



Ramsar Information Sheet

Published on 9 January 2017

United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (Crown dependencies)

Gouliot Caves and Headland, Sark



Designation date	9 April 2007
Site number	2276
Coordinates	49°25'54"N 02°22'45"W
Area	4,00 ha

<https://rsis.ramsar.org/ris/2276>

Created by RSIS V.1.6 on - 20 July 2020

Color codes

Fields back-shaded in light blue relate to data and information required only for RIS updates.

Note that some fields concerning aspects of Part 3, the Ecological Character Description of the RIS (tinted in purple), are not expected to be completed as part of a standard RIS, but are included for completeness so as to provide the requested consistency between the RIS and the format of a 'full' Ecological Character Description, as adopted in Resolution X.15 (2008). If a Contracting Party does have information available that is relevant to these fields (for example from a national format Ecological Character Description) it may, if it wishes to, include information in these additional fields.

1 - Summary

Summary

The site consists of the Gouliot Headland on the west coast of Sark and La Moie de Gouliot, a large sea stack connected to the headland at low water. It includes the famous Gouliot Caves that cross the headland three times from north to south with other openings to the west. These caves have long been noted for the amazing variety of invertebrate life, especially sponges, hydroids, sea-anemones and sea squirts that can be found on their walls by foot at low spring tide or by diving. The very high species richness is probably a consequence of the caves having several entrances with inter-connecting passageways, leading to strong currents developing through the caves at high water and bringing plenty of food to the mainly filter-feeding organisms on the cave walls. Before the invention of the aqualung this was one of the few places where submarine life could be examined in situ and thus has importance in the history of the development of marine zoology. Many of the species described in the monographs of Alder & Hancock (1845-1855) and Bowerbank (1864-1882) came from these caves.

2 - Data & location

2.1 - Formal data

2.1.1 - Name and address of the compiler of this RIS

Compiler 1

Name	Josephine Birch
Institution/agency	Hon Sec, La Societe Serquaise
Postal address	Petit Moie Sark GY9 0SE UK
E-mail	birchstisted@cwgsy.net
Phone	+44 01481 832788

Compiler 2

Name	The Official Respondent
Institution/agency	Joint Nature Conservation Committee
Postal address	Monkstone House City Road Peterborough Cambridgeshire PE1 1JY UK
E-mail	ris@jncc.gov.uk
Phone	+44 01733 562 626
Fax	+44 01733 555 948

2.1.2 - Period of collection of data and information used to compile the RIS

To year

2.1.3 - Name of the Ramsar Site

Official name (in English, French or Spanish)

2.2 - Site location

2.2.1 - Defining the Site boundaries

b) Digital map/image
<1 file(s) uploaded>

Former maps

Boundaries description

The site boundary is the same as, or falls within, an existing protected area.
The site lies in the mid-part of the west coast of Sark, Channel Islands, approximately 11.5 km ESE by sea of St Peter Port in Guernsey.

2.2.2 - General location

a) In which large administrative region does the site lie?

b) What is the nearest town or population centre?

2.2.3 - For wetlands on national boundaries only

a) Does the wetland extend onto the territory of one or more other countries? Yes No

b) Is the site adjacent to another designated Ramsar Site on the territory of another Contracting Party? Yes No

2.2.4 - Area of the Site

Official area, in hectares (ha):

2.2.5 - Biogeography

Biogeographic regions

Regionalisation scheme(s)	Biogeographic region
EU biogeographic regionalization	Atlantic

3 - Why is the Site important?

3.1 - Ramsar Criteria and their justification

- Criterion 1 : Representative, rare or unique natural or near-natural wetland types

Hydrological services provided	Recharge and discharge of groundwater.
Other reasons	The site qualifies under Criterion 1 since the particular assemblage of marine life found on the walls of the caves is unique in the Atlantic biogeographic region of Europe. This is a consequence of Sark's cliffs and geology interacting with a huge tidal range of 10 m at Spring tides. The caves extend from above high-water mark to below low-water and contain and exceptionally very rich fauna. In other places, much of this fauna occurs only subtidally, and thus the tidal exposure at this location is of scientific significance. It is the largest such cave system in Europe that can be visited on foot.

