

## ISLAND REPORT

Derek Green (General Manager, The Lundy Co Ltd)

Despite the prospect of celebrating the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Landmark Trust's tenure on Lundy in style, inevitably it was the weather that made the headlines.

Fresh easterly winds at Easter combined with an errant rope made national headlines as MS *Oldenburg* had to be rescued and towed back to Ilfracombe, leaving 79 visitors stranded on an already full island for an extra couple of nights. Islanders rallied in true Lundy style, going out of their way to accommodate the 'castaways' – writing yet another adventure into the annals of the island's long history. Two days later, *Oldenburg* was declared safe and the smiling castaways were 'rescued', arriving cheerfully back in Bideford with the media inevitably waiting.

The weather also played its part in 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary plans, carefully laid out during the year for a grand celebration of all things Lundy. However, on the day strong winds dictated events and a scaled-down celebration was held, with several guests being flown over by helicopter to ensure that the day was marked in style. Representatives from the National Trust joined with Trustees and senior management of the Landmark Trust, along with Lord David Owen and members of the Harman family. Other guests included many people with a close island connection who had, in their own way, helped shape the destiny of the island over the past 50 years. A new guide book was commissioned to mark the occasion, with Michael Williams suitably charged with its production, and, in the usual way of things, we issued a new set of stamps depicting some of Lundy's finest features.

A stirring church service was held to mark the occasion, followed by speeches and toasts in the square by Mark Harold (NT), Anna Keay (LT) and Barty Smith, who's parents had established the Landmark Trust in 1965 and who shared memories and amusing tales of his youth spent on Lundy. Guests were treated to a superb meal of Lundy lamb roast served from the Black Shed, and the evening was finished off in fine style with a party that only the Marisco Tavern could host. Music was ably provided by island favourites The Dambusers.

During the course of the year, *Oldenburg* was hampered regularly by inclement weather, which affected 18 sailings, reducing passenger numbers to just 15,103 (1,976 fewer than in 2018). Thankfully, good weather finally arrived in July and the ship enjoyed nine capacity sailings in a short space of time. The total passenger count for the year was 16,451, comprising 9,979 day-trippers and 5,442 staying visitors. Of the latter, 1,348 (up 19 on 2018) flew across during the winter helicopter season. Five of the scheduled 36 flying days of the winter season were affected by weather, but thankfully not during the peak festive period.

*Oldenburg* entered dry dock in November, and it soon became clear that her rudder stock had been damaged during the Easter incident and would require replacing. This has proved the greatest of challenges but a solution is in hand and we are confident that she will prevail and sail in time for the 2020 season.

Island properties again enjoyed healthy bookings, with occupancy of 87% for all available nights. Castle Cottage proved the most popular and was fully booked for the year, with Old House North a close second at 96%. Improvements to properties continued with more new kitchens and an external make-over for both Bramble Villas and the Old School (which remained Blue!) after being insulated and re-clad with new tin. Further work saw the finish to the mammoth task of re-cladding the Black Shed, creating a better working area for the island. Windows at the Castle and in the Square were refurbished and in November work was also carried out to replace rusting spindles in Old Light tower, courtesy of aptly named 'Old Light Building Conservation', better known as Charlie Smith and Rachel Thomson.



*The Landmark Trust flag flies above the Ugly marking 50 years of tenure on Lundy, and (right) the Trust's Director Anna Keay speaking at the anniversary celebrations (photos: Shaun Barnes).*

At the North Light, Trinity House began their project to move the light from the roof of the acoustic room back into the original lantern room. This involved refurbishing the main tower and accommodation block, returning it to something like its former glory. The internal features have been mostly preserved and results to date are impressive – not least the fact that all of the fragile and hugely expensive diamond-shaped panes of glass had to be replaced during bad weather. The final result will protect the rich heritage of the building for the future, and could present opportunities for the island as the accommodation block has been formally separated from the technical area.

One of the most important projects was without doubt the installation of the water treatment plant, reducing the need to import some 32,000 plastic bottles of water, and leading to a patient but determined campaign of plastic reduction, led by Sue Waterfield (Manager, General Stores). Lundy was deservedly awarded plastic-free status in November 2019, which attracted extensive press interest. Local company Boshers provided a two-minute beach clean station for Lundy which encourages everyone to keep plastic off the island. Also making the news on the plastic-free front was campaigner Sadie Davies, who in August became the first woman to swim from Hartland Point to Lundy. It took her nine hours, for which she became the proud recipient of the Cyril Webber Cup, awarded by the Right Honourable John Rous of Clovelly.

The newly refurbished St Helen's Centre provided the perfect stage to host a visit by the Cornwall Seal Group and their excellent exhibition telling the life story of 'Septimus the Seal'. Proving an instant hit with everyone who visited during the six weeks of the exhibition, St Helen's showed its true value as a multi-use centre for the island. Many of the visitors and children visiting the church were expertly guided by our team of 'Lundy Ambassadors', under the direction of Frances Stuart and Rosie Ellis – the latter joining us last summer to ably take over the role of Education Officer.

In May the Cloud Appreciation Society paid the island a visit. The group utilised St Helen's for their meeting, which was beamed live around the world using modern technology to its utmost, bringing Lundy to a whole new audience.

There have been many positive outcomes from the refurbishment of St Helen's, and it was only fitting when in June the project won 'Heritage Project of the Year' at the 2019 Michelmores



Clockwise from left: Lundy's postbox with its celebratory makeover; the second all-island race gets under way; the Shore Office and Ship's crew; and Lundy's team in 2019 (photos: Derek Green, Graham Hobbs & Shaun Barnes).

Property Awards held at Sandy Park Conference Centre in Exeter. I was delighted to accept the award on behalf of the island, the Parochial Church Council and the team who brought the challenging project to fruition. Other initiatives that resulted from the project included the arrival of our Trampers, Large Print Guides, Easy Read Guides and a BSL (British Sign Language) tablet, as well as much better online information to help improve our overall access for visitors.

The island hosted a number of events through the year, including the second all-island race, which again proved popular and is becoming part of our annual calendar. The annual 'Fly-in' brought 21 small aircraft from across the region to the island early in August, and cruise ships the *Hebridean Sky* and *Ocean Nova* both called in.

The farm had another busy year, with new foals Lundy St John and Lundy Mary joining the herd, appropriately named after the late Sir John Smith and Mary Gade respectively.

There were a number of staff changes during the year with the departure of long-standing Chief Engineer Steve Roberts from the *Oldenburg*, whilst on the island we said farewell to long-standing islanders Grant and Shelley Sherman, Nick Herbert and Rachel Threlkeld, and Mike Jones and Emily Trapnell. Emily has taken up a position with Falmouth Coastguard, her voice now regularly heard on VHF radio. We wish them all well in their new ventures.

2019 proved to be a challenge in many ways, but the resilience of the islanders, the ship's crew and the fantastic support from the Shore Office ensured that Lundy continued to run smoothly. My thanks to them all for their dedication to the island, the ship and our shore-based operations.

Undoubtedly the main news of the year – in conjunction with the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary – was the signing of a new lease with the National Trust. Both organisations have worked closely, through many challenging times, over the last 50 years to ensure the island remains open and accessible for the nation. It has been an incredible privilege to have been party to ensuring that our close working relationship will continue for another 50 years.

Finally, thank you the LFS for your ongoing support.

All the very best!