

Sark News

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UNELECTED AND UNFIT TO GOVERN!

Abuse of privilege in Chief Pleas

In his opening statement to the Chief Pleas meeting on 1st October, Seneschal Reg Guille cynically set the scene by promptly informing his audience that, with provisions of the Reform Law now being in force, any comments made at the meeting would be protected by absolute privilege so that the laws of defamation would not apply. Having thus set the tone for the meeting, free of the restraints of such niceties and making the most of the meeting not being recorded, Mr Beaumont & Reg Guille went on to abuse this very privilege, intended to be a democratic tool, and wasting parliamentary time.

Seneschal Reg Guille led the way...

It was not the Seneschal Reg Guille's finest hour and yet again his unsuitability for this job was demonstrated; clear for all to see. Mr Guille, who is unelected, unqualified and only answerable to Michael Beaumont (who appointed him) and Nik van Leuven (their master and legal advisor, ex-member of Chief Pleas and now HM Procureur), managed to prove beyond any doubt that he is incapable of conducting the Chief Pleas meeting in a civilised, democratic and dignified manner.

Reg Guille should now do the honourable thing and resign or face one day being voted out of office. It should be apparent to all that he is unfit to lead an elected, democratic Chief Pleas. His personal prejudice is clear for all to see and an impediment to a democratic process of

government in Chief Pleas. His abuse of power has already contributed to Sark facing a legal challenge in the Court of Appeal which will be costly to the UK and Guernsey taxpayers.

His domineering and arrogant behaviour whilst conducting the last Chief Pleas meeting and his consistent refusal to allow a balanced debate is an insult to the people of Sark's intelligence, their sense of fairness and their promised democratic process of government.

Reg Guille said to Chief Pleas that Sark had been "*mistreated, abused and harassed*" by the Barclay Family in order to "*impose their will*' on this community of 600 souls".

Is he really so hard done by or could it be that Mr Guille resents the challenge to his authority? As far as Sark News can ascertain, '*imposing their will*' through abuse and harassment has for far too long been the absolute privilege of Mr Guille himself along with his appointer Michael Beaumont.

Endorsed by the Seigneur...

It was in particular the debate on Item 26 on the Agenda, the proposal by Sir David and Sir Frederick Barclay that each Committee of Chief Pleas and the Island Trustees prepare reports giving an account of the matters for which they are responsible in preparation for the new fully elected assembly, which appeared to set the Seigneur's and the Seneschal's blood boiling. Mr Beaumont was literally "*trembling with emotion*" according to

Phil Falle of the Guernsey Press, having completely lost his composure when launching into a vitriolic and vindictive attack on his perceived enemies. Presumably he was put out by Sark News' exposure of his substantial involvement in the Sark Lark, as well as smarting at the loss of his treizième and the demise of the work permit proposition. Although put forward by Roger Olsen, this proposition no doubt had his prior endorsement.

Surely Item 26 was a very sensible proposition, so why this strong reaction - what are they trying to hide? Their continuous objections to disclosure, transparency and accountability can only add to the suspicion that there are numerous skeletons in the Seigneurie cupboard.

Michael Beaumont's closing speech was inappropriate for the occasion and showed that he is no statesman either. His inaccuracy and inconsistency over the years is breathtaking. There is absolutely no evidence for some of the accusations that he made. However, he or anyone else who truly feels victimised through "external abuse" or "blackmail", could always make use of the Citizens' Advice office, provided by Sark Estate Management, free of charge, to ensure that people no longer feel intimidated on the island.

Having revealed his paranoid reaction to Sark News, Mr Beaumont expressed his nostalgia for the assembly of more than 30 years ago. Well, this *scurrilous propaganda sheet* is not surprised. Now, those were the days! – of an undemocratic, un-elected Chief Pleas which would not dream of opposing the Seigneur's authority, that is.

Mr Beaumont went on to say that he at that time predicted that if change came to Sark, then it would come from outside the Island. The fact is that the changes he regrets have been of his own making and many were endorsed by himself (along with Reg Guille and HM Procureur) on the basis that under the new law reform he would retain his powers and privileges which, of course, subject to the

judicial review appeal, will be the case. What he did not foresee was the exposure of this charade in Sark News.

Has he forgotten, for example, putting his signature to a rather threatening letter addressed to Sark's Tenants, urging them to vote for Option A, i.e. the Reform Law as it now stands 'or else'?

