

LUNDY GENERAL MANAGER'S REPORT FOR 2008

“Getting to Lundy should not be easy, it should be a bit of an adventure, to sort out a little those who try, and so that those that have been there are a little different from those who have not, Lundy will never be advertised as ‘so easy’”

I'm sure Sir John had years like 2008 in mind when he made this speech in 1969; because 2008 will be remembered first and foremost for summer gales, constant easterly winds and general bad weather. It rates as one of the worst sailing seasons that Lundy has encountered in recent memory and tested the Oldenburg and her crew on more than one occasion during her 50th birthday year.

As a result of the weather, from our 101 expected scheduled sailings, 27 were affected, with the helicopter having to be brought in on 17 occasions during the sailing season. The cancelled sailings had an enormous effect on the Island's day trippers, reducing numbers to just 9017; a drop of some 27% from 2007, when we shut the Island temporarily due to the Norwalk virus.

Staying visitor numbers in 2008 however, were extremely healthy with 5006 people holidaying on Lundy, which gave us another record annual occupancy rate of 87.7%; so the Island remains a popular destination for those wanting to recover their poise.

The Winter Helicopter service continued to increase in popularity, with over 1500 visitors enjoying the short flight over the winter months. Unfortunately, due to the financial constraints that the weather brought, the proposed refurbishment of the “departure lounge” at Hartland point which was planned for last summer has had to be postponed until further notice.

Overall and despite the gales, 14837 visitors arrived by both ship and helicopter, representing a decrease in total visitors of 16% from 2007, so not a great year both weather-wise or financially for Lundy.

Sadly we said goodbye last March to Les Perrin, Bosun of M.S. Oldenburg, who passed away after a period of illness. Les was a true gentleman, a stalwart of the ship's crew and has been greatly missed by the Lundy team and visitors alike.

As expected we had some staff changes on the Island and we said goodbye in March to Marek, Jolanta and Carl Preworski (who eventually had to go to school !), Paul and Elena Faramus in October and Lesley Dixon - Chatfield from the shore office in December. We welcomed to the Island, Ceri Stafford, Edward Bassett, Eleanor Pearce and Shelley Southen. We also welcomed a new property Librarian and assistant in Myrtle Ternstrom and Peter Rothwell.

2008 brought M.S. Oldenburg to her 50th year and with it an old hand back to her wheel in Captain Jerry Waller. A grand, river party was held in August to celebrate her birthday with the crew, dignitaries and old friends associated with bringing her to Bideford some 22 years ago invited. Representatives also arrived from Germany, including Reinhard Hempen, son of the original captain and a memorable occasion was had by all. To help commemorate Oldenburg's birthday a new set of Lundy stamps was produced depicting the ship, to firmly seal her place in the Island's history.

On the Island, the ongoing road project was the main focus for the year and despite the bad weather, progress was steady with work continuing until the summer recess in June. Work restarted in October after the peak visitor months.

The upper sections of the works are now complete with the raising of the road beside the Trinity House stone and refurbishment of the old slipway now complete. Outstanding work includes stabilisation of the cliff face above the boat cave, dentition work to the existing wall at the top of the beach and reinforcement to fissures and sea caves behind the sentinels and around the boathouse.

The project is due to complete during spring 2009 following the success of the appeal which generated an outstanding £280k toward the overall project. We received individual sums from £100k to 50p and had donations of different kinds from boxes of Lundy road fund T-shirts to a sack of Half Puffin coins to sell for the cause! By this summer, an impressive £1 million will have been raised and invested in the road over the past 4 years, securing the access for the future, so please accept my grateful thanks to everyone who generously donated to the cause, especially the National Trust and Devon County Council who contributed 500k and 100k respectively.

For the island maintenance team it was also a busy year with more work on the water saving programme in letting properties. Showers have now been fitted above baths in Square Cottage, Government, Millcombe, Old House South and North, with high pressure stainless steel hot water cylinders fitted into most properties. These reduce early failures of conventional copper tanks which don't seem to agree with our water and also the need for unnecessary water storage in loft spaces. Other initiatives inside properties include the fitting of stoves into the lounges in Old House South and Castle Cottage with larger models being fitted into the vast fireplaces of Old Light Upper and Lower, helping to make the properties warmer during cold winter months. Outside, Pig's Paradise rear has a replacement roof with new cedar shingles, fitted during the few good days of summer and further work was carried out on Millcombe garden walls which will be an ongoing project.