- Criterion 2 : Rare species and threatened ecological communities

- Criterion 3 : Biological diversity

Justification	The site qualifies under Criterion 3 because of its importance for a wide range of inter-tidal and normally sub-littoral invertebrates. Particularly noteworthy are the sponges (Porifera), and sea anemones and other hydroids (Cnidaria). The main invertebrate communities are those associated with rocky littoral and sub-littoral habitats including many rare species. As a consequence of the rareness of the habitat, many of the species are not found elsewhere in western Europe. The site also includes the headland above the caves which contains many typical coastal ecosystems including coastal grassland and hard rock. These habitats support many rare species of terrestrial plants, insects and lichens.
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- Criterion 4 : Support during critical life cycle stage or in adverse conditions

- Criterion 7 : Significant and representative fish

Justification	The site qualifies under Criterion 7 because of the remarkable diversity of the invertebrate species it contains, including sponges (Porifera), and sea anemones and hydroids (Cnidaria). It is also a site where the exceptionally large tidal range coupled with the constancy of the cave situation mean that these animals, many of which can only otherwise be found by diving or dredging, can be viewed at low-water. Because of this, these caves were where many of these animals were first described and studied in the 19th and early 20th centuries, before readily available sub-aqua equipment. The site thus has importance in the history of the development of marine zoology.
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3.2 - Plant species whose presence relates to the international importance of the site

Scientific name	Common name	Criterion 2	Criterion 3	Criterion 4	IUCN Red List	CITES Appendix I	Other status	Justification
<i>Hydrocotyle vulgaris</i>	Marsh Pennywort	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	LC	<input type="checkbox"/>	Please list all the species that qualify under the Criterion 2 here.	
<i>Teloschistes flavicans</i>	Powdered orange bush lichen	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>		found only at one other place in the Bailiwick of Guernsey

The site qualifies under Criterion 2 since this species-rich inter-tidal habitat is extremely restricted elsewhere in the Atlantic biogeographic region of Europe. It contains many species that are endangered, and the assemblage of these species and their habitat is threatened elsewhere in Europe.

3.3 - Animal species whose presence relates to the international importance of the site

Phylum	Scientific name	Common name	Species qualifies under criterion				Species contributes under criterion				Pop. Size	Period of pop. Est.	% occurrence ¹⁾	IUCN Red List	CITES Appendix I	CMS Appendix I	Other Status	Justification
			2	4	6	9	3	5	7	8								
Others																		
ARTHROPODA / INSECTA	<i>Cicindela campestris</i>	Tiger beetle	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>					<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		nesting site	

1) Percentage of the total biogeographic population at the site

Onchidella celtica
 The site qualifies under Criterion 2 since this species-rich inter-tidal habitat is extremely restricted elsewhere in the Atlantic biogeographic region of Europe. It contains many species that are endangered, and the assemblage of these species and their habitat is threatened elsewhere in Europe.

3.4 - Ecological communities whose presence relates to the international importance of the site