Mr Beaumont's reference to threats on his opponents' part is ill judged. He has for over 30 years presided over a feudal regime where he could appoint those in his favour to do his bidding. Anyone not toeing the party line could be ostracised, excluded from the community, made redundant and forced to leave the island, as were Mr & Mrs Symes. What would Mr Beaumont call that?

With the advent of democracy on the island, the 'good old days' of playing politics behind closed doors along with his feudal supporters are (hopefully) coming to an end for Mr Beaumont. He has spent years interpreting the feudal laws as he so wishes, for his own political and financial gain, which has enabled him to collect vast amounts of money through the treizième and his Sark Lark activities. Those days are now gone and the Seigneur obviously rues their passing.

Mr Beaumont had a perfect opportunity at this "last" Chief Pleas meeting to redeem himself a little by showing some leadership and give feudalism a dignified exit before the take-over by an elected assembly. But a leopard does not change its spots. Mr Beaumont saw fit instead to shout out a ranting attack on the owners of Brecqhou and Sark News.

Thereby inciting his supporters...

Mr Beaumont's speech in turn incited an undignified spectacle amongst the rabble in the gallery, who reacted on his cue.

The whole spectacle was irresponsible and the people of Sark should take note. If the 'old guard' continues to dominate the Island's politics, Sark's future looks grim indeed. (We have referred to

their names often enough but yet again point out that Edric Baker and William Raymond, for example, are totally unsuitable to represent the people of Sark in the coming elections.) The problem is, these people are adept at controlling and orchestrating events between themselves and skilfully manipulate the Chief Pleas in doing so. They have demonstrated time and again that they can't run the economy, nor Sark's only lifeline to the outside world, Sark Shipping. Judging by this blatant abuse of the newly won right to absolute privilege for Chief Pleas proceedings, it is obvious that they can't run a democracy either.

NOT WORTHY OF MENTION MR BEAUMONT?

The most interesting aspect to the Seigneur's closing speech, however, is all the matters he did **not** deem important enough to mention:

There was **no mention** of Sark Shipping's current problems. Nor did he, as an Island Trustee who committed guarantees for Sark Shipping's bank loans, offer any ideas of how Sark is going to pay for those loans. He put forward no suggestions as to how Sark Shipping can be rescued from its continuing loss-making operation (presently estimated at £150,000 a year) under Ship & Fly's management, a contract supported by him.

He has **never expressed his concern** about the ceaseless stream of legislation emanating from the States of Guernsey and how this is bound to affect Sark's independence and its future; on the contrary, he has supported it.

There was **no mention** of the Sark Lark and how it has damaged Sark's image abroad or indeed no comment on his own involvement and how he proposes to end it. During his term of office Sark has opened the door to all and sundry, many of whom are participants in the Sark Lark, an activity of

which Mr Beaumont himself has been in the forefront. The same people now seek to control Sark's future.

There was **no praise** and **no encouragement** for those who have created enterprise on Sark over the years and **no mention** of how further inward investment would help such enterprise along.

There was **no concern** for those who are unemployed for most of the off-season.

He did **not take the opportunity** to disclose to whom he has sold the Seigneurie Gardens to or who his mystery benefactor is.

There was **no mention** of Sark's achievements during his 30 years of misrule. Is that simply because there just simply is nothing for him to be proud of?

There were **no regrets** about the neglected state of the Island's infrastructure and the precarious state of the Island's economy. Was that because this is a sad testament to his own questionable leadership?

There was **no comment** by him or any member of his family of their commitment to the future of Sark. Replacing one feudal right with another but promoting law reform for everybody else, he has secured for himself an index linked, tax free annual stipend of £28,000 for the benefit of his children and their children forever and a day. This is an outrageous abuse of taxpayers' money. Where is the morality in securing yourself and your own descendants such benefits without a commitment to the island's future?

Mr Beaumont offered **no vision** and appears to have **no interest** in Sark's affairs other than putting in an appearance at Chief Pleas meetings.

Surely the closing of the last unelected Chief Pleas was a historic occasion which would have merited the mention of some of the important matters Sark's new assembly will be facing? Then again, this final speech was perhaps the perfect way of closing a chapter of Sark's history characterised by its leader's indifference to his feudal subjects' employment, welfare and their future.

ABSOLUTE PRIVILEGE
OR
A FREE-FOR-ALL TO HAVE-A-GO?

