

L'Ancrese Common



Contact Information

General Management

Vale Commons Council
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Golf Clubs

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Environmental Significance

L'Ancrese Common comprises about 737 verges and constitutes the largest single area of open land in Guernsey.

History

The common lands of the Clos du Valle popularly known as 'L'Ancrese Common' have existed largely in their present form for hundreds of years.

The Common's history is chequered ranging in time from prehistoric (les Vardes and Les Fouillages) to medieval during the times of the great land owning diocese of Mont St. Michel, the rationalisation measures undertaken during and after Elizabeth I's reign up to the reclamation of the Braye du Valle in the nineteenth century.

It is little known that L'Ancrese Common is owned by private persons although such ownership is subject to the exercise of hereditary and customary rights including those of the inhabitants (Les Habitants - defined in the ordinance mentioned below) of the Clos du Valle such as rights of pasturage, rights to cut furze (droit de fouillage), rights of passage etc.

Various areas belong to the Crown or the States of Guernsey and some areas

have been handed over to the States for the purpose of providing public services such as car parking, beach kiosks and public toilets.

Use of the common lands has evolved over the centuries, the major present day use being that of a leisure area for islanders. The increasingly important leisure requirement was recognised in the mid twentieth century by the creation of a fifty year term lease for a golf course in 1947 at a peppercorn rent with an add on term of twenty years of which some eleven years remain.

The area devoted to the golf course occupies almost 50% of the 737 vergées which means a large portion of L'Ancrese Common is off limits to islanders who are not members of the two privately run golf clubs.

A form of Commons Council has existed since 1875 formed initially by Royal Court Order and then under legislation enacted by the States of Deliberation.

The present Vale Commons Council is mandated under the 1932 Ordinance (as amended) which Ordinance recognised the change of use of the Common from agricultural to largely leisure orientated activity.

The duties of the Council to protect and supervise the Common are set out in detail (see below) so in effect the council is designated custodian of the common lands accountable to the inhabitants.

Under the Ordinance an annual meeting - usually held in February - is convened after being advertised in the Gazette Officielle to enable the Council to present a report of the year's activities, obtain approval of audited accounts for the year's budget, the election of a Council member and invite discussion from interested persons. Votes may be taken on agenda items.