

# Sark News

No. 19, Second Pre-election Special  
December 2008

## A DEFINING MOMENT IN SARK'S HISTORY

**This election is about Sark's future;  
about the crucial issues of economy, jobs,  
investment, tourism, business community and, last  
but not least, the survival of Sark Shipping and  
Sark's independence.**

**And, equally important, it is about Sark becoming  
a democracy with a transparent and accountable  
parliament and administration. The Reform Law  
2008 does not go far enough. It is NOT acceptable,  
as the Court of Appeal Judges recently noted, and  
in breach of the European Convention of Human  
Rights, that the Seneschal should be appointed for  
life. Nor is it acceptable that he, as an unqualified  
Judge with no legal training, should hold judicial as  
well as legislative and executive powers and, in  
addition, be a Trustee of the island's assets, issue  
licences and control conveyancing.**

**YOUR vote will decide YOUR future. Don't vote  
for those who will destroy it!**

## What this election should NOT be about...

Unfortunately, there are strong signs that many candidates allow the crucial issues to become overshadowed by using their well known feelings of deep-seated animosity towards Brecqhou, its owners and their current inward investment on Sark as their election platform.

For sure, these people are trading on emotional issues. Some are using Sark's time-honoured political tools of spreading fear and misinformation to get what they want. Coming up to its first democratic election after 450 years of feudal rule, isn't that style of manipulation exactly what the island must now get rid of? It is high time to look at the issues logically:

Why on earth would the owners of Brecqhou want to "rule" or "take over" Sark? They have been the most prominent and outspoken supporters of democracy that the Island has ever seen. They have devoted endless hours and poured enormous resources into their campaign for justice and fairness for all on Sark – and Brecqhou. Separated by a narrow stretch of water, what is good for one of these islands is good for the other. Injustice on Sark is felt as injustice on Brecqhou. Unfairness on Sark means unfairness on Brecqhou. Obviously, there is a need for cooperation – as made abundantly clear in the Brecqhou manifesto.

**In the end, hot air and - yes, we'll go that far – illogical hatred of all things Brecqhou are not building blocks with which anyone can expect to successfully build Sark's future.**

## A clear plan for the economy is needed...

Instead of rumour-mongering (yes, that certainly includes you, Lt Col. Reg Guille),

scare tactics and behind-the-scenes manipulation, what this election campaign needs is **OPEN DEBATE** and clear information. When will the anti-Brecqhou brigade present Sark's electorate with their own, concrete plans for the economy, employment and the way forward for the tourist industry on the island? When will we get their view on Sark's independence and how they foresee keeping the island's economy going in tough times? Have they got any such plans or views at all? Presenting an airy-fairy wish list is not enough – what would they actually **DO**?

With the ever gloomier outlook for the global economy, it would be disastrous for Sark if Chief Pleas is composed of clueless Conseillers who have by and large obtained their seats due to their well-known antipathy towards Brecqhou. Yet, it seems that many expect to get elected on the strength of their pedigree as members of the anti-brigade and supporters of the present "establishment". Is that the kind of democracy you want?

**The Conseillers elected will hold the island's future in their hands and it is in everybody's interest to ensure those hands are capable ones. The new assembly will manage the island's economy and every decision they make will influence your life; your personal finances, your job situation as well as your dependence on or independence from Guernsey, the UK and even the EU. Would-be Conseillers must therefore prove they are up to the formidable tasks ahead and that they are worthy of the electorate's trust. Make sure you choose wisely!**

## There is too much power concentrated on one pair of hands...

As it was to the Judges of the Court of Appeal, it is obvious to all who have been attending Chief Pleas meetings that Reg

Guille's continued abuse of power is utterly undemocratic and totally unacceptable. He sets the agenda, dominates the proceedings and orchestrates the debate. In the run-up to this election, he has decided that anyone not opposing the Brecqhou investments should be treated as social pariahs.

**This election presents the people of Sark with an opportunity to rectify the situation; to vote for candidates who favour establishing a new, democratic system that does not allow for one all-powerful man singlehandedly to dictate Sark's politics, but whose formidable influence permeates every aspect of life on the island. It is time to drive the "feudal intimidation brigade" from the streets.**

## **TOE THE PARTY LINE – OR ELSE!**

**Lt Col Reg Guille's outrageous behaviour in the run-up to the election should remove any doubt about the urgent necessity for reform the Seneschal's role.**

At the moment, it appears the Seneschal and his supporters enjoy complete dominance around Sark's corridors of power; at the committee offices which include offices of the constables, the treasurer and the committee secretary. Sark News is sure we have seen only the tip of the iceberg and it is quite amazing how democracy can be threatened under the very noses of the appointed crown officials in Guernsey.