Edric Baker showed his true colours by seizing the chance to launch a pre-mediated, personal and malicious attack on John Donnelly – on a matter that had been cleared up in Chief Pleas a long time ago and which was not on the agenda for the meeting. But, since the attack was made under the cover of absolute privilege, of which Mr Baker must have been made aware beforehand, there is little point in demanding an apology nor can any libel action be taken. In short, Edric Baker knew he was free to attack Mr Donnelly and attempt to blacken his reputation with no possibility of unpleasant consequences. (Apart from a well-deserved mention in Sark News!) This was a cowardly attack, unbecoming of someone who has now announced he will seek to represent the people of Sark at the coming elections. Will Mr Baker have the courage to repeat his spiteful comments outside of Chief Pleas?

More slings and arrows are inevitable!

All editors know that when they are attacked by those who they oppose, they are on the right track. A free press is the guardian of democracy and history has shown that all tyrannies feel threatened by a free press. Sark News will continue to name and shame those who choose to govern others when they fail in their duties to those they represent through the lack of transparency and accountability.

It is clear now that Sark News has a growing and interested readership. It is the lack of transparency and accountability the undemocratic Chief Pleas which has caused this. Otherwise there would be no need for Sark News to exist. No longer can the “establishment”, led by Michael Beaumont and Reg Guille as well as Roger Olsen and Richard Dewe of the GP&A make decisions affecting the lives of so many without exposure in Sark News.



The crowd outside Chief Pleas 1st October 2008

ELECTION CANDIDATE BAKER

As Mr Baker has announced his candidacy at the December elections, Sark News would like to draw the electorate’s attention to his miserable failure as chairman of the Planning Committee. Under his watch, there are considerable inconsistencies in what buildings have been allowed, we mention again the disproportionately large and architecturally misconceived building on the very cliff tops at the Rondellerie as well as the two foreign and misplaced looking wooden buildings erected in what was once part of the Seigneurie grounds. How could Mr Baker possibly support the construction of such obvious eyesores whilst vehemently opposing an out-of-sight helipad for emergency medical evacuations only?

www.sarknews.com

Our website is a success!

The statistics reveal that Sark News is enjoying a world wide audience as the number of visitors keeps increasing month by month. In September 2008, we had well over 400 unique visitors with nearly 700 visits. These numbers have doubled since we first went “live”. Our stories about Sark, its politics and its feudal regime are attracting interest from all corners of the world!

THE WORK PERMIT ISSUE

A big step in the right direction: consultation!

On a more positive note, the GP&A had to withdraw their proposal for work permits put forward by Roger Olsen. After much discussion, reality and common sense prevailed. They tried to continue playing the usual game of Sark politics but this time they were beaten at their own game.

The inward investment which would have been affected is on a scale that has never been seen before on the Island of Sark. It must be remembered that nobody is obliged to make such investments. Indeed, nobody in their right mind would do so unless they had a passion for the Island. It would be extremely fortuitous to Sark if the investments were to continue but, in a world facing a depression on a 1930s scale and potentially years of deflation, how many people would do so? Sark News believes it would not take too much from a political activists to end it all – which is no doubt part of these political activists' agenda.

However, the retraction of the work permit proposal must be a defining moment in Sark's history. Regardless of what is decided in Chief Pleas and regardless of the outcome of the legal challenge in the Court of Appeal, neither Mr Beaumont and his unelected Seneschal nor Chief Pleas and its committees will ever again be able to impose legislation on the people of Sark without first consulting those who are affected. Emphatically, that includes Sark's business community, on which the Island's future depends entirely.

CONGRATULATIONS!

On 30th September the Guernsey Press reported that La Sablonnerie once again has secured rave reviews with hotel inspectors from a number of quality hotel publications.

The Sablonnerie's international reputation for excellence is an enormous

achievement for Elizabeth Perrée. The quality of her establishment is a great credit to her and something Sark can be proud of.

WELCOME DUSTBUSTER

What a relief to find out that something is finally to be done with the undeniable problem of dust from the roads! Sark News applauds Deputy Paul Williams' for his fact-finding efforts. Deputy Williams might be aware that a preliminary investigation into the possible presence of harmful substances in the dust is under way.

The question remains, how many people have suffered from respiratory illnesses over the years? The sooner this problem is dealt with, the better for all concerned.

