



Friends of the Priaulx Library

Friends of the Priaulx Library Newsletter

Issue 1 2015

Charting Guernsey's Unknown Waters in the Early Eighteenth Century By Keith Alan Fisher

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The Priaulx Library has a unique collection of printed sea charts relating to the Island of Guernsey. The first printed chart showing Guernsey in some detail is attributed to Lucas Wagenaer, the one-time Netherlands sea pilot, who published his atlas of sea charts, *Spiegel der Zeevaerdt* in 1585. The atlas contained charts that covered navigation from the Baltic to Cadiz.

In 1588, the year of the Spanish Armada, Wagenaer's charts were copied and the text translated into English by Anthony Ashley and issued under the title "The Mariner's Mirrour". Its success was such that British seamen confidently used their "waggoners", as they termed these atlases, for the next century.



Fig. 1 Lucas Wagenaer 1588

The chart, which shows the whole of the Channel Island archipelago, is extremely picturesque with elaborate cartouches, ships in full sail and sea monsters (See Fig. 1). Place names are given, cliffs on the coastlines are drawn in elevation; navigational landmarks and hazards, anchorages, and soundings are shown using symbols still used today on modern charts.

STOP PRESS

May 2015

'Secret Guernsey'

Book Launch

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(more details to follow)

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Fig. 2 Mercator 1595

Mercator published a map of Guernsey in 1595 that showed, for the first time, the location of the parish churches. The map (See Fig. 2) was in reality a detailed sketch of the Island but was unique in that it also showed and named several of the prominent offshore rocks.

It is not known who actually completed the first survey of Guernsey. However, it is recognised that an Elizabethan surveyor would have started his survey from church towers establishing angles to other towers and hills by compass and cross staff. He would have got distances from local knowledge or perhaps from riding from place to place. It is possible he used a "Waywiser", a surveyor's wheel for measuring distance.

For the next one hundred and fifty years no printed charts of Guernsey were issued based on new surveys.

On 3rd October 1744 HMS Victory was wrecked with the loss of her entire crew, 100 bronze cannon and gold bullion. For over 260 years she was believed to have been wrecked during the night on Black Rock just off the Casquets. As a result of this enormous loss, Nicholas Dobrée, at that time the local naval agent, was commissioned by the Lord High Admiral of Great Britain to produce a set of accurate sea charts detailing the waters around the Bailiwick.

During the early Eighteenth Century many ships were wrecked across the western approach to the English Channel. At this time navigators could only determine their latitude fairly accurately by measuring the altitude of the sun. The accurate determination of their longitude was still an unsolved problem. Dobrée accepted this and only called for latitude values to be indicated on his general chart of the Islands. Navigators could sail along the line of latitude for Guernsey until they saw the Islands then refer to the charts for further directions.

Dobrée wrote:

"The general chart of the Islands is only useful to show the bearing and the distance of each of these from one another, and what course to keep to approach them; so that when you come near Alderney or Guernsey, make use of the particular Charts of those Islands."

By Keith Alan
Fisher

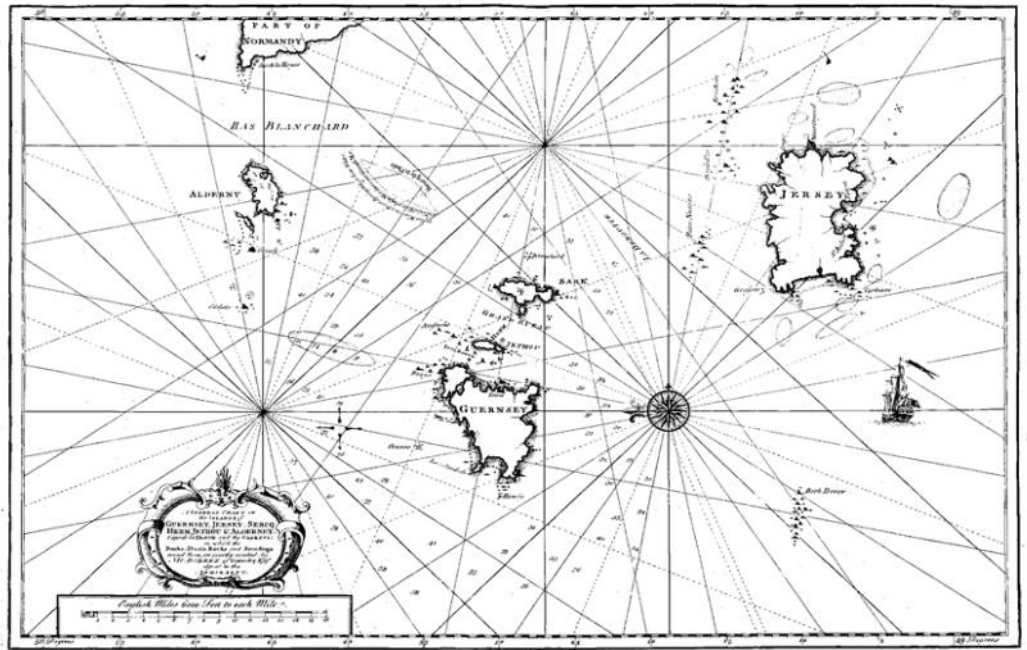


Fig. 3 Nicholas Dobrée 1746 – General Chart of the Islands

In his explanatory booklet: "Observations on the Maps" Nicholas Dobrée explained that:

"He had been on the rocks and dangerous places, has taken all the soundings, and examined the ebbing's and flowing's of the tide, in order to place them all in the most exact manner; and that strangers might the more easily come to, or go from Guernsey or Alderney, he has drawn the following instructions, by the help of which they may come to these Islands without the least fear".