### **IMPARTIALITY?**

Dream on! Despite his assurances to the Guernsey Press on 3<sup>rd</sup> December that "*as Seneschal, he was bound not to speak on political issues*", we know that Mr Guille is not even attempting to be neutral in his

dealings with the candidates and the electorate. At the recent Island Hall hustings, he did not hold back but demonstrated clearly to those attending just who he thought should and shouldn't be elected.

### **WELCOMING NEW VOICES?**

Not Mr Guille! Instead he saw fit to make outright accusations against a couple of new faces he perceives to be from the "wrong" camp, openly saying he thought that they had been bullied into standing by SEM. Who's the bully, we ask.

### **ENCOURAGING DEMOCRACY?**

Reportedly, Lt Col Guille has been making catty, intimidating remarks to candidates who are perceived to be in the "wrong" camp. For instance, he was studiously reminding "wrong" candidates of their "right" to withdraw their nominations at any time up until the 12.00 noon deadline on 26<sup>th</sup> November.

### **INFORMING THE ELECTORATE?**

Misinforming, more likely! Lt Col Guille is doing his utmost to discredit his perceived political enemies by perpetuating and encouraging the pathetic rumour that SEM have offered £100 to any member of staff that stand for election and a further £1,000 to any that manage to get elected.

### **SHOWING THE CANDIDATES RESPECT?**

Only if they toe the party-line! People who are standing for election have been accosted by Mr Guille. Others, middle of the road candidates and solid citizens who are perfectly able to think and speak for themselves, are openly being accused of being in the pay of the Barclay family – accusations that are aided, abetted and blessed by the Seneschal.

## **DISPENSING JUSTICE?**

Mr Guille does not need to “talk” politics. He has other ways of making his displeasure known. Despite being deeply upset, some of the candidates who found them being intimidated by Mr Guille refused to make statements to a lawyer. We all know why. They know that the plenipotentiary Seneschal has many informers and they feared further intimidation - the ramifications of which would inevitably follow such an overt act of ‘civil disobedience’. It cannot, for instance, be for nothing that so many of Sark’s residents opt to carry their mail to and from Guernsey rather than using Sark’s local service.

## **COMMUNITY SPIRIT?**

Sark News is often accused of being “deeply divisive”. We firmly level this same accusation at Reg Guille. He is openly declaring that in his opinion there are two camps in the up and coming elections and making clear to everyone on the island his disapproval of anyone associated with Sir David and Sir Frederick Barclay, Kevin Delaney or Sark Estate Management. Is he expecting a large proportion of the island’s workforce to put down their tools and walk away from their jobs in order to please him? Can he suggest or supply alternative employment?

**The way in which Sark’s unelected “parliamentary leader” Lt Col Reg Guille discharges what he apparently sees as his “duty” is totally at odds with all democratic principles. In view of the recent judgment at the Court of Appeal, he will thankfully now be “reformed” - whether he likes it or not. The problem is, it will be too late for this election.**

## **FACT:**

### **THE UNELECTED SENESCHAL’S MULTIPLE POWERS CUT ACROSS ALL THREE LIMBS OF GOVERNMENT;**

**The legislature –  
he controls the legislature with no effective political leadership to challenge him and only very brief rules of procedure to limit his discretion and use of “customary” powers;**

**The executive –  
he sets the agenda for Chief Pleas meetings, he meets with committees, discusses the agenda with the Seigneur before each meeting, and is in close communication with the Law Officers over all Sark business;**

**The judiciary –  
he is Sark’s no. 1 Judge for all purposes, criminal and civil, despite being unqualified in legal matters.**

**The Seneschal is  
UNACCOUNTABLE to Chief Pleas  
and the people of Sark have NO  
control over him.**

**Sark News’ Opinion:  
In order for the Island to  
have a transparent and  
reliable election  
procedure, an  
independent body of  
observers is required.**

**SO WHO CAN YOU SAFELY  
ENTRUST WITH SARK'S  
FUTURE?**

We have already published a list of 12 candidates not to vote for. Of the 45 remaining candidates, there are 9 that stand out. These 9 have a solid track record from Chief Pleas which clearly proves that they are capable of serving Sark. **THESE ARE THE ISLAND'S SAFE PAIRS OF HANDS:**