MORE CONGRATULATIONS

Congratulations to Michael Adams, Werner and Phyllis Rang, Pam Cocksedge, Gemma Dewe and Martin Remphrey for their various awards from

SARK CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Special congratulations to Mr Kevin Delaney for being given the

Personality of the Year Award

“In recognition of his invaluable investments in the people and community of Sark”

Well done and thoroughly deserved!

FRIENDS, ROMANS, COUNTRYMEN, LEND ME YOUR EARS

***I come to bury Caesar, not to praise him;
The evil that men do lives after them,....***

These are the opening words of Mark Anthony's speech at Caesar's funeral in Shakespeare's tragedy Julius Caesar, the speech which Mr Beaumont, "trembling with emotion" informed us he had considered to re-work as a suitable closing speech for the 'last' Chief Pleas meeting. The speech ends:

***My heart is in the coffin there with Caesar,
And I must pause till it come back to me.***

Sark News wonders, does Mr Beaumont see himself as the "dead" Caesar of Sark, stabbed in the back by "Brutus" in the form of democracy? Or is it Chief Pleas that is "in the coffin" now that it becomes a fully elected assembly?

The idea of a Caesar of Sark is acutely uncomfortable and we suggest that Abraham Lincoln's Gettysburg address would have been a more appropriate choice for this particular closing speech:

***...that this island, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom—
and that government of the people, by the people, for the people,
shall not perish from the earth.***

Mr Beaumont could also have used some famous words from the Gospels (Matthew 22:21):

Render unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's....

Having for so long collected what he considered his feudal dues, time has now come for Mr Beaumont to:

**Render unto the people of Sark the things which are the people of
Sark's...**

SARK SHIPPING

Just a little reminder of the facts to William Raymond and Roger Dadd

It was very clear at the Sark Shipping Shareholders' Meeting on 25th September that, contrary to the facts of the matter, William Raymond and Roger Dadd are at pains to exonerate themselves from their own mismanagement by blaming SEM, Brecqhou and its owners for the current financial difficulties experienced by Sark Shipping.

Roger Dadd, supported by William Raymond, pointed a series of accusations at SEM, Brecqhou and its owners, who supposedly want to "take over" Sark Shipping. Pulling fantastical numbers out of a hat, Mr Dadd firmly blamed Sark Shipping's losses on, in turn:

- Brecqhou Marine Operations' 12 & Under licence (**since this licence has never actually been used, how could it cost Sark Shipping £40,000?**)
- SEM's partly independent freight arrangements (**without mention of the considerable income SEM directly and indirectly has generated for Sark Shipping and without mentioning the fact that much of SEM's private freight comes from France, a promised Sark Shipping route which never materialised**).
- In addition, and contrary to the well documented facts of the matter, they again tried to establish as truth **the fantasy** that Brecqhou cancelled the freight contract with Sark Shipping **after** the Sark Viking was commissioned.

Sark News therefore respectfully reminds these gentlemen of the following indisputable **facts**, quoted from various official Minutes:

Sark Shipping had early warning of the termination of the Brecqhou contract: Already on 3rd January 2003, the Shipping Committee reports to Chief Pleas: **"... Since that date,**

the Company has received verbal notice of the termination of the freight contract with Brecqhou."

20th March 2005, Minutes of Chief Pleas meeting: The President of the Shipping Committee informs the house that ***"the island of Brecqhou have given the Company notice that they intend to buy their own vessel and discontinue their trading connection with Isle of Sark Shipping. He said that this is to be regretted but it will not affect the purchase of the new cargo vessel for Sark."***

He further stated that there was ***"one last reference in the process"*** and that ***"all is ready for signing of the contract."***

It is abundantly clear that they knew about the termination of the Brecqhou contract well before signing the contract for the Sark Viking. There is therefore absolutely no way the Shipping Committee and Sark Shipping can lay the blame for their difficulties at Brecqhou's door. The directors and managers must face the truth and themselves take the blame for their own mismanagement and their own lack of judgment in buying a boat they did not need, recently labelled by Mr Dadd himself as a fiasco.

It is time to face the facts and start providing the people of Sark with the service they need, as envisaged by Dr Spencer's report.



The proposed 2009 timetable has stirred up some strong reactions!