A review of contemporary cartographic techniques suggests that Dobrée could have used plane table surveys, and "triangulation", to generate his charts. Dobrée produced three charts: a general chart of the Islands, a chart of Alderney and a chart covering Guernsey and Sark. He did not produce a chart of Jersey.

The chart showing Guernsey, Herm, Jethou and Sark (See Fig. 3) does not have any references to longitude or latitude. The amount of hydrographic information is exceptionally detailed. A rosette showing the run of the tides is shown together with arrows indicating the run of the flood tide around the Island. Rocks, reefs, sandbanks and safe anchorages are shown and named and soundings in fathoms are liberally given. Safe passageways into the harbour of St. Peter Port are clearly marked on the chart and show the optimum courses to take in order that the hazards to navigation are avoided. The charts were issued together with a small booklet of sailing directions that included comprehensive details of the navigational marks required for safe passage. The sailing directions were given in both English and French.

The first printed edition of Dobrée's charts was published in 1746 by the London based engraver and print-seller Emanuel Bowen. Revised editions were still being issued in the early 1800's.

Nicholas Dobrée's charts were the first to be based on an extensive land survey. The crude surveying instruments available at the time limited the accuracy of the charts; nevertheless, the resulting sailing directions are still valid today.

Committee Secretary

Round Table Christmas Fayre

From Left to right: Keith Pike (Committee), Mary Goubert, Derick Goubert (seated)
& Rob Grant (Vice President)



The Friends of the Priaulx Library committee would like to express their thanks to Mary & Derick Goubert for their support and for volunteering during 2014. Mary & Derick supported our stands last year at the Viaer Marchi, the Round Table Christmas Fayre, the Grammar School PTA Christmas Fayre and our Christmas Drinks event at the Library.

Fundraising

New Fundraising Avenue

Following on from our last Committee meeting, I would confirm that the Friends are now set up under www.easyfundraising.org.uk (courtesy of Committee Member, Gordon Snell).

You can now make purchases online from over 2,500 online retailers like Amazon via this site and the Friends will receive a donation for each purchase you make.

Please remember that there is no additional cost to you, the goods cost the same no matter how you access the Amazon site but we receive a 1.5% donation.

What's On

15th April 2015

◇ **The Friends AGM at 5.30pm**

May 2015

◇ **“Secret Guernsey”, Book Launch, Author: Amanda Bennett**

6th July 2015

◇ **Viaer Marchi**

Our New Merchandise



Our new chart merchandise was produced after consultation and advice from Jill Vaudin of Jill Vaudin Publishing, to whom we are most grateful. Once we had chosen the chart from the Library's collections Jill kindly commissioned an order on our behalf from her suppliers.

The chart design is the Nicholas Dobreé 1746 sea chart, commissioned by the Lord High Admiral of Great Britain after the loss of HMS Victory on Black Rock just off the Casquets in 1744.

We have now received our latest set of merchandise. This time Committee members Rob Grant and Keith Pike have chosen old black and white prints of Guernsey's past.

1. The Fridge magnet Shopper has 60 pages on which you can make shopping or reminder notes and depicts Victoria Tower.
2. The A5 Notebook has a front cover of four old Guernsey prints and blank pages for notes or longer scribbles.
3. Finally, there are four fridge magnets with different old Guernsey scenes. They are in presentation packs and in this photo look much larger than actual.

All these new items can be viewed at the Library and are sold at £3 each. They can be bought from the Library staff.

On order are new mugs depicting two sheets of the Guernsey Press from May 9th 1945. They will be available for purchase soon. We will inform Members when they arrive.

Members can purchase any of these items at discounted prices:

- Chart table mats - £5.00 each or four for £16.00**
- Chart coasters - £2.25 each or £9.00 for four or £12.50 for six**
- Chart tea towels - £5.00 each**
- Chart mugs - £5.00 each**
- Fridge magnets — 4 different photos — £3.00 each**
- Fridge shopper — 60 pages to make notes — £3.00 each**
- Notebook — £3.00 each**

Do you have family and friends who may be interested in joining the Friends? Help us by circulating this newsletter and highlighting the membership details below.

CATEGORIES OF MEMBERSHIP, please select

- ◇ Individual annual membership £10
- ◇ Family annual membership (two adults and the children of the family) £20
- ◇ Student in full time education annual membership £5
- ◇ Non profit making organisations annual membership £50
- ◇ Individual life membership £200
- ◇ Corporate annual membership £250

BANKER'S STANDING ORDER FORM

New member's name:
 Address:
 Email:

Any additional donation you might wish to make would be most welcome.

Standing Order form or membership fee to The Membership Secretary at the Priaulx Library, Candie Road, St Peter Port, GY1 1UG or copy and email to: membership@friends.org.gg.

We encourage you, if at all possible, to join by way of a Standing Order. This method saves the Charity administrative and postage costs.

To (name and address of your bank):

.....

Account number:Sort code:

Please pay to:

HSBC, PO Box 31, St Peter Port, Guernsey GY1 3AT, sort code 40-22-25, for the credit of The Friends of the Priaulx Library, account number 62799405, the sum of £ now, being the subscription due, and hereafter the sum of £ annually on the 1st January until further notice from me/us in writing, and debit my/our account accordingly.

Full name(s):

Signature(s):.....

Address:

.....

Post code:.....