

## HERM ISLAND CHRISTMAS NEWSLETTER 2011

Dear Hermites,

It was the firework display last weekend that prompted me to begin thinking about writing this year's Christmas letter. The bonfire weekend saw many guests join the residents of Herm for a wonderful bonfire and some terrific fireworks. In addition, guests were encouraged to enter the "build a Guy" competition, modelling their creation on a play on words of either Guy or Fawkes. There were some excellent entries which had clearly taken significant amounts of ingenuity and thought, let alone many hours of work. The winner was a beautifully crafted skeleton made of hundreds of wooden forks that many a GP would have proudly displayed in their surgery!

There is definitely now a chill in the air and the Island is certainly quieter than the summer months and so it seems the perfect time to look back on another busy year, and bring everyone up to date with what we have all been up to over the past 12 months.

Last winter saw a major restoration project begin on St Tugual's chapel which has been suffering from dampness caused by the deteriorating condition of the roof and the wall pointing. The project was undertaken by the States of Guernsey, who are responsible for the upkeep of the Chapel, which meant a new roof, re-pointing, and re-rendering of the walls. A drainage channel was also to be created taking rain water directly from the roof into a soak-away which was to be dug into the Manor lawn, to the south of the chapel. When digging the soak-away, the working team were more than surprised to uncover human bones. Archaeologists from Guernsey began an investigation, and soon discovered that the bones belonged to a skeleton of an adult and a child that were buried together. Within the walls of the grave dug by the archaeologists, were clearly more and more bones. Further digging revealed many more skeletons, some laid out peacefully, some heaped in a mass grave. Early indications were that the bones were 400-500 years old, but little more is known about them or how they came to be laid to rest there. Jenny Cataroche, an osteoarchaeologist based in Guernsey is hoping to discover more by studying the bones that the team took away. Despite the location, there has never been any historical record to suggest that the Manor garden is a burial site. The chapel project may take a couple of years to complete, as the walls dry out in preparation for painting, but for now, the scaffolding, drilling and dust production has come to an end.

Throughout the winter, the reverend Richard Bellinger continued to travel to Herm in order to lead a service on the second Sunday of each month. With the closure of the chapel, the services were held in the village hall. The Christmas carol service was held in the Manor courtyard, on a still, dry but very cold Christmas Eve evening.

Simon George, Herm's technical director oversaw a number of projects throughout the winter continuing the perpetual renewal of the Islands services and facilities. One of the Islands generators needed replacing, a number of roofs needed repairing, garden machinery needed

purchasing, bathrooms needed refurbishing and the estate needed a great deal of care in its forestry, gardens and thoroughfares. 23 Hotel bedrooms at the White House Hotel saw a soft refurbishment, making them so much lighter and fresher, with the soft refurbishment of the balance of the rooms being planned for this winter.

The gardening team have had a very busy year, with a number of significant milestones. Herm Island's entry into Floral Guernsey saw the Island winning a gold award, and the competition outright, picking up a special award also for best local environment. The win for Herm means that the Island will be entering the small coastal category in the Britain in Bloom competition during 2012. Small coastal refers to places that have a population of up to 12,000 residents, so Herm Island with its 60 residents should feel right at home! Herm has twice won its category in the Britain in Bloom competition in 2002 and in 2008.

Soon after the floral Guernsey competition results, assistant gardener James Cordingley and his partner Jana Ondrejovicova announced that they would be moving on, in order that James could take up a position in the larger team of gardeners at Penshurst Place in Kent. In September, we were joined by new assistant gardener Roseanne Wheeler. 21 year old Rosie comes to us fresh from Writtle College, and already has made herself a strong part of the team. With Britain in Bloom on the horizon, Rosie has been thrown headlong into island life, with a winter that will be packed with exciting gardening projects. We are confident that Rosie's artistic touch will be apparent in everything she does, whilst trying to keep up with Brett Moore's amazing enthusiasm in his role as head gardener.

Britain in Bloom judge and horticulturist Rae Beckwith visited Herm recently in order to deliver his very own creation of the Herm Daffodil. The flower is a white daffodil and Herm is the only place it will be found. The first ten bulbs were hand-delivered to the island by Rae, who has already won awards with his creation. Five of the flowers will be planted in the garden of St Tugual's chapel, whilst the remaining five will be kept for reproduction.