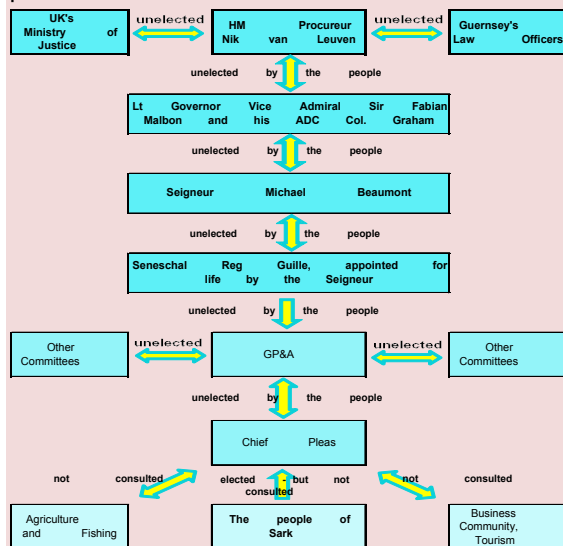
In case you missed the Guernsey Press on 6th October:

MYSTERY? WHAT MYSTERY?

It is obvious from Sir Peter Miller's letter (opinion page 29th September) that although he is happy to have a swipe at "written attacks on the island authorities" he has not really understood what Sark News is all about.

Sir Peter is quite right to be fearful of the owners of Brecqhou – they are men of principle. However, there is no mystery, Sir Peter. Sark News and the "mighty neighbours" are quite simply of the opinion that Sark and its people need, and deserve, a true democracy where transparency and accountability is adhered to by all rather than the ill-conceived, half-baked reforms shortly to come into effect which will leave Chief Pleas dominated by feudal institutions.

Due to Sir Peter's track record in island politics, his claimed inability to understand the reason for "written attacks on island authorities" seems less than sincere and even wilful; having more to do with spreading distrust and alarm rather than genuinely attempting to understand the deeply held views of those who oppose his own position.



Some might remember that a few years back Sir Peter Miller tried to justify the feudal system on Sark by likening the unelected Chief Pleas to the UK's House of Lords - sadly he forgot that the House of Lords does not have power to legislate. Although mostly an absentee landlord on Sark, Sir Peter then became one of the leading lights in favour of the present reforms, under which (and subject to the Court of Appeal's judgment) a thoroughly undemocratic chain of unelected bodies will still dominate island affairs. It is clear from the illustration above that the Seigneur (a position held for life, and one which can be bought and sold), the Seneschal (appointee of the Seigneur, for life), the Lt Governor, the Law Officers, and the UK Ministry of Justice will still be making decisions on

behalf of, but without consulting or being accountable to, the people of Sark. There is nothing democratic about that! Sark News asserts that this law reform is a complete sham; it is mere window dressing designed to keep the "peasants" quiet but still in their proper place.

Has Sir Peter ever considered what the so called law reform actually means to the man in the street, that what it delivers is nothing less than the replacement of one feudal system with another? Preserving the coastline is commendable, but did Sir Peter protest about the construction of the 7,000 sq ft oversized residential property at the Rondellerie, right on the west coast of the island? Has he ever protested about the dubious practice dubbed the Sark Lark?

Sir Peter says the outlook is grim. But, he and other members of Chief Pleas were the architects of this community that some now describe as bitter and divided long before Brecqhou was sold to its present owners. Sir Peter and his Sark peers have presided over a mismanaged economy. Their legacy to the new "democratic" Chief Pleas is a near bankrupt shipping company, a declining tourist industry and an outdated and decrepit infrastructure, starved of investment for well over a generation.

Although I totally agree with Sir Peter's hope that "Chief Pleas will attract the strongest and best members available and will provide the leadership which has been lacking" Sir Peter cannot, through expressing such genuinely worthy hopes, absolve himself from his own past actions. The current reforms do not go far enough and leave some of the worst aspects of the old feudalism intact, even reinforcing some elements of it. Claiming not to understand why Brecqhou challenges the Sark authorities is disingenuous and further evidence of the willingness of the Sark old guard to cut off their noses to spite their faces regardless of what is actually in the best interests of Sark as a whole. If Sark wishes to preserve its political independence and resist improper pressures then it should ally itself with the mighty neighbour Sir Peter identifies, not constantly obstruct and insult it.

S. Oliver
Editor, Sark News

Sark News is more than happy to print any response to articles in Sark News. We cannot guarantee to publish all responses and reserve the right to edit pieces both for length and content.

Publisher: Brecqhou Developments
Editor: Mrs S. Oliver
www.sarknews.com / sarknews.co.uk
Contact: sarknews@cwgsy.net
P.O. Box 8, St Peter Port, Guernsey GY1 4AE