

AGENT'S REPORT FOR 1995

Reg Lo-vel wrote this report last year and I would like here to thank him very much for all that he did acting as Lundy agent for the major part of 1995.

Lundy Island is a hard place. It would appear that 1995 was almost idyllic. The weather was perfect, the summer was long and holiday makers were abundant. It was these very advantages that brought some of the worst droughts and severe shortages of water that the island has ever known. This was made worse by the fact that the island was very heavily stocked with sheep and cattle and that there is a resurgence of the rabbit population after the myxomatosis outbreak of a few years ago. As soon as I arrived we had to face the fact very quickly that the island had been severely overgrazed, was exceedingly short of water and that there had to be a mass evacuation of the sheep and cattle. The Marines helped us to move several hundred animals including all the cattle on one day and the rest were moved out on the Oldenburg as quickly as possible. The island has duly been rested since and at the time of writing this report we are awaiting in excess of 500 sheep to be moved back onto the island. We made a decision to sell all the large half breeds of sheep and to bring back Welsh Mountain ewe lambs. It is not the intention to lamb in 1996. Effectively therefore we will reduce the number of feet on the island both in the sensitive winter months and next year and we will do our best to allow the island to recover from the shock of a very dry 1995. It is therefore safe to say that we have changed the philosophy of farming on the island this year.

As well as the full time Warden, Emma Parkes, I have also appointed a young man, Chris Wells, with what seems to be a fairly substantial job title, Island Groundsman. It was most difficult to think of a title for a man who we basically wish to work on preserving various parts of the island which are used very much by the public such as paths, walls, verges and to maintain a vigilance on the upkeep of these at all times.

With regard to staff generally the Island has seen a lot of changes but I am confident now that the end of 1995 has seen the stabilizing of a balanced team forming the core of the staff requirements for the island.

It is noteworthy that within the last months of 1995 there have been dramatic changes in the Landmark Trust itself: Mr Barty Smith was appointed the Chairman in the autumn; Mr Peter Pearce was appointed the Director in December and of course my position as Agent commenced on the 1st August. It is therefore a new team which is now leading the whole Landmark Trust and Lundy.

It is a timely moment therefore to confirm my personal objectives here as presented to the Trustees of the Landmark Trust in order that the members of the Field Society should be fully aware of our total commitment. The objectives are:-

1. To maintain Lundy as a natural, tranquil island, peaceful and unspoiled by changes on the mainland.
2. To maintain its availability to the public at all times of the year.
3. To derive an income from visitors to cover the maintenance of the island, its buildings and services as well as making improvements where necessary and aesthetically proper.
4. To preserve the island's flora and fauna by ensuring the various, very individual habitats, are continued.
5. To identify strongly with the Landmark Trust and to maintain the whole island as a Landmark property.

Above all it is evident to me having stayed on holiday for the last twelve years on the island when I have enjoyed bird watching, walking and the general study of wildlife that the island attracts a host of individualists and enthusiasts. I have already met many such enthusiasts from the Lundy Field Society and look forward to meeting more in the future.

TONY BLACKLER
January 1996