**PAUL ARMORGIE  
KEVIN DELANEY  
STEFAN GOMOLL  
PAUL BURGESS  
JOHN DONNELLY  
PJ CARRE  
COLIN GUILLE  
DAVID BIRD  
SIMON COULDRIDGE**

There is also a number of candidates who on the strength of their manifestos can be recommended to the electorate as sensible and reasonable future politicians for Sark:

**CHERYL TONKS  
CHRISTOPHER NIGHTINGALE  
BERNARD SOUTHERN  
MICHELLE PERREE  
FIONA BIRD  
BOB PARSONS  
ROGER KEMP  
PETER TONKS  
BELINDA DOYLE  
NATALIE CRAIK  
SUSIE STRACHEY  
JAMIE SWANSON  
LEIGH GIBBINS  
KEVIN LAWS  
MICHAEL DOYLE  
NATALIE TIGHE  
KAYE CHAR  
MINI McCUSKER  
ANN ATKINSON**

**These are the candidates that, if  
elected, will not destroy your  
future.**

**Give them your vote!**

**FORMING COMMITTEES IN  
THE NEW CHIEF PLEAS**

According to the information sent out by the Committee Secretary, the plan is for the new Conseillers to be sworn in and herded into the assembly room, whereupon they will immediately be allotted seats on various committees – all in one day, in one fell swoop.

The House will consist of many members unfamiliar with Chief Pleas and its procedures and this plan would give the “parliamentary leader” the upper hand in assigning the seats on the various committees. If past performance is anything to go by, we would say that the unelected Seneschal has already worked out who should be where.

**Sark News believes the new  
Conseillers should be given time  
to work out for themselves how  
to divide up what will no doubt  
be a considerable work load.**

Now, that would be democracy at work!

## NEW VOICES

### Another generation wants to be heard

Not surprisingly, many of the names on the candidate list are seasoned politicians belonging to the “old guard” of Sark’s political arena. These are candidates whose names and views are familiar to most of the Island’s residents. What is remarkable, though, is the sheer number of “new” people who are eager to have their views heard in the new, democratic Chief Pleas – and quite rightly too. Many of these “new” faces are of a younger generation than the present political establishment. They are of the generation that is busy making a living and rearing their children and theirs are voices that until now have not really been heard in Sark politics.

These are the people who will take this community into the future. They are the ones who will, eventually, be running the island’s affairs, both its politics and its economy. They are the ones most likely to depend on finding employment to be able to continue living on Sark. They are the ones who will bear the brunt of possible tax increases as well as being responsible for bringing up the next generation of Conseillers, farmers, business owners and carters – the taxpayers of the future.

**It is high time their voices were heard and their opinions taken into consideration in the Island’s political process. Their opinions matter. Listen up, Sark!**

## THE BRECQHOUS MANIFESTO

The recently distributed Brecqhou Manifesto speaks for itself. It sets out a clear vision for Sark’s future; offering concrete solutions for preserving the island’s independence and enhancing its character and beauty whilst safeguarding its economy. It takes into consideration the importance of not only the tourist industry but also the needs of

small businesses. It highlights the need for Sark to ring fence its assets.

The massive investments that the owners of Brecqhou have undertaken on Sark are totally unique in the island’s history. The manifesto makes it clear that their intentions are friendly and that they are looking forward rather than back into a veritable quagmire of animosity and distrust. The document has sparked considerable interest and debate around the island, with many people openly acknowledging the very many issues of common interest that Brecqhou and Sark share.

**It is time to look forward and not back!**

## THE SENESCHAL’S ARMY

### Female storm troops deployed!

A jocular remark about Sark made by a Guernsey Press television critic led to a finely orchestrated counter-attack by the FF (Feudal Furies) division. Jo Birch, Wendy Kiernan, Diane Baker and Jennifer Cochrane fired off a defensive volley attempting to convince Guernsey Press’ readership that the shortcomings hinted at by the hapless Mr Murphy are but figments of a hack’s imagination.

