

## SARK ISLAND REPORT TO IDA - 2020

Sark is a small island, 5 km x 3km, (3 miles x 1.5 miles but heavily indented and narrow at one point) situated about 30 km off the coast of France in the English Channel. In normal years we receive approximately 50,000 visitors to the island annually although it is almost impossible to estimate how many of those come due to our Dark Skies status; interest has been increasing annually.

The quality of our night sky appears unchanged – there has been no intrusive outside lighting installed on the island and, if anything, there is less light in Sark due perhaps to the continuing high cost of electricity. Possibly though, after 9 years of awareness of our Dark Sky status, residents are keen to keep it that way. There has been a slight increase in ground level solar lights.

SAstroS, Sark Astronomy Society, continues to offer stargazing to residents and visitors at the Sark Observatory. Our Tourist Office [info@sark.co.uk](mailto:info@sark.co.uk) publishes a small leaflet on how to book a star-gazing session at the Observatory but they don't keep count of the numbers receiving it. We are also advertised in the official Sark guide and map.

Sark is largely closed from mid-Autumn until the following Easter since we have a restricted boat service from Guernsey, no airport, and most hotels and restaurants close for those months. In 2019/20 we had a particularly wet winter so little star-gazing took place.

In March we were badly affected by the travel ban due to Covid-19 and the island was closed to all passengers except for a few returning residents. On 1<sup>st</sup> June the Bailiwick was declared Covid-free and visitors were allowed in from the other Bailiwick islands, (Alderney, population 1600, and Guernsey, population 60,000) and a few guest houses and one hotel opened. (Jersey visitors are still not allowed to visit Sark without 14 days quarantine). To date there have been 10,200 visitors to Sark of which approximately 140 came to the Observatory for star-gazing.

Sark enjoyed clear views of the comet Neowise from 11 to 21 July and we have had good summer weather so plenty of skywatching. We have also established a relationship with Howard Parkin of AstroManx, the Isle of Man astronomy group and it is hoped that he will visit Sark next year and give a talk to our astronomy society, SAstroS; that is of course always assuming that things return to normal.

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Sark Astronomy website is [www.sastros.sark.gg](http://www.sastros.sark.gg)