

SARK ISLAND REPORT TO IDA up to 2016

Sark is a small island, 5 kms x 3kms, about 22 miles off the coast of France in the English Channel. We receive approximately 50,000 visitors to the island annually. It is almost impossible to estimate how many of those come due to our Dark Skies status but interest has been increasing annually. www.sastros.sark.gg/aboutus.html

In 2011 the Sark Astronomy Society was formed and we hosted a Star festival in the Autumn of that year. Professor Andrew Coates (Mullard Space Sciences Lab at UCL) was our guest speaker and gave a talk which was open to the public. We also had a pop-up planetarium from Exploradome for the 3 days of the festival, music and poetry from visiting artistes and star-gazing sessions run by Bob Bowers. All were free and open to the public.

Since then we have held had two 'Starfests' a year in Spring and Autumn and our visiting speakers have been: Dr Marek Kukula, the Public Astronomer at the Royal Observatory, Greenwich (three times), Professor Chris Lintott, Professor of Astrophysics at Oxford University and presenter of the BBC1 "The Sky at Night" (twice). Also David le Conte from the Smithsonian Institution (ex-NASA) has been a speaker as has Ed Gillen, an Observational Astronomer and Clinical Research Fellow at Cambridge University. Bob Bowyers has held practical star-gazing sessions on three occasions.

At our Starfest in 2015 we ran an astronomy weekend arranged by planetarium organizers from Scotland, (www.sark.co.uk/event/star-fest-weekend)

This was also to celebrate the official opening by Dr Marek Kukula of a small observatory on Sark for which we ourselves raised funds over the past three years by various means; holding 3 masked balls, several quizzes and jumble sales. The observatory houses the SAstroS telescope, a Meade 20", which the Society bought second-hand in 2013.

Since then we have had approximately 195 visits by tourists, largely arranged through the Sark Visitor Centre, to star-gazing sessions with the telescope and various binoculars. Local residents are encouraged to visit and the schoolchildren have also been involved. The observatory is for the whole Sark community, not just for SAstroS members.

Of all media visits to the island of Sark, 7 have specifically asked to see the observatory; this has resulted in media coverage through articles in the press. See below for media involved. Aurigny Airlines (Guernsey state airline) has a front cover on their in-flight magazine about Sark's Dark Skies in the November issue this year submitted by Sue Daly, (www.suedalyproductions.com) a member of SAstros, (a wildlife film maker, underwater and night sky photographer). She also gave an illustrated talk on the cruise ship "MS Orion", National Geographic Adventure Cruise which anchored off Sark for the night in June 2016.

SKY QUALITY ON SARK

This has remained unchanged over the past 5 years, possibly even been enhanced. At the time of our designation there were a few lights which could be improved. Two of these have disappeared altogether, the light outside the Bel Air Inn has been dismantled and also

the outside light at the rear of a restaurant called Nicolles (formerly Stumbles). In addition to this, four hotels closed down two years ago and two of them had exterior lighting in their gardens and pathways. Also the price of electricity in Sark is set to reach unprecedented levels in January 2017 – it is already extremely high so very little is wasted.

CONSERVATION PROJECTS

On 16 September 2016 during a Roots Festival staged on the island, a night walk was led by SAstroS members in conjunction with the penumbral lunar eclipse of the moon.
(www.sarkrootsfestival.com)

The island of Sark entered a Bailiwick competition in 2016 run by Floral Guernsey and, as winners, will represent the Bailiwick at the UK competition in 2017. Part of this competition is concerned with conservation and recycling efforts in the community and so our portfolio will include our efforts at conserving power by dark-sky friendly lighting as well as permanent planting and landscaping.

RADIO AND TV INTERVIEWS (excluding coverage at the time of our designation)

Al-Jazeera TV The Independent The Times Rough Guide

Island Parish programmes (BBC 1 series of 6)

BBC Radio 4 “From our own Correspondent”

Swedish Morning TV

Suisse Radio Romande

Local media

Enya’s Link. The Irish singer’s latest album was inspired by Sark’s Dark Skies

<http://www.idolator.com/7612739/enya-new-album-dark-sky-island-generational-appeal-interview>