

Voice-Vowels

Why Voice – Vouaïe?

‘Vouaïe’ translates as ‘voice’ in Guernesiais.

Guernesiais (*JEHR-nehz-yay*) is the language of Guernsey, a variety of Norman French and a cousin of standard French.



What is the project about?

Recording people who grew up with Guernesiais, using portrait photography and audio.



Who is behind it?

The project is a partnership between Guernsey Museums and photographer Aaron Yeandle. Aaron is taking portrait photographs and language specialist Yan Marquis is recording audio from each participant. The project is a blend of art and social history.



I was delighted to have been invited to be part of this very important and significant project. I feel it is essential for the Vouaïe project to be embraced by all of the community of Guernsey, as an important part of Guernsey's heritage and for the future legacy of the Island.

I have interpreted the theme of the Vouaïe brief, by producing intimate portraits of the volunteers in their homes. To complement the portraits, I have also photographed people's personal objects, which remind them of Guernsey.

Through being involved and photographing for the Vouaïe project, has allowed me to capture a part of Guernsey's community and social history, which can be so fleeting.

Photographer, Aaron Yeandle



I was delighted to be asked to work with Guernsey Museums and photographer Aaron Yeandle on the *Voice – Vouaïe* project. I have been involved with recording Guernesiais for over twenty years both privately, with academics and for Guernsey Museums.

I began work on the project back in November 2018 and was immediately encouraged to see so many people come forward to take part. By the end of August 2019 I had made audio recording of some sixty people. While only a short 'soundbite' is needed to accompany your photo portraits, the Project has provided, and continues to provide an opportunity to make longer recordings of Guernesiais speakers which can cover a wide range of language and topics.

Speakers of Guernesiais are privileged to possess a valuable Guernsey cultural asset which needs to be passed on! People in Guernsey, and beyond, are beginning to realise the value of this asset.

- Language consultant, Yan Marquis



Listen to Elaine Creed (pictured right)



My name is Creed. Not a Guernsey name but my family is from Guernsey, St. Peter's. I was born in 1934. I was raised in St. Peter's, I lived there until I was 25 years old, then I moved to St. Martin's. My maiden name was de Garis from Les Islets, St. Peter's. I spoke English at school, my family spoke Guernesiais at home, but I must have been able to speak English because I used to play with a girl next door whose family didn't speak Guernesiais, I probably learnt it in this way. We always spoke Guernesiais in the family.



Why are we doing it?

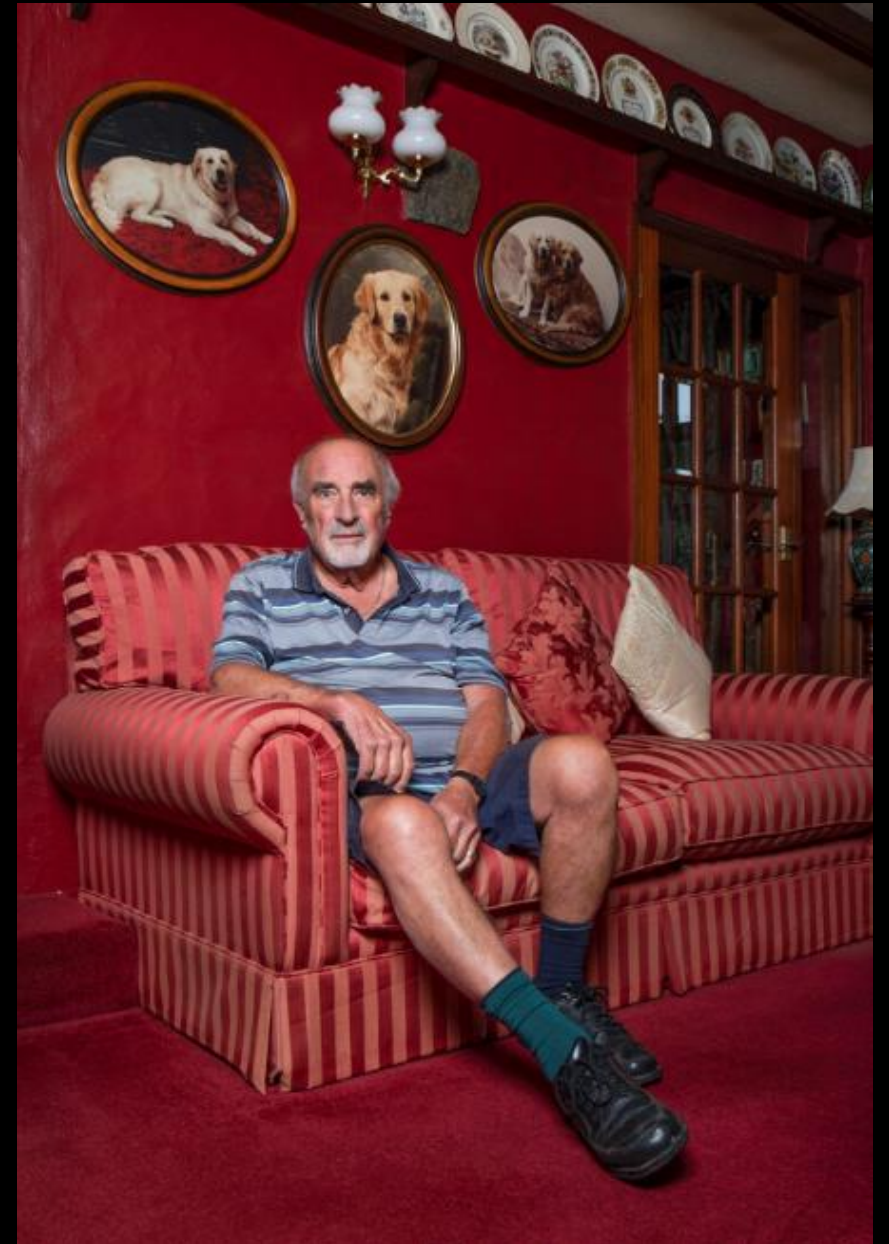
- To raise the profile of the language
- To capture a social record for the future
- To foster a sense of community around the language



What are the outcomes?

- A free audio-visual exhibition
- An important social and linguistic archive for Guernsey Museums, which can help with teaching & learning now and in the future
- Increased connections between members of the language community

We also intend for the exhibition to exist as a 'touring' exhibition. All or some of the portraits be lent to other places in Europe, including those who have their own indigenous languages (such as Normandy).



The time is now

In 2020, it is estimated that there are fewer than 100 fluent speakers of Guernesiais and these are mainly aged over 80.

Our language is therefore defined by UNESCO as 'severely endangered'.

In a globalised world, we feel it's more important than ever to celebrate our sense of cultural identity and difference.



Voice-Vouaie

www.museums.gov.gg/voice
www.aaronyeandle.com/pagevo