

HONORARY SECRETARY'S REPORT

Inevitably, after a busy year in 2016 celebrating our seventieth anniversary, 2017 was a much quieter one. Nevertheless, it has been a productive and successful year.

Three grants were awarded in 2017: Nathaniel Legall received £280 to continue his research into Lundy's pygmy shrews, Linda Losito & Bob Cowley received £500 for their study of the dung beetles and Tony Taylor received £116 to support a student who is analysing bird ringing data (see below). For some years, it has been difficult to budget grant allocations as we could not predict how many applications would be received in a year. We have reviewed the way in which grants are allocated and will now seek grant applications up to the end of October before considering all applications together for an award.

We also made a further contribution of £1000 to assist with the funding of the Warden's post. Progress has been made with discussions about setting up an endowment fund and will continue during 2018. The Society had also donated £10,000 to the church project to restore the building as St Helen's Centre from which the Society will benefit by providing a base for study as well as providing a centre for exhibitions and lectures.

There were three working parties during 2017. The first, in February, was prevented from reaching Lundy for four days by fog. Eventually, a party of eight set to work doing rhododendron seedling searches, bench renovation, transplanting trees from the nursery to side lands and recycling pallets into kindling for the shop. One new member, Vicky Edwards who was visiting for the first time, became the Assistant Ranger for the season. In June, the conservation break focussed on bracken control and quadrat surveys. In October, a good deal of growth was cleared from Millcombe Pond, some fencing was installed on top of walls near the water tanks, unwanted plant growth was removed from above Millcombe Gardens and Kevin Walsh, the farmer, was helped to gather his crop of silage from many places where ex-hurricane Ophelia had deposited it.

The Society continues to contribute to activities on the island including talks in the Wheelhouse, fungi forays and moth trapping and bird ringing demonstrations. We have a really excellent relationship with both the Warden and Ranger teams on Lundy.

Chris Dee has been revamping the LFS website and this went live in early 2018. In addition to all the information from the old website, the wildlife and history sections have been supplemented with new information. We hope it continues to be an appealing and useful resource.

2018 will see 25 years of study of the Lundy Cabbage by Steve Compton and Roger and Rosy Key. This will be their last year of doing annual counts and we hope they will provide an account for publication of what has been going on in that time. Steve comments that they produced a report about ten years ago when the picture was very clear and they should have stopped then, as cabbage numbers have become chaotic since!

There was little marine research work in 2017 although there was a significant programme of sampling and survey undertaken by Natural England and the Environment Agency and described in the Report of the Lundy Marine Protected Area Advisory Group later in this Report. The LFS logbook included a great many very welcome records of porpoise and dolphin around the island. Like the rest of south-west England, Lundy received a rare influx of Portuguese man o'war hydrozoan jellyfish in the autumn.

The long-term ringing study of Manx Shearwaters continued, with 242 adults and 121 young birds newly ringed, and 154 previously-ringed adults caught. These all contribute to our understanding of the population dynamics of Lundy's breeding colony. A pair bred successfully in one of the artificial burrows installed in 2016, allowing more detailed study of their breeding biology. During nocturnal work on shearwaters, Storm Petrels were encountered on several occasions, providing evidence that these seabirds are taking advantage of Lundy's rat-free status and establishing a breeding colony on the island.

As part of the BTO's national study of adult survival in Wheatears, 51 birds were newly colour-ringed and 48 that had been ringed in previous years were re-sighted. This project also helps us to calculate the size of the island's population: 2017 was a record year, with an estimated 121 pairs breeding.

The ringing of migrant songbirds in spring and autumn continued, contributing towards the national effort to understand their movements and monitor their populations.

A Master's degree student from Imperial College, London, started a project analysing the Society's 10,000 ringing records for Chaffinches caught on Lundy since 1972, comparing the resident breeding population with the migrants from Northern Europe that pass through in autumn. We hope to publish a report on this work in a future volume of the Journal.

Jenny George has continued to edit the Journal, with assistance from André Coutanche as production editor and the sixth volume was published at the end of February 2018. Tim Davis retires as editor of our Annual Report. His contribution over the past six years has been substantial, and Tim has transformed the report into the attractive publication that we are all familiar with. Thank you, Tim.

Keith Hiscock will be standing down as Chairman after completing eleven years in office. This is actually Keith's second stint as Chairman, having previously held the role for three years from 1985. Keith's contribution to the Society and its administration has been significant not least in his marine work and representing the Society's interests at the Lundy Management Forum and the Lundy Marine Protected Area Advisory Group during his current tenure. What you may not know is that Keith has been active in Society matters for over 45 years having been elected to



The LFS Committee at a strategic planning workshop facilitated by Paul James during the Residential Committee Meeting in May. Image: Keith Hiscock.