

## HONORARY SECRETARY'S REPORT

2015 was a very busy year for the LFS, during which we awarded grants to Luke Sutton to continue his study of Lundy's Peregrines, to John Henry Charles for an up-to-date study of the petrogenesis and age of the Lundy granite, and to Helen Booker for the construction of 30 nestboxes to aid monitoring of Manx Shearwaters. We also part-funded the survey expenses of the BTO's Non-Estuarine Waterbird Survey (which took place in January 2016) and sponsored the Puffin pages of the new *Devon Bird Atlas*.

The Society appointed the first wardens on the island until finances made this impracticable. The current warden is funded by the Landmark Trust, until recently with support from Natural England. In June, the LFS Committee decided to make a one-off contribution of £1,000 towards funding this post. If our finances permit, we hope to make further contributions in future.

We recorded the death of our President, Sir Jack Hayward, in last year's report. The LFS was represented by the Chairman and two members on 25 July when family members and friends of Sir Jack scattered some of his ashes on the island.

On a much more cheerful note we were very pleased that Diana Keast accepted our nomination to become our new President and she was duly elected at the 2015 AGM. Although previously a regularly attending Committee member, Diana's presence at the June meeting meant it was only the third time that the Society's President had attended such a meeting. The two previous occasions were in May 1969, when John Harman, Diana's nephew, was President, and in February 1949 when Diana's father and founder of the Society, Martin Coles Harman, chaired a meeting.

Three conservation working parties took place during the year, with 38 participants. Most of the tasks continued to involve rhododendron clearance on the East Side slopes, burning leftover brush and making access ways to stumps and areas of regrowth to enable further treatment. Widow's Tenement was also walked in search of seedlings. Other activities included fence erection and repair, routine tree maintenance, and painting the H of the helipad once again! The group leaders were Andy Bell, Gabi Humphries and Belinda Cox, while Trevor Dobie continued to organise the parties. To each, our thanks.

As usual, the Society contributed to various activities on the island, including talks in the Wheelhouse, fungi forays and moth-trapping demonstrations. Andrew Cleave gave illustrated talks in the southern counties of the mainland and, in addition to history talks in the Tavern, André Coutanche also gave presentations about Lundy in the Bristol area. Simon Dell and Frances Stuart supported the wardening team in educational activities for school parties in North Devon.

The long-term studies of Manx Shearwaters continued, with 126 new adults and 255 chicks ringed in 2015. In the main colony, about 40% of the adults now carry rings from previous years. These provide valuable information on survival rates and on the recruitment of Lundy-reared young to the growing breeding population.

Tony Taylor and Richard Taylor continued their study of the island's Wheatear population, with contributions of colour-ring sightings – which provide information on the survival of breeding birds – by several members. The survival rate of colour-ringed birds between the 2014 and 2015 seasons was 52%. A further 37 birds were trapped and colour-ringed in 2015. General ringing of the island's birds continued in the spring and autumn periods, further contributing towards the national effort to track their movements and monitor their populations. Several demonstrations

of the ringing process were given, as well as evening talks on the insights that ringing provides. The more adventurous visitors who joined in night-time shearwater ringing included two parties from Natural England, including the Chairman of Natural England's Board in September.

On the marine front, our Chairman along with committee member Robert Irving continued to advise on fieldwork – in particular condition monitoring and studies of spiny lobsters – and in consultations regarding the Marine Protected Area around the island. Robert also continued his role as secretary to the Lundy Marine Protected Area Advisory Group which meets twice a year.

Steve Compton and Roger and Rosy Key once again surveyed the Lundy cabbage population. The total number in flower in early June 2015 was about 7,700, almost exactly the same as in 2014 but showing a different pattern of distribution, with an approximately 40% decline in the Millcombe area but increases elsewhere. Greater goat activity in and around Millcombe may be responsible for declines there. Overall, the Lundy cabbage total in 2015 was 48% higher than the average figure over the previous 22 years, an indication that the plant is doing well. The very rough estimate of the overall number of plants in 2015, including those not in flower, was 25,000, reflecting fewer seedlings than usual.

Jenny George continued as editor of the biennial Journal, which will see its fifth volume published in 2016, with André Coutanche again acting as production editor. With eight papers on a diverse range of subjects ranging from Pygmy Shrews to Icelandic artists, it is a measure of the tremendous contribution to the scientific study of Lundy that the Society makes. Belinda Cox edited her third issue of our Bulletin, *Discovering Lundy*, assisted by Tim Davis who acts as production editor.

The Landmark Trust commemorated its 50th anniversary in 2015 and this was marked on Lundy with a 'Golden Weekend' in May. The LFS supported the event by acting as stewards at Millcombe House, which was open to visitors over the weekend. We answered questions, handed out leaflets (including our own!) and supplied cups of tea to over 300 people. A television series about the Landmark Trust was broadcast on Channel 4 during the autumn. As Honorary Secretary, I assisted the production team in sourcing information and historical photographs of Lundy for the segments about the restoration of the lower light in the Old Light.

Tom Dickins was co-opted to the Committee in September. Tom's father led field trips to Lundy for 20 years and Tom now follows in his footsteps. He is based at Middlesex University and brings students to Lundy undertaking a variety of research, including animal behavioural psychology.

The LFS continues to be represented on the church restoration steering group and our Chairman represented the Society at two meetings of the Lundy Management Forum.

At a meeting in Exeter on 29 May 1946, the Lundy Field Society was founded by Lesley Harvey and Martin Coles Harman. Seventy years later the Society is still going strong, making a significant contribution to the conservation and study of a small island in the Bristol Channel. We will be marking the anniversary in 2016 during the Discover Lundy week in September, during which we aim to hold a commemorative dinner and unveil a special plaque.

MICHAEL WILLIAMS  
March 2016