

AGENT'S REPORT 1993

Late in 1992, the Landmark Trustees announced that they could no longer support the costs involved in the running of Lundy. The island was given one year to break even in cash terms otherwise the Landmark might have to consider pulling out. As a result of this decision a very tough budget was set.

Many factors contributed to the amazing change in the fortunes of the island: a full time promotion person was appointed, a completely new stayers brochure was produced, there was considerable media coverage early in the year and a determination amongst the staff to succeed.

Christmas and New Year were well subscribed but once again the weather delayed visitors and a helicopter from R.A.F. Chivenor came to the island with the Christmas provisions.

On January 13th the M.S.Oldenburg was dry docked at Appledore utilising a redundant dock. It was quite an event as no ship had used the dock since the Oldenburg docked there in 1987. The gates were completely blocked by mud and rubbish which had to be cleared before the ship could enter. It was however so satisfying to be able to give work to people in our own district and unemployed people volunteered to paint the ship.

The February half term was the first indication of the coming season: the island was extremely busy and this trend has continued right through the year.

On the farming side, again events have shown that the farm is well able to contribute to the island's economy. We had an excellent lambing with few casualties and the later sales of these lambs produced impressive results with best price of the day at one market.

In July the Devon Association of Young Farmers arrived with two huge tractors and cleared about three hundred acres of bracken; they also creosoted all the gates and fences and removed the bell chamber from the church. Their arrival was a shot in the arm for the islanders as the tasks carried out could never have been completed without help.

During June the M.S.Oldenburg sailed to Gloucester in superb weather and with a very healthy passenger loading. This now looks like becoming an annual event with the ship being the only large passenger vessel to use the Sharpness ship canal. Later in the year she sailed from Watchet to Lundy carrying a full compliment of passengers. As a result of these successful forays into other ports, the timetable for this year shows the ship making more visits to places other than Bideford or Ilfracombe.

The flexible approach to booking has resulted in a considerable increase in the Bed & Breakfast trade which utilises otherwise empty properties and gives visitors a real taste of staying on the island.

During 1993 there was no funding for new projects and the island brewery was not reinstated. Maintenance however has not suffered and the properties are all in good order. One project which did slip through was the conversion of Old Light West as a hostel for volunteers. This has proved popular and means that small groups of four people can book at any time of the year and particularly during the summer months when the island really does need support.

There have been a few staff changes during the year; our new engineer Philip Congdon arrived in March with his wife Deborah and three children coming later in the summer. They currently have two boys at Queen Elizabeth's school in Crediton and a daughter Rebecca who is being taught at home. Annie Alford left the island in January and we are currently looking for a replacement for her shop position. Our daughter Emma has now reached school age and is being very successfully taught on the island by Lorna Gibson.

As the season progressed it was becoming apparent that the island might reach a goal

of breaking even; in other words creating no cash call on the Landmark Trust. The weather was not exceptional but ship loadings were good and there were few cancellations.

The island's year end is the 31st October. When the final accounts were presented the island had made a small profit. The news was greeted with great enthusiasm by all the staff as this heralded a secure future for Lundy.

Everyone worked terribly hard to ensure the results would be achieved and they may be justifiably proud to have been the first to have made Lundy viable in living memory.

Many of you will have noticed a forlorn collection of bells in the Church porch. These were removed early this century because salt air had corroded the steel structure to a point where the bells were in danger of falling. Due to the great generosity of the Doris Field charitable trust, the bells were removed from the island on January 3rd this year and sent to Eayre and Smith of Melbourne in Derbyshire. They will be repaired, retuned and fitted with new clappers, mountings and headstocks; The clock mechanism has also been sent for restoration and when re-fitted will enable the bells to chime the hour and the quarters.

It is exciting to think that the bells will be heard again after a period of some 90 years; I am sure it will breathe new life into the church and create an additional interest in the island.

There are many events planned for 1994 which is the 25th year of the Landmark Trust's involvement in Lundy, one of which is an open day scheduled for Tuesday July the 12th. Another event which will be of interest is a wreath laying service at V.C. quarry on the 21st of June. This is to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the posthumous award of the Victoria Cross to Corporal John Harman who was brought up on Lundy. He died in the Battle of Kohima which proved to be the turning point of the Burma campaign.

J. PUDDY
May 1994.