The winter saw the preparation of Moss field as the venue for the annual charitable cricket match for the Guernsey region of the Lord's Taverners association. Brett Moore toiled with his team to create "Herm International Cricket Ground", and the entire Herm team were challenged to ensure that the marquee's arrived and were set up, that the IT systems communicated with the outside world, that the lunches were prepared and served perfectly, and that refreshments were available for everyone that wanted to watch the action. The weather posed a challenge with a prevailing force 6 wind throughout the weekend, but Saturday's rain gave way to a clear day for the event on the Sunday. Chris Tarrant captained the Lord's Taverners president's XI, whilst former England cricket captain Mike Gatting lead the sponsors XI. Eastenders actors Steve Mcfadden, Perry Fenwick and Ricky Groves along with Lorraine Chase, and former England cricketer Andy Caddick were split amongst the two teams, but it was Chris Tarrant's team that took the trophy at the end of the day. The bails were then ceremoniously burned, and placed in a replica urn from Lord's and the match will now be played each year for "The Herm ashes". The weekend was a tremendous success and raised over £55,000 for the charity. With the inaugural event such a success, we are very much looking forward to the 1st July 2012, when we are looking forward to welcoming the Taverners back to Herm.

The residents of Herm have developed their sporting achievements throughout the year. Herm FC the Island's football team, have gone from strength to strength from their conception a year ago. During the summer, the team comprises of a lot of seasonal staff, many of whom have displayed real talent, leading to a couple of excellent wins for the Herm boys.

Tom Harvey, one of Herm's truckies is fanatical about rugby, and fixed up a challenge for a Herm team

to play a game of rugby against Guernsey team St Jacques in October. Tom put together a team made up of Island residents, former Island residents, and seasonal staff, who showed incredible commitment to training, often getting up and being out very early in the morning, during a busy summer season. The game took place a few days after the White House Hotel closed, with the score line of 24-0 not really paying justice to the amount of preparation put in by Tom's team.

Another enormous achievement was realised on the 28th August when Mat Nicholls, Herm's boat skipper, finished the Guernsey marathon in 17th position, sporting a wonderful time of 3 hours, 21 minutes and 17 seconds. Mat had been training throughout the summer, and must have circled Herm countless times in the process!

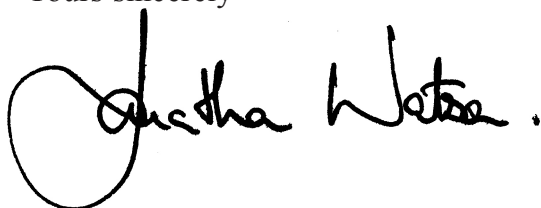
On 2nd September, I managed to complete my own challenge of kayaking around Guernsey with a team trained by Outdoor Guernsey, organised by the Crimestoppers committee in Guernsey. This was the third date set, as the previous two were halted by unsuitable weather. There were 24 kayakers in total that finally made the 27 mile trip in 8 hours and 20 minutes, despite the last few miles being in thick fog.

The Mermaid Tavern held its first Real Ale and cider Festival over a weekend in May with over 30 real ales and ciders available to sample in special commemorative glasses. Tom Jones, the Taverns general manager attended a course organised by Liberation Breweries in order to gain the Cask Marque accreditation for keeping real ale. Tom has kept real ale for many years in the businesses that he has been involved in, and so this training topped up his already considerable knowledge. He then laid on the ale and cider festival in order to showcase the range that is available for us to sell. The Liberation Group were very helpful in producing an ale just for the festival, which was affectionately named "Herm Gold". This one off production was so well received, Tom pursued the brewery, in order that they begin production for us so that we can sell the ale on a regular basis. "Herm Gold" was officially launched in the Mermaid Tavern on the 13th July, and sold out very quickly that evening. The ale is Golden in colour and light and fruity in taste, and is currently only available on Herm island, but we are hoping that pubs further afield will come to love it as much as the residents and visitors to Herm have done over the last 6 months.

2011 has been a fascinating year for us all on Herm, with so many diverse and wonderful events. Although we had a terrific April and beginning to May, the summer sun remained shy and elusive throughout the summer months. We very much hope that we will be blessed with some excellent weather throughout 2012, and that you are able to visit us and enjoy our tranquil and beautiful Island once again.

John and Julia, Andrew Bailey, Simon George, myself, and all of the residents of Herm wish you all a very merry Christmas and a peaceful new year.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jonathan Watson', with a large, stylized initial 'J'.

Jonathan Watson  
Director of Hospitality.