

LUNDY GENERAL MANAGER'S REPORT

2013 on Lundy was a memorable year in many ways. We had the best summer followed by the worst winter for many years. The island suffered prolonged water shortages and the threat of the 'Atlantic Array' suddenly and quite unexpectedly disappeared.

MS Oldenburg and the helicopter brought 15,342 visitors to the island during the year, an increase of some 7% on the poor 2012 season. *Oldenburg* sailings were affected by the weather on 16 occasions from her planned schedule of 101 trips. The winter helicopter service was delayed by weather on two occasions from her 37 scheduled flying days. In all, 13,996 passengers sailed to Lundy and 1,346 passengers took advantage of the winter helicopter service.

Our properties were occupied for 79% of the year, a decrease of 4% on 2012.

Lundy enjoyed visits from several large cruise liners over the summer, including *MV Island Sky*, *Ocean Nova*, *MV Corinthian* and *MV Minerva*, along with three visits by the *Waverley*. Unfortunately *MV Balmoral* is still out of service and her regular visits were sorely missed.

In April we opened The Dairy, the latest of our building conversions, this time specifically designed to house visiting contractors who need to stay overnight. The success of the island's letting properties have made it difficult to find accommodation at short notice and so the old dairy was transformed to a comfortable two-bedroom apartment.

Also in April our first open doors event for some time was well supported by members of the LFS who took on the role of both island and property guides. The Barn, Old House South, Government House and the Old Light were opened to visitors and 156 day-trippers sailed across to join resident 'stayers' who all enjoyed a glorious sunny day, guided walks and accounts of the history of each property from our knowledgeable guides.

In May we began the task of repairing and re-pointing the exterior bailey wall, perched high on the edge of the cliff above the Beach Road to the east of the Castle. We had concerns for its long-term stability following noticeable erosion, caused mainly by rabbits. With £35,000 of funding secured from our National Trust colleagues, an elaborate scaffolding was erected over the wall, providing safe access and marvellous views over the Landing Bay. The weather was kind and the job was completed in good time and to budget.

May also brought the wedding of Ed and Ellie Pearce, two previous islanders whose dream was to be married in St Helen's Church. Unfortunately, bad weather prevented *Oldenburg* from sailing on the day and the helicopter was brought in to fly the substantial bridal party and guests across. However, visibility deteriorated midway through flying and the helicopter was grounded at Hartland until the following day. Luckily, the fog had cleared by the following morning and the wedding went ahead.

In June we were delighted to host a visit from Dr Anna Keay, the Director of the Landmark Trust. Anna spent three glorious days on the island, meeting staff, helping in the Tavern and with the housekeeping team, as well as taking time out to see Puffins and other seabirds at close hand and to enjoy some of the island's other delights.

Summer also arrived in June, with long hot days reminiscent of 1976. This brought many visitors but also a challenge for the island's water supply and farm. To prevent the need for water to be

imported at considerable expense from the mainland, water from the Rocket Pond was used for flushing toilets on busy boat days. This laborious task was well met and we managed to prevent the heavy rationing of water seen in previous years. We abandoned using salt-water many years ago after it was found to kill bacteria in our septic tanks and corrode plumbing fittings.

Our Highland cattle were moved to Pondsbury to begin their task of grazing the tough *Molinia* grass, which the ponies don't touch. The cattle soon settled in with the ponies and will be a feature for years to come.

The deerstalking team continued with the island's culling programme, which helps keep grazing pressure under control and which also provides the Tavern with high-quality, sustainable island produce. Despite low rabbit numbers, our team of rabbiters continued to visit to help give us an idea of rabbit numbers and the condition of the warrens.

A vegetation study was conducted in early summer to better understand the impact of factors such as grazing and weather on the habitats included in Lundy's Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). It is expected that this will feature regularly on the calendar from now on.

In September our main walk-in freezer in the Black Shed had to be replaced, at a cost of £12,000, before it failed completely. The contractors were able to remove it and install a new unit over a two-day period, maintaining a vital supply chain for the Tavern.

November was a very busy month and saw *Oldenburg* head for her annual dry docking at Sharpness, from which she emerged three weeks later with a clean bill of health and many maintenance tasks completed. The heliport at Hartland also opened for business in November and saw the introduction of our new safety briefing video, which is now shown to all helicopter passengers before flying to Lundy.

November also brought relief to those combatting the proposal to build a huge wind farm to the north-east of Lundy, with the news that the developer had decided to withdraw the application citing technical and financial reasons. The area remains open for development so we must keep in mind the lessons from our dealings with the Atlantic Array proposal to ensure that any future development is appropriate for the Bristol Channel.

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Scaffolding around the bailey wall to the north-east of the Castle gave the workforce carrying out the repairs some fine views.

Lundy hosted its second wedding of the year in November when Rebecca and Richard Latham chose the island as the venue for their wedding reception, flying in from Hartland Abbey in style with their guests for the weekend. The Tavern was beautifully laid out and provided the perfect venue for the wedding breakfast, speeches and evening entertainment.

In December Lundy was designated a parish in its own right with the church of St Helen becoming the parish church. The building requires some major repairs so it is hoped that its enhanced status will help to attract the necessary funding. A bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund 'places of worship' grant proved unsuccessful but we plan to submit a further bid to the Fund in August 2014.

It is clear from booking statistics and visitor feedback that our policy of offering only full weeks during the summer school holidays is not as popular as short breaks, so from 2014 onwards we will offer short breaks throughout the peak summer weeks. This means that our tradition of scheduling a double sailing on a Saturday in July and August will cease, reverting to a single sailing at normal times. Property and sailing prices for 2014 will remain at 2013 prices to further encourage bookings.

I would like to thank the entire Lundy team and all our volunteers for their continuing hard work in keeping the island open for others to enjoy, the Lundy Field Society for its ongoing support, and in particular those who have helped us at events and with our educational programme both on and off the island. It is very much appreciated.

DEREK GREEN
April 2014



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St Helen's Church – designated as the parish church of Lundy in December 2013.