In addition to revealing a regrettable lack of a sense of humour, the Seneschal’s storm troops also proved to all and sundry, once and for all, that they have their heads firmly buried in the sand. Nobody in their right mind could deny the fact that Sark’s infrastructure – roads, drains, sewage treatment, water supply, garbage disposal - is in urgent need of up-dating and up-grading to comply with 21<sup>st</sup> century standards. There is no denying that medical facilities on the island are basic and that the caring community of Sark is unable to look after its elderly members when they become unable to look after themselves. There is no denying that Sark Shipping is struggling to provide the service the Island needs.

Instead of deploying storm troops to self-righteously deny the Island’s undisputable short-comings, would not all this energy be better spent in rectifying them?

It is now time for Sark's electorate to decide whether their heads belong in or out of the sand.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Election candidate Bernhard Southern has asked us to print the e-mail below in this issue:

Knowing Sark News is delivered to every household on Sark, I thought I'd use this opportunity to put to bed a few rumours Reg Guille brought to my attention at the hustings on Monday 1st December;

1. I was NOT paid £100 by ANYBODY for putting my name forward as Candidate for Conseiller;

2. I will NOT be paid £1000 by ANYBODY if I am elected Conseiller on Wednesday 10th December;

and,

3. Yes, I have eaten at the Aval de Creux Hotel recently, but politics were NOT mentioned once by anybody I was dining with.

Where I choose to go to socialise and whomever I choose to socialise with is my business and my business alone. I would never take bribes in any way, shape or form from anybody and, if there are any other equally ridiculous rumours doing the rounds out there, then please give me a call on 07781 418543 so I can put those to bed, too.

Many thanks,  
Bernard Southern.

## ANOTHER LETTER TO THE EDITOR:

Dear Mrs. Doubtfire,

I address you as such as I doubt you are either a Mrs. or an Oliver. I therefore read your name on the Sarkastic News and envisage a sort of butch transvestite.

However I move on to my first point and that is that you don't publish letters other than to criticise or ridicule the writer. I have therefore remained sober in writing this so as not to suffer the same fate as those before me who opened themselves to such ridicule. We are at a critical stage of our history. If the good people of Sark don't get this right we may become part of

Guernsey and lose our independence totally. It's a real threat! There are people like Richard Dewe who haven't put out a manifesto and yet he needs to be asked "Do you really want to give up Sark's independence? Just because you found being on Chief Pleas hard why are you standing again depriving someone of a place who is ready to read and digest the new laws sent over by Guernsey?" Are the people of Sark aware that Richard has put in place a mechanism that already effectively gives away our total independence unless members of Chief Pleas are really on the ball? - How? Well because whether he did so deliberately or more likely because he didn't understand the complexities of the issues, he has created a precedent that many BAILIWICK LAWS SENT OVER FROM GUERNSEY WILL AUTOMATICALLY APPLY TO SARK unless Chief Pleas counter it within three months. This is the most stupid thing anyone could have done and I genuinely doubt he understood what he was doing. Remember he has been challenged in Chief Pleas with the simple question "Do you understand this piece of legislation? If so can you tell the house what it means?" And he was simply been unable to do so! He simply lost his temper and threw his toys out of the pram (great Guernsey Press Article). And yet you say he's on "Probation". Surely he's proven he's incapable of representing the best interest of the people of Sark. Full Stop!

My main question regards Sark Shipping who ran a more efficient service when it was still the Sark Steam Packet and I can only surmise that things will get worse before they get better or cease to run completely.

As all residents, I deal with them regularly and rely on them. I see the boats manned by great staff, the current workers on the boat are ambassadors for Sark and every time I step on the boat I smile with pride. Similarly the office staff when they are not tied up doing work for Ship and Fly are also delightful, if a little over staffed were it running on a commercial basis.

However the management at Fawltly Shipping appear unable to make the whole equal a sum of the parts. Therefore it is obvious that a serious trouble-shooter needs to get in there and slash and burn before the corporate ship sinks with all hands on deck. I must question, is the time table is published as a wind up? Who authorises a boat to leave early leaving people stranded on Guernsey for a Saturday and Sunday night? Who came up with an information line number you can't ring from France or the UK? Doh, this is basic stuff. Come on The Simpson's Shipping Line, take this seriously.

