

WARDENS REPORT FOR 1987

Following recent attention to marine matters, culminating in Lundy's designation as a statutory MNR in 1986, the terrestrial side of the island received recognition of its outstanding interest when it was notified as an SSSI in September, 1987. Under the notification the NCC must first be consulted, should the Landmark Trust wish to carry out certain operations which may be damaging. The onus is then on the NCC to come to a mutually satisfactory management agreement. For instance, under the notification, only certain tree species could be planted.

Those of you who are regular visitors to Lundy cannot fail to have noticed the forest of brown tubes that have sprung up on the East Sidelands. Many of you are probably dismayed at this blot on the landscape. The tubes, however, have an important function; they provide protection from the greedy mouths of deer, sheep and rabbits, as well as wind and drought; they enable the easy location of trees for weeding and aftercare; they cause rapid growth in the first few years. There will be failures and management methods will need to be reconsidered, but should just 5% survive, and there are over 450 transplants, then it will be a significant achievement. Our tree planting programme has been grant aided by the NCC. We have concentrated on native species, which are more valuable in terms of the wildlife that they support. Species such as sessile oak and downy birch grow in exposed conditions close to the sea in Scotland, so should be well suited to Lundy; others such as rowan, ash and alder have been tried successfully in the past. In Millcombe there are also buddleia, holly, elm and Austrian pine.

The clearance of rhododendron, or more correctly its containment, is the other major area of management that has received attention. Over the next few years we hope to not only prevent its further spread by removing seedlings, but also to remove it from Three Quarters Wall Bay; these clumps are of relatively recent origin and it is believed that their continuing spread into this area and northwards into Gannets Bay is undesirable, in view of the resultant habitat impoverishment. In order to provide an accurate record of the distribution of rhododendron, photographs are being taken annually of the east side. Permanent quadrats have also been set up to assist in monitoring the recolonisation of cleared areas. The clearance of rhododendron is a daunting task and one that is only possible with the help of work parties. In 1987 we had five work parties, that is over 250 man days of work! Joining the regular LFS work parties were NT Acorn Camps and a BTCV party. In 1987 they improved both the rhododendron and quarry path and they cleared a large area of rhododendron from Quarter Wall Copse. Individual volunteers also make an important contribution, so if there are any desk bound, frustrated wardens out there then get in touch with me!

The island's visitor centre (better known to regulars as the Old Shop, but now known as the Linhay) has been refurbished to provide an attractive setting for the display of information, for slide shows and for visitors to simply sit in and write their postcards. The books (which can now be found in the back of the church) have been replaced by the magnificent model of the Hindustan, which made an exciting journey, towed by tractor, from the hotel. An interpretative consultant, David Craddock, has co-ordinated the installation in the Linhay of an informative and attractive series of displays, which apart from wildlife subjects cover the archaeology, history and working of the island. Further displays are soon to be installed on the Oldenburg. The entire project has been grant aided by the Countryside Commission and the NCC. We hope that the displays, together with the various guides and LFS leaflets that are already available, will cater for the enquiring minds of the increasingly large numbers of visitors, particularly day visitors, that now come to Lundy.

Lundy's first year as a statutory MNR has passed quietly, which is no doubt no bad thing. There are, however, difficulties that do not exist on a terrestrial reserve. The boundary is not well defined; it is hard to know how users of the reserve, be they divers or fishermen, are behaving; it is difficult to inform people of the reserve's status and any necessary enforcement is even harder. A new leaflet prepared by the NCC and outlining the reserve's Code of Conduct and Bye-Laws is now available.

Ironically, but almost certainly coincidentally, the waters around Lundy are receiving more use than ever before. Potting is principally carried out by two boats from Padstow, each with over 1000 pots, though the majority are outside the reserve. Up to 4 smaller boats also pot from time to time around Lundy. Diving is an ever increasingly popular pastime, with most activity (there are regularly more than 7 boats here at any one time) occurring at the weekends, boats visiting from N. Devon and Wales. Lundy's new venture into island run diving has started slowly, but all the indications are that we will be much more busy in 1988.

A complete absence of basking sharks was a disappointment, though there were four separate records of small cetaceans, each involving several individuals. At least three of the records related to dolphins. A killer whale was reported late in the year by the Oldenburg crew and if this is a positive identification it wouldn't be the first, for one was photographed in 1970. Large numbers of jelly fish, *Rhizostoma pulmo*, were present in late April/early May, some of them exceeding 2' in diameter! Some readers will have heard of the red band fish, *Cepola rubescens*, which was once found in large numbers living in burrows on the gravels off Lundy's east coast. A staggering 1400 individuals were estimated in 1977, but by 1982 they had disappeared. During the course of routine searches made by the sub-littoral monitoring team a small and apparently discrete population was located. It was an especially memorable experience to me since these beautiful eel-like fish were observed free swimming out of their burrows (an unusual observation), some of them exhibiting a shimmering bright blue dorsal fin. On a more sombre note a small oil slick was observed 4 miles off Lundy in April and one wonders how many go unnoticed. The damage that they could cause to Lundy's already fragile seabird populations might be devastating.

Other important events of the year were the arrival of our very own Veery (as reported elsewhere) and even more fascinating the discovery of mouse pellets in the Tavern. Our culprit was never discovered and no doubt it died of a broken heart, despairing of ever finding a mate. Mice are not resident on Lundy, though they were fairly numerous until exterminated in 1929; subsequently a few are reported to have come over in thatching reed.

Professor Ian Linn reports that he found a species of flea, normally parasitic on woodmice, on a rat in 1984. This gives rise to speculation concerning how it arrived on Lundy, not least of which is that a population of woodmice, complete with fleas, once existed here.

Lastly, somewhat mundanely, but very importantly, two separate initiatives have been made. The first regards the reporting of events and projects. A standard procedure, adopted by the NCC, is now being used for the MNR (and soon for terrestrial matters) and this should significantly improve the storage and retrieval of information. Secondly, a Management Plan has been drafted. This principally concerns the management of rhododendrons and woodland. It is intended that this document will become an agreed series of management objectives, which will subsequently be achieved through a series of projects.

N. WILLCOX
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