Name of ecological community	Community qualifies under Criterion 2?	Description	Justification
Coastal Grassland	<input type="checkbox"/>	54 species of vascular plants recorded in the south side of the headland, and 56 from the north, with 30 species on both sides. More info in the 6.1.2 Additional material.	The vegetation of the south side of the headland is more 'Mediterranean' in type with mostly low growing plants, and many species that flower in spring or autumn.
Soft Cliff	<input type="checkbox"/>	Soft cliff is found in patches at the bottom of the coastal grassland above the sheer rocks dropping to the sea.	It is an important nesting site for solitary bees and wasps and for the tiger beetle <i>Cicindela campestris</i> .
Hard Cliff	<input type="checkbox"/>	Outcrops of rock occur all over the site and around above the sea. This has a covering of many species of lichens. Particularly noteworthy are the two species of <i>Roccella</i> and <i>Teloschistes flavicans</i> .	<i>Teloschistes flavicans</i> is only found at one other place in the Bailiwick of Guernsey, at Jerbourg Point in Guernsey, a similar high headland.
Rocky Shore	<input type="checkbox"/>	This has similar species present to rocky shores elsewhere in the Channel Islands. Particularly noteworthy is the marine pulmonate mollusc <i>Onchidella celtica</i> occurs around the cave entrances on the shady north side of the headland.	There are recent records only from two other places in the Channel Islands.
Undersea Caves (partially exposed at low water)	<input type="checkbox"/>	The walls are in large areas covered with marine life, and this is exposed at low water spring tides. More info in the 6.1.2 Additional material.	It is one of the very few places in Western Europe where many of the species present can be seen by observers on foot and is the largest such area.

4 - What is the Site like? (Ecological character description)

4.1 - Ecological character

<no data available>

4.2 - What wetland type(s) are in the site?

Marine or coastal wetlands

Wetland types (code and name)	Local name	Ranking of extent (1: greatest - 4: least)	Area (ha) of wetland type	Justification of Criterion 1
A: Permanent shallow marine waters		3	0	
D: Rocky marine shores		1	3.88	Unique
E: Sand, shingle or pebble shores		2	0.12	Unique

4.3 - Biological components

4.3.1 - Plant species

<no data available>

4.3.2 - Animal species

<no data available>

4.4 - Physical components

4.4.1 - Climate

Climatic region	Subregion
C: Moist Mid-Latitude climate with mild winters	Cfb: Marine west coast (Mild with no dry season, warm summer)

Annual 30 year averages:
 Rainfall - 824mm 670mm
 Mean Air Temperature - 11.1°C
 Max. Air Temperature - 13.4°C
 Min. Air Temperature - 8.7°C
 Sunshine - 1820 hours
 The prevailing wind direction is SW- W with a mean wind speed of 12.1 knots

4.4.2 - Geomorphic setting

a) Minimum elevation above sea level (in metres)

a) Maximum elevation above sea level (in metres)

- Entire river basin
- Upper part of river basin
- Middle part of river basin
- Lower part of river basin
- More than one river basin
- Not in river basin
- Coastal

Please name the river basin or basins. If the site lies in a sub-basin, please also name the larger river basin. For a coastal/marine site, please name the sea or ocean.

Greater North Sea

The area is divided into two distinctly different areas; undersea caves below a steep cliff headland with grass and scrub on the north side and low growing plants on the south. The sea has eroded away the western section of gneiss into faults that provide the spectacular system of the caves.

The caves are approached by a steep path, grassy to start with then bare rock. Some of the caves are covered by water except at low spring tides, and then not totally exposed.

4.4.3 - Soil

Mineral

Organic

No available information

Are soil types subject to change as a result of changing hydrological conditions (e.g., increased salinity or acidification)? Yes No

Please provide further information on the soil (optional)

The soil is very thin or completely absent on the cliffs.
On the north side of the headland there is some slightly deeper soil, with different plant life than on the sunnier south side.

4.4.4 - Water regime

Water permanence

Presence?	
Usually seasonal, ephemeral or intermittent water present	No change

Source of water that maintains character of the site

Presence?	Predominant water source	
Marine water	<input type="checkbox"/>	No change
Water inputs from groundwater	<input type="checkbox"/>	No change

4.4.5 - Sediment regime

Significant erosion of sediments occurs on the site

Significant accretion or deposition of sediments occurs on the site

Significant transportation of sediments occurs on or through the site

Sediment regime is highly variable, either seasonally or inter-annually

Sediment regime unknown

4.4.6 - Water pH

Acid (pH<5.5)

Circumneutral (pH: 5.5-7.4)

Alkaline (pH>7.4)