Now I know that the huge financial burden has mainly been caused by three buffoons who thought that because they sat on the old Chief Pleas they were suddenly endowed with qualities they simply didn't and don't possess. That is irreversible and I can only hope that the good people of Sark recognise the incompetence and arrogance of these dangerous characters and don't vote for them again. I know that at the time two of them *nearly* did the honourable thing and

resigned but then their arrogance and sense of self importance actually convinced them to stay on. If their abilities were as huge as their egos they'd be geni and quite frankly we wouldn't need anyone else on Chief Pleas at all. However the simple truth is idiots are always satisfied with their own performance whereas perfectionist are always disappointed and work to improve, no matter how high the bar they set. They say ignorance is bliss and I can only assume these two are the happiest guys on the island. However may I ask that anyone who wants to stop the island going bankrupt does not vote for either of these sad but dangerous characters.

I have just been told that in the New Year the new management at Carry on Shipping are going to increase the price of the return ticket to £28. This while the alternative information is that the Herm boat will be cheaper as they've realised that bums on seats bring revenue to their lovely little island.

I can only liken this to the Sark Shipping Petrol Station. Imagine they own a petrol station with fuel at £1 a litre. Now imagine there is a rival petrol station down the road, lets call it The Herm Petrol Station, that reduces the cost of their fuel to 90p per litre.

Obviously Sark Shipping Petrol Station, will suddenly lose revenue as their customers drive into the other petrol station down the road to save the 10p. The bosses from Sark Shipping Petrol Station have a meeting and say, "To make up this loss of revenue we will have to put up our fuel retail cost to £1.10p". To them it makes perfect sense. I have news for you Sark Shipping, the only people who put up their charges time after time and yet offer a poorer and poorer service are civil servants. And that is why the rates burden on UK businesses was recently highlighted as the main reason for small businesses going bust. Local governments answer to the loss of revenue from these units becoming empty is to put the rates burden up again to the poor unfortunates left struggling to make a living! Frightening but true.

I'd like voters to make a note of previous employment history of the candidates. If they are ex-civil servants or teachers sitting here on their gold plated pensions having never earned a living, don't vote for them for heaven's sake. They might be nice people but they won't have a clue how to manage a million pound budget. If they are ex-teachers then they could be co-opted as consultants to relevant education committees but please PLEASE keep them away from the purse strings!

Now wake up Sark Shipping and listen to those who pay your wages - the hard pressed citizens of Sark and especially the hard working owners of the shops; cafes; hotels and small businesses.

I discovered this island on a very cheap day return 20 years ago. I booked a 4 day break on the strength of that day trip and that's the point, unless we get people here we can't let them fall in love.

I'd rather see a full boat paying a tenner return than 3 people on it paying £28. Although it's

tempting to look at Sark Shipping as a remote, troublesome child but in fact we need to realise it's part of the family. We need it to bring enough people onto the island to support the economy, tourism in all its forms is our back bone and sort that out and the rest will follow.

Lets see some transparency and be consulted on the policy of Sark Shipping I was horrified earlier in the year to see the boss presenting mangled economics and a completely naïve and lazy attitude and yet we, basically his bosses as shareholders were not allowed to challenge him. Members of Chief Pleas who were allowed to ask questions were mysteriously dumb (other than Molly Bull and John Donnelly) even though the statistics spouted by the Chief Executive were childishy inaccurate! His statistics were wrong and his attitude more wrong. It was a frightening show of business ineptitude and I wouldn't let that man run a hot dog stand. Yet he was unchallenged. Like a UK politician he stood there proud; incompetent and arrogant. Blaming everyone but himself. If I may remind you of young George Washington, "Who chopped down that cherry tree George?" – "I cannot tell a lie father, it was those evil Barclay Brothers". Well no, not this time Sark Shipping, you can't blame them for this cock up. You were useless lazy and incompetent. Were you a sales manager in a serious company you'd have been put out onto the dole queue.

You should have rushed over to Brecqhou and signed up a lucrative contract that was a total no-brainer. Had you any pride you'd have resigned before that meeting but I believe you genuinely are just not very good at business and couldn't see what you'd done wrong.

I only hope that if we get a sensible new lot of business brains on Chief Pleas they'll be able to rescue at least some freight business with Brecqhou. The old boys network that previously refused to deal with the Barclays simply because they didn't like them are like pre-school kids picking the footie team. They need keel-hauling and replacing with grown ups!

I'm glad we now have new management but I hope it's not going to be more of the same. Rumour is they plan to put the ticket price up to £28. Please listen to sense and do the opposite, reduce the ticket price and watch how more people help everyone. However I suggest if things aren't improved dramatically by the end of March we stage a mutiny.

Yours Sincerely,  
Angry of Sark.

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.

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