

SECRETARY'S REPORT

Michael Williams

You might expect this to be a short report given the extraordinary international situation we experienced in 2020. In fact the LFS adapted remarkably well and although some of our core activities were affected by the pandemic, the Society had a busy year and has achieved a lot, as you will see below.

The developing situation with the coronavirus pandemic resulted in some considerable discussion between the Secretary and Chair before the decision was taken to postpone the AGM originally scheduled for early March. In the end the AGM took place online in September and went smoothly despite the internet connection dropping out during the Treasurer's report. Attendance was 93 people which compares favourably with recent in-person AGMs and feedback was overwhelmingly positive.

Following the imposition of the lockdown the Secretary organised a series of online webinars open to all. From late April to the first week of July a total of 12 talks and presentations took place, ranging from lectures about Lundy's archaeology, birds, wildflowers and LFS conservation breaks to a photography workshop and a poetry recital. The series restarted in October with a talk from Andrew Cleave about moths and butterflies. John Hedger and Mandy Dee spoke about fungi and there were talks about wildlife photography and seals. The Marisco Tavern online Christmas Quiz was a huge success with an estimated 120 people taking part. The post-quiz socialising on the Zoom call went on well into the evening in true Tavern style, except that the electricity stayed on!

The LFS was promoted during each talk, attracting many new members – welcome if you are one of them! Thank you to all the speakers who gave their time freely to talk to us, and to Dave Richards who hosted the webinars and made the technical arrangements. Typically around 250 people watched live each week, with very many more catching up on YouTube afterwards. Collectively the talks have so far been watched over 10,000 times!

Having served for six years as Treasurer, Roger Chapple retired at the end of the 2019 financial year, Chris Dee taking on the role. Roger had previously been Chair between 2002 and 2007, so in recognition of his contribution to the Society we were delighted when he was elected as a Vice President at the 2020 AGM. Roger continues as an active member of the committee and will maintain the role he has made his own as AGM auctioneer!

Following John Hedger's retirement from the committee a vacancy arose on the Grants sub-committee and this was filled by Andrew Cleave. Richard Breese was elected to the committee at the AGM. Earlier Richard had undertaken a project to scan and rehouse the glass plate negatives donated to the Society by the family of Harry Savory.

The £500 grant given to Dr James Waggitt of Bangor University for research in July 2020 on the influence of tidal currents and weather patterns on cetacean presence in Lundy waters has been deferred until June 2021. A grant of £500 to Jamie Dunning for a study of the role of social interactions in the life histories of House Sparrows is also being transferred to 2021. Jamie is the current Lundy sparrows project research student. Financial assistance of £500 was given to the field studies activities relating to the St Helen's Centre Appeal, enabling the Education Officer, Rosie Ellis, to purchase binoculars and equipment to support school visits.

During the summer it became apparent that the pandemic was causing real financial difficulties for the Landmark Trust and the Lundy Company and an appeal was launched to raise funds to cover the shortfall. In August, Derek Green, Lundy General Manager, wrote to the Chair with a

request that the LFS might consider financial support. He explained that, although the Lundy Company had been fortunate to receive large grants from the National Lottery Heritage Fund and the Culture Recovery Fund, it was not enough to see them through the coming winter. After much virtual discussion and consideration, the committee determined to donate £10,000 to the Lundy Appeal, ring-fenced to support conservation and education work on Lundy. In October the Society received a personal thank you for helping to secure the future of Lundy.

The Investment sub-committee monitored the Society's endowment fund and reviewed the policy that assesses our risk with respect to investment. Both the Privacy Policy and the Safeguarding Policy were reviewed and brought up to date. Copies of all the Society's policies can be found on the website (www.lundy.org.uk/policies).

Sadly no conservation breaks were possible during 2020 but we are exploring the possibility of increasing the number of LFS working holidays in the future. For the first time in over 25 years the annual Lundy Cabbage count was not able to take place. Bird ringing, too, was significantly affected by the Covid pandemic, but it was still possible to carry out some valuable work. Before the first lockdown, necessary repairs were made to the Manx Shearwater nestboxes, seven of which were subsequently occupied. Lockdowns provided plenty of time for continuing digitisation of historic LFS ringing records, to make them more readily available for analysis.

Work on the long-term study of breeding Wheatears could not take place, and the absence of visiting ringers greatly reduced the number of migrants caught in spring. However, from July onwards good numbers of birds were ringed, leading to an annual total of almost 2,000 birds, which was very pleasing under the circumstances.

In January the first steps were taken towards Lundy rejoining the network of British and Irish Bird Observatories (Lundy was formerly a member between 1946 and 1968). The rebuilding of the Terrace Heligoland Trap would contribute towards this process. As the trap is sited at the Quarries, which is a Scheduled Monument, approval by Historic England for carrying out the necessary work is required but has been delayed by the pandemic.



A Communications & Engagement sub-group, established following the committee workshop on Lundy in May 2019, has been reviewing our visual identity and developing a strategy that will help sustain the LFS as we move towards our centenary in 2046. This work will continue in 2021, recognising that we need to attract people who are willing to undertake a variety of roles, for example as a committee member, wildlife recorder, data manager or conservation volunteer.

In May bookings opened for the 75th anniversary celebratory 'Discover Lundy' week, due to take place in May 2021 and to conclude with the first-ever Society AGM to be held on the island. Within ten days all 60 places had been reserved, but with the ongoing pandemic more detailed organisation was paused as the event would have to respond to the restrictions in place at the time. As part of our 75th anniversary celebrