

## HONORARY SECRETARY'S REPORT

At a meeting in Exeter on 29 May 1946 the Lundy Field Society was founded by Leslie 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. In 2016 we marked our anniversary during the 'Discover Lundy' week in September with a range of activities covering all our areas of interest, both academic and informal. On the academic side we covered migrant birds, fungi, freshwater biology, archaeology, flora, seashore marine life, astronomy, bird ringing, moth trapping and terrestrial invertebrates. More informally we held a social gathering in Government House, a golf tournament, two film nights, two photography workshops, had talks about Lundy's history, the HMS Montagu and bellringing, performed the play 'Granite' set on Lundy, and held a baking competition and a quiz. The focal event of the week was a commemorative dinner when 63 people sat down to a three-course meal in the Marisco Tavern and enjoyed the superb catering of chef Dave Bradley and his team.

A plaque (originally designed by John Dyke for the 50th anniversary of the LFS) commemorating Martin Coles Harman and Leslie Harvey, the Society's founders, was unveiled at the Old Light in pouring rain at the start of the week. A special postal cover was also produced and all mail posted from the island during the week received a special franking.

'Discover Lundy' 2016 was a great success and we record our thanks to everyone who led an activity or was involved in the organisation in some way. Our thanks also to the islanders who made us so welcome as well as joining in some of the activities (and winning the quiz!).

All of this was on top of our usual activities. The 'Sir Jack Hayward Award' went to Luke Sutton to enable him to continue his research into Lundy Peregrines, and for a second year running a contribution of £1,000 assisted the funding of the Warden's post. Three conservation working parties took place during the year, with the usual mix of rhododendron clearance and seedling searches, drystone walling, fence repair and gully clearing, while in September the 'Steps of Doom' became the 'Stairway to Heaven' when the steep steps from the Ugly to the Lower East Side Path were completely relaid. Our thanks to all who volunteered and especially to the group leaders, particularly Trevor Dobie who organises the conservation breaks.

The LFS continues to contribute to activities on the island, including illustrated talks in the Wheelhouse, fungi forays and moth trapping and bird ringing demonstrations. Simon Dell, Alan Rowland and Frances Stuart led walks on at least a monthly basis during the boat season.

We said farewell to Lundy Warden Beccy MacDonald in October; we wish her well in her new role with Somerset Wildlife Trust. In the interim period before the arrival of the new Warden (Dean Jones), Grant Sherman provided walks and talks for visitors. The island's Ranger, Steve Pratt, who worked closely with our working parties over many years, also left for new challenges and we wish him well on his travels.

The long-term study of the island's Manx Shearwaters, organised by Tony Taylor, resulted in the ringing of 130 new adults and 291 chicks in 2016; 126 recaptures of previously ringed birds provided valuable information on survival rates and on the recruitment of Lundy-reared young to the growing breeding population. Tony and Richard & Rebecca Taylor continued their colour-ringing study of the Wheatear population, providing data on the year-to-year survival of adult birds for the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO); 29 birds from previous seasons were re-sighted and a further 48 birds were trapped and colour-ringed.

The process of digitising paper records of past migrant ringing on Lundy has begun, with 30,000 records of Blackbird, Chaffinch and Goldcrest now available for analysis. These are being offered to MSc students at Imperial College London as a project choice, with a view to producing research papers for subsequent publication by the LFS.

During 2016, the Warden, on behalf of Natural England, drafted a new Marine Management Plan, to which LFS specialists contributed significant input; completion of the plan has rolled over into 2017 with editorial work by Robert Irving. Robert continues to act as Secretary to the Lundy Marine Protected Area Advisory Group which meets twice a year. The Group is composed of 'users' of the MPA together with representatives of relevant statutory authorities and the island management (the Group's activities in 2016 are reviewed on page 19).

In April Keith Hiscock took a group of marine biologists to the island to survey a site north of Gannets' Rock which Leslie Harvey had found to be the richest of Lundy's shores. Later in the year funding was found to repeat monitoring of the declining population of sunset cup corals, but sadly poor weather prevented the work taking place.

The long-running survey of Lundy Cabbage by Steve Compton and Roger & Rosy Key continued. Counts and fixed-point photographic monitoring were undertaken, as usual, from both land and sea. The number of Lundy cabbage in flower in early June 2016 numbered some 4,300, an apparent 44% decline since 2015 and 16% lower than the average figure over the last 23 years. However, a rough estimate of the overall number of plants, including those not in flower, was 32,000, an apparent increase of 33% over 2015. The two endemic species of insect that the cabbage supports were both abundant.

To tie in with the Discover Lundy event, we published a biography of Martin Coles Harman, written by Tony Langham shortly before his death in 1995. The booklet quickly sold out and a second short print run was made.

We are grateful for the many donations, large and small, that the LFS receives to support our studies of the island. A number of donations were received in memory of former members, including Paul Webley, Lady Mary Percy and Hugh Boyd, who was LFS Warden in 1948/49. The Society receives many gifts in this way, prompting the LFS Committee to consider the establishment of an endowment fund whereby a capital amount is invested and the return on the investment is used to support our objectives. This will preserve any gifts in perpetuity and reduce our dependency on other sources of funding.

Looking to the future, we expect to publish the long-awaited guide to Lundy fungi in the autumn of 2017 and Andrew Cleave is preparing a book about the island's flora. In May 2017 a meeting of the LFS Committee, to include a day-long workshop looking to the Society's future, will be held on Lundy in Millcombe House.

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