Unknown

4.4.7 - Water salinity

Fresh (<0.5 g/l)

Mixohaline (brackish)/Mixosaline (0.5-30 g/l)

Euhaline/Eusaline (30-40 g/l)

Hyperhaline/Hypersaline (>40 g/l)

Unknown

4.4.8 - Dissolved or suspended nutrients in water

Eutrophic

Mesotrophic

Oligotrophic

Dystrophic

Unknown

4.4.9 - Features of the surrounding area which may affect the Site

Please describe whether, and if so how, the landscape and ecological characteristics in the area surrounding the Ramsar Site differ from the site itself. i) broadly similar ii) significantly different

Surrounding area has greater urbanisation or development

Surrounding area has higher human population density

Surrounding area has more intensive agricultural use

Surrounding area has significantly different land cover or habitat types

4.5 - Ecosystem services

4.5.1 - Ecosystem services/benefits

Provisioning Services

Ecosystem service	Examples	Importance/Extent/Significance
Food for humans	Sustenance for humans (e.g., fish, molluscs, grains)	Medium
Wetland non-food products	Livestock fodder	Medium

Regulating Services

Ecosystem service	Examples	Importance/Extent/Significance
Maintenance of hydrological regimes	Groundwater recharge and discharge	Medium

Cultural Services

Ecosystem service	Examples	Importance/Extent/Significance
Recreation and tourism	Water sports and activities	Medium
Recreation and tourism	Picnics, outings, touring	Medium
Recreation and tourism	Nature observation and nature-based tourism	Medium
Recreation and tourism	Recreational hunting and fishing	Medium
Spiritual and inspirational	Aesthetic and sense of place values	Medium
Spiritual and inspirational	Cultural heritage (historical and archaeological)	Medium
Scientific and educational	Educational activities and opportunities	Medium
Scientific and educational	Important knowledge systems, importance for research (scientific reference area or site)	Medium

Other ecosystem service(s) not included above:

Sheep grazing
 Social and cultural values: Aquatic vegetation (e.g. reeds, willows, seaweed)
 Caves are used for leisure diving, cave visiting and walking on the headland. They are promoted in the tourist brochures and web-sites

Have studies or assessments been made of the economic valuation of ecosystem services provided by this Ramsar Site? Yes No Unknown

4.5.2 - Social and cultural values

i) the site provides a model of wetland wise use, demonstrating the application of traditional knowledge and methods of management and use that maintain the ecological character of the wetland

ii) the site has exceptional cultural traditions or records of former civilizations that have influenced the ecological character of the wetland

iii) the ecological character of the wetland depends on its interaction with local communities or indigenous peoples

iv) relevant non-material values such as sacred sites are present and their existence is strongly linked with the maintenance of the ecological character of the wetland

<no data available>

4.6 - Ecological processes

<no data available>

5 - How is the Site managed? (Conservation and management)

5.1 - Land tenure and responsibilities (Managers)

5.1.1 - Land tenure/ownership

Public ownership

Category	Within the Ramsar Site	In the surrounding area
National/Federal government	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Private ownership

Category	Within the Ramsar Site	In the surrounding area
Other types of private/individual owner(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

5.1.2 - Management authority

Please list the local office / offices of any agency or organization responsible for managing the site:

Agriculture Committee

Provide the name and title of the person or people with responsibility for the wetland:

The Chairman

Postal address:

Chief Pleas
La Chasse Marette
Sark GY9 0SF
Seneschalofsark@cwgsy.net

5.2 - Ecological character threats and responses (Management)

5.2.1 - Factors (actual or likely) adversely affecting the Site's ecological character

Please describe any other threats (optional):

No factors reported

5.2.2 - Legal conservation status

<no data available>

5.2.3 - IUCN protected areas categories (2008)