The farm had another busy year lambing and the game larder has also been busy following the annual controlled cull of the Island's feral stock of Sika, Soay and Goats. I'm pleased to report that following a two year debate over the legal classification of the Soay flock, the authorities have finally agreed to allow the Island to continue to harvest the meat without mainland intervention. So it's business as usual in the Marisco with Soay back on the menu alongside a small victory for common sense! Despite the weather, Kevin our farmer was able to produce another good harvest of silage reducing the need for winter feed to be shipped across.

Rabbit numbers are on the increase following the outbreak of myxomatosis which spread round the island over the past two years. The latest estimate puts numbers at over 400, however, I'm sure the planned mammal count in May 2009 will see that estimate rise. Terry Britten and his team have been across to the island to help keep numbers low and help to reduce damage. The team will continue to visit regularly during the quieter months.

A major step forward for Lundy was the establishment, this year, of Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Station no 85 – Lundy. Following three years of work, the Island fire team has been recognised as playing a vital role in fire prevention on Lundy and has formally become part of the fire brigade. As well as the fire station, this has resulted in the provision of a new fire engine and equipment, protective clothing and

formal training from the service, which collectively helps to ensure Lundy is a safer environment for everyone who lives there or visits. The new fire engine arrived in true style with help from our friends in the Royal Marines and was ceremoniously handed over to the Island during on a rare fine day in June. It's to the islander's credit to have made this happen considering that as well as being in the fire service, they also act as coastguard and 'first responders' alongside their everyday jobs.

Other Island events last year included three weddings for visitors which the weather held for. We also had the great Lundy Row which involved the Clovelly Gig racing club rowing to Lundy and back again -- no mean feat in a relatively small boat. The annual barn dance was held in July and we were entertained by our adopted band the Dambusters. Unfortunately the Air Day planned in August fell foul of the weather for a second year and had to be cancelled.

Trustees of the Landmark Trust paid a visit in October and were very impressed by the condition of the Island, its' properties and the initiatives taking place to ensure that Lundy retains it's very special appeal to visitors.

On the mainland, both shore offices had busy years with visitors and constant disruption that the weather brought. The exhibition trailer was seen at all the local events and shows, and together with our marketing team, has helped to attract many staying visitors during the year. We also enjoyed lots of media attention which helped raise Lundy's profile and we enjoyed national coverage in publications such as The Times, Telegraph, Guardian and the Daily Mail. We also continue to have coverage in publications such as Devon Life, the North Devon Journal and Gazette, which continues to run the monthly acclaimed "Letter from Lundy". This latter is a credit to both Nicola and Sophie who produce it; since it describes our way of life so well.

Another initiative which has been successful is the annual production of our Lundy calendar. Sales have exceeded all expectations and the annual event to judge the potential entries for the calendar, which are accepted from staff and visitors alike is always eagerly awaited. Thanks to all who have contributed to what has become a prestigious event and collectable publication.

Looking ahead to 2009, the focus remains firmly on completing the road project. Other planned maintenance projects include: - the replacement of the shingle roof on the front section of Pigs Paradise, re-roofing of Old Light Cottage, the last of the showers to be fitted in Brambles East and West and new electrical infrastructure for the Old Light complex. Work is also planned for the isolation hospital to help prevent further deterioration.

The future of the church will be coming under review, as the building requires a substantial investment to weatherproof it. The Diocese is considering various options for its future and I'm assured there will be consultation before any firm decision is made.

We'll also be working on a new 2010 Stamp issue which will be issued in the spring and the theme for the new issue will be Lundy's wild animals. We're planning that there will be a set of five or six stamps.

2009 sees the celebration of the 40th anniversary of the ownership and management of Lundy between the National Trust and the Landmark Trust. Clearly we owe a huge

debt of gratitude to the Harman family for shaping the Island into the beautiful and unique environment that Lundy is today. Thanks must also be passed to everyone who was instrumental in 1969 to ensure that Lundy was secured for the nation and not turned into a prison, casino or other outlandish scheme. Sir Jack Hayward, The National Trust, Landmark Trust and Sir John Smith should be proud of their achievement in assuring Lundy's future, which has given many people the opportunity to experience a world quite timeless and remote from the mainland, where people with a common spirit but with such varied interests are brought together.

In conclusion, I would like to thank all of the Lundy team for their continued dedication to the Island and ship. I'm sure the coming year will bring many challenges and we would be naive to think that the economic climate won't have an effect. However, our bookings remain steady and we remain quietly optimistic that we'll have a good season. At the end of the day, it is the weather forecast that generally dictates our fortunes, not the stock market. I would like to finish by thanking everyone for their continued support over the last year and to wish the Field Society a successful future.

DEREK GREEN
March 2009