

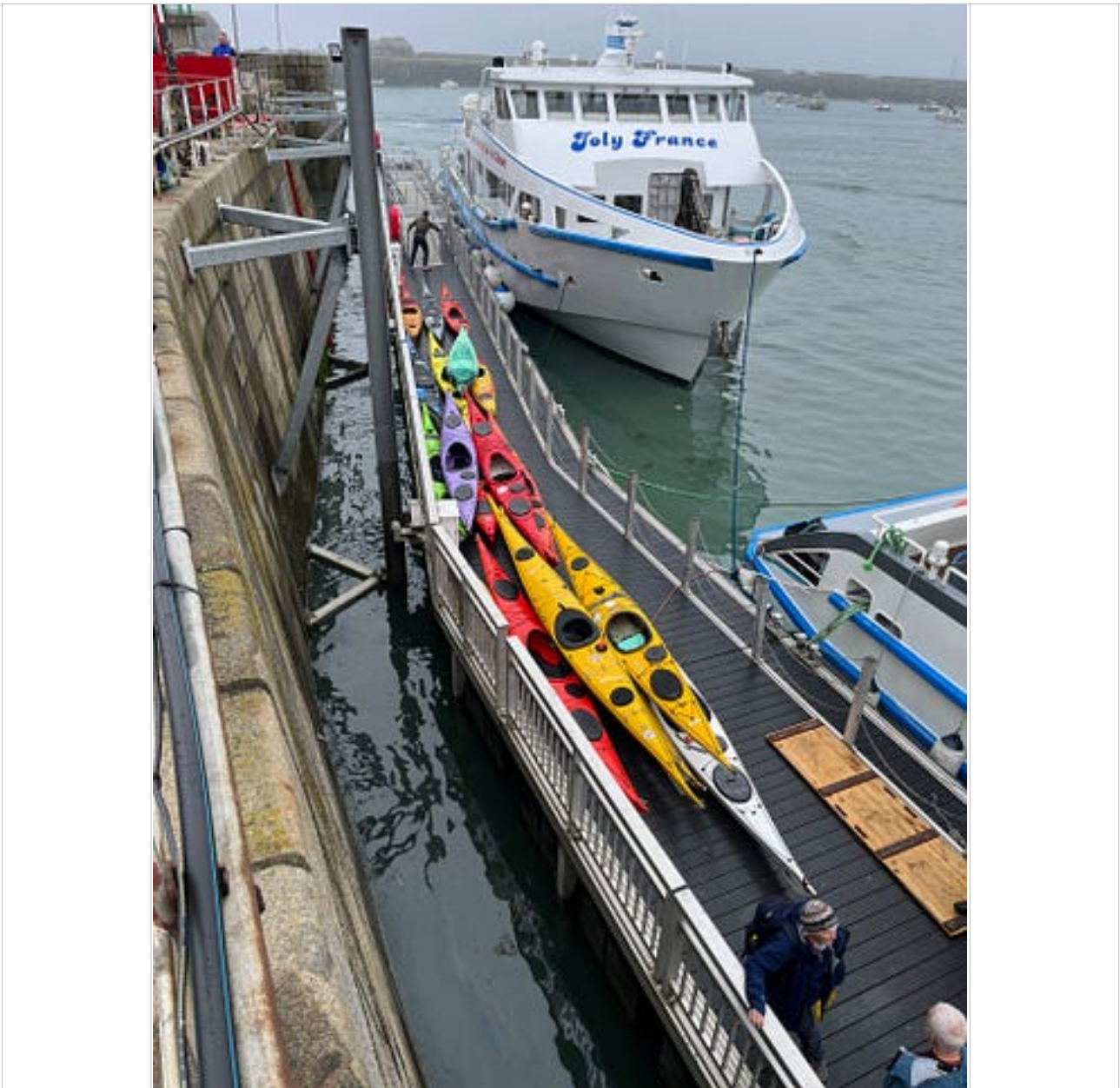


Thank you for reading this article about sea kayaking in the Channel Islands and further afield. If you have enjoyed it, hopefully you will recommend it to your friends and paddling partners. Many thanks.

## Chausey

### A Normandy Archipelago

If, at night, I stand on the cliffs near my house I can often see the welcoming beam of a number of French lighthouses. One of these is on the French Island of Chausey. An amazing archipelago I had been fortunate enough to visit on a couple of occasions over the years, fleeting visits which opened my eyes to the sea kayaking potential of the area. When the Kayak Club in Granville got in touch with the Jersey Canoe Club for a joint trip to Chausey, the response was pretty amazing. So Tuesday 9th May, Liberation Day, an important date in the history of Jersey, saw us loading the kayaks on to a Vedette, in Granville, prior to heading across to the main island.



Kayaks being readied for loading onto the ferry. I have traveled on ferries throughout the world but I would have to say that the crew on this boat are amongst the most helpful and accommodating that I have encountered.

Unloading the kayaks was a simple process and in a matter of minutes we were heading towards the Gîtes, which had been booked for us. Thankfully the tractor and trailer were waiting to transport the mountain of equipment and food we had brought with us. I suppose there were 25 of us for 5 days.



Afternoon on the first day, returning to Ile Grande after an exploration of the northern reefs, including the sighting of a recently revealed stone circle.

The Gîtes were perfect for our needs, following a quick lunch it was time to get on the water. For most of our visit, the gods of the wind looked favourably upon us although the clouds were reluctant to disperse for the majority of the time.



Chausey is an archipelago whose appearance has been transformed by the long history of quarrying. What was the story of

these workings and man made structures on the north of the main island?

The rock from Chausey, will be familiar to numerous travellers although they may not be aware of it. It was used in the building of Mont Saint Michel and for some of the pavements in Paris. In Jersey the rock was highly prized as it was easier to work than the local rock. For example, the font in St Clement's Church dating from the 14th or 15th Century is from Chausey granite. Many of the parish Churches on the island have used Chausey rock in their construction.



Lunch on Iles des Huguenans. These 3 islands, separated by sounds containing swift moving tidal streams, were one island prior to the advent of quarrying.



One of the larger islets, Gd. Romont, complete with an aging collection of tractors. Trapped on neap tides, they regain their freedom on Springs when they are used by the shellfish industry. They are just visible in front of the paddlers head.



There is a large tidal range around the islands, reaching 13 metres on Springs. As such the maritime infrastructure needs to be flexible. Underneath in the morning and two hours later over the top, and we were on neaps.



Paddling past Chateau Renault. A 16th Century chateau, purchased by the car manufacturer Louis Renault in the 1920's. As the Renault company continued to produce vehicles during the Second World War they were seen as collaborators and Louis Renault died in a French prison towards the end of 1944, whilst awaiting trial. The Renault factory and possessions were seized by the French government.



The islands Chapel was built around 1850. From its slightly elevated location there are extensive views across the archipelago.



Kayaks resting at the end of the day. Most of us spent some time here in the evening. Not in contemplative reflection but because it was the nearest spot with a reasonable phone signal.



On our last full day we finally had lunch in conditions we had been hoping for. Many of the group found the attraction of the crystal clear water irresistible and went swimming.

I think it is fair to say that very few sea kayakers from the U.K. will have made their way to Chausey, it's only 25 miles from Jersey and we struggle. Those that do make the effort are richly reward, with a maritime landscape that constantly changes with the ebb and flow

of the tides. It is also a landscape, which reflects the significant impact of humans over several millennia. Hopefully it will be possible to return in the future to explore more of this fascinating reef.

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