fern) to return.

Alderney has now got its first "Ramsar" site registered with the UN, (a convention signed at Ramsar in Turkey, covering "Wetlands of International Importance"), only the second one in the Channel Islands so far. (See file [Eco 14](#)) or click the link in brackets. This consists of the whole of the West coast shoreline from some distance above the HWM and includes all the offshore islands and stacks from Burhou out to the Casquets. Inclusion under this convention does not in any way interfere with the traditional use of the area, but imposes an obligation on the States to ensure that nothing is done to destroy the present ecosystem.

The large amount of species surveying work necessary to prepare the document, which was then submitted to the UN by the States of Alderney, was carried out over about 18 months, at little expense to the States, by Trust members and several other experts who gave freely of their time. The site was included in the International Register in August. This has greatly increased our knowledge and record base of the various plant and animal groups which live in this area, and a number of new sites have been noted for plants in our existing flora, previously unrecorded here. It should also encourage eco-tourists.

Much of this recording work has now been incorporated into the island Digimap system and Dr. Charles David and Bridget Ozanne, who run the recently established States of Guernsey Biological Records Centre in the old Tobacco Factory premises, have also given considerable assistance in this part of the work as well as in the surveying. In particular Dr. David is converting my own 11,852 plant records, each with a map reference based on the old yellow covered OS map issued by the States of Alderney, to the "true" GPS co-ordinates. It had been found that the gridlines on the older map were about 183m north and 140m west of their true spatial positions, thus placing some species found on the N and W coasts and beaches too far inland and those on the S and W out in the sea, using the existing co-ordinates, as well as moving all the other sightings based on that map within the island. I have now redrawn the UTM gridlines on the map of Alderney used in my various books and articles and on my website, to reflect these changes and make available to visiting naturalists, who wish to record their sightings, a map which would closely mirror the same co-ordinates as a handheld GPS machine at any given point. It is hoped that all of the 11,852 sightings recorded in my database will soon have their co-ordinates changed to bring them into line with the corrected positions. These revised maps are now available from the several links on this website.

The species surveys done for the Ramsar submission have also given us greater details of the taxa found in this part of the island in several groups of plants, notably seaweeds, lichens, liverworts and mosses, which have not received a great deal of published recording attention for several, or in some cases many, years. The same can be said of the many marine, littoral zone and 'coastal' animal groups. Several of the updated lists are now available on this site.

Little progress has yet been made with the preparation of a proper Wildlife Conservation Law, despite my many attempts in the last 15 years and those of others before me, so it will be some time yet before a draft law can be brought to the States for approval.



I have not been able to spend a lot of time this year in routine botanical recording, but have kept a careful eye on the sites of our locally rarer and nationally scarce or endangered plants. We seem to have finally lost the two colonies of *Odontites verna* (Red Bartsia) in the verges either side of the road across Longis Common, due to mowing on one side and encroachment by *Carpobrotus* on the other. Lindsay Pyne, one of the Trust's volunteer workers has made a considerable list of the plants she has found, especially in the Ramsar site area and has noted more than a dozen new sites for plants already recorded in the island and several not previously recorded, yet to be confirmed.

Limonium normannicum (Alderney Sea-lavender) continues to thrive near Fort Houmet Herbé although the nearby colony of *Aster tripolium* (Sea Aster) has become more fragmented and reduced). It has been a good year for *Romulea columnae* (Sand Crocus), *Tuberaria guttata* (Spotted Rock-rose), *Orchis morio* (Green-winged Orchid) and *Anacamptis pyramidalis* (Pyramidal Orchid). The single colony of *Ophrys apifera* (Bee Orchid) was badly damaged by the activities of 4WD vehicles climbing the steep bank and running directly over the colony, but a few specimens managed to recover and flower and a site barrier of rocks was created by Public Works to prevent further incursions. In 2006 some 14 plants have been seen in an area a few metres removed from the damaged site. A few plants of *Geranium sub-molle* (Alderney Geranium) have been noted at each of three sites and two plants of *Dactylorhiza praetermissa* (Southern Marsh Orchid) once again appeared in Bonne Terre.

Frequent mowing of both Braye Meadow and Platte Saline Common has again prevented most of the smaller plants from appearing in any numbers, including the Celandines and the Pyramidal Orchids. The usual crop of *Calvatia gigantea* (Giant Puffballs) has not been found (at least by me) on Platte Saline this autumn, but *Scleroderma verrucosum* (Earthballs) have been plentiful and have spread considerably in several nearby lawn areas and even to wall bottoms and a cobbled gutter.

The influence on the flora of what is expected to be a very cold winter, especially on the naturalised alien species, will be observed with great interest in 2006.



<Bee Orchid

Earthballs in Le Petit Val gutter>