- Ia Strict Nature Reserve
- Ib Wilderness Area: protected area managed mainly for wilderness protection
- II National Park: protected area managed mainly for ecosystem protection and recreation
- III Natural Monument: protected area managed mainly for conservation of specific natural features
- IV Habitat/Species Management Area: protected area managed mainly for conservation through management intervention
- V Protected Landscape/Seascape: protected area managed mainly for landscape/seascape conservation and recreation
- VI Managed Resource Protected Area: protected area managed mainly for the sustainable use of natural ecosystems

<no data available>

5.2.4 - Key conservation measures

Human Activities

Measures	Status
Fisheries management/regulation	Proposed

5.2.5 - Management planning

Is there a site-specific management plan for the site? No

Has a management effectiveness assessment been undertaken for the site? Yes No

If the site is a formal transboundary site as indicated in section Data and location > Site location, are there shared management planning processes with another Contracting Party? Yes No

Please indicate if a Ramsar centre, other educational or visitor facility, or an educational or visitor programme is associated with the site:

Exhibition, talks and films on Gouliot Caves have been shown annually at the Visitor Centre. There is an information booklet available on the species found in the Caves (Allen 2007). The headland is included in Sark's Wildflower walks which takes place annually and there is a leaflet available on the flora.

5.2.6 - Planning for restoration

Is there a site-specific restoration plan? Please select a value

5.2.7 - Monitoring implemented or proposed

<no data available>

6 - Additional material

6.1 - Additional reports and documents

6.1.1 - Bibliographical references

Alder, J. & Hancock, A. 1845-1855. A monograph of the British nudibranchiate Mollusca: with figures of all the species. Parts I-VII. Ray Society, London.

Allen, A. 1989. Sark invertebrates of the rocky shore. Ann Allen.

Allen, A. 1993. Field Companion; Flowers of Sark. Privately published.

Allen, A. 2007. Gouliot Caves. La Société Guernesaise. 12 pp.

Allen, A. & Hilton, B. 1988. Distribution & zonation of marine lichens in Sark. Report & Transactions La Société Guernesaise, 22(1987), 234-257.

Ansted, D.T. & Latham, R.G. 1862. The Channel Islands 604pp W. H. Allen & Co., London.

Bowerbank, J.S. 1864-1882. A Monograph of the British Spongiadae in 4 vols. The Ray Society, London.

Cheney, C.S. 2004. A preliminary hydrogeological study of the Island of Sark 2004. British Geological Survey, NERC.

Gibbons, W. 1975. Sark Rocks. An Introduction to the Geology of the Island. Manche Technical Supplies, Jersey.

Le Sueur, F. & McClintock, D. 1963. A check list of the flowering plants & ferns wild on Sark & its off-islets. Report & Transactions La Société Guernesaise, 17(1962): 303-318.

Marquand, E.D. 1901. Flora of Guernsey and the lesser Channel Islands. London.

Marsden, M.H. 1995. A new check list of flowering plants & ferns wild on Sark. Rep. Trans. Soc. guernes. 23(1994): 754-783.

McClintock, D. 1975. The wildflowers of Guernsey. Collins, London. 288 pp.

Pienkowski, M.W. (ed.) 2005. Review of existing and potential Ramsar sites in UK Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies. Contractor: UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum, Peterborough. Final report on Contract CR0294 to the UK Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, Bristol. www.ukotcf.org

6.1.2 - Additional reports and documents

i. taxonomic lists of plant and animal species occurring in the site (see section 4.3)

<no file available>

ii. a detailed Ecological Character Description (ECD) (in a national format)

<no file available>

iii. a description of the site in a national or regional wetland inventory

<no file available>

iv. relevant Article 3.2 reports

<no file available>

v. site management plan

<no file available>

vi. other published literature

<1 file(s) uploaded>

6.1.3 - Photograph(s) of the Site

Please provide at least one photograph of the site:



Please provide a caption. (Please provide at least one photograph., 19-12-2016)

6.1.4 - Designation letter and related data

Designation letter

<1 file(s) uploaded>

Date of Designation 2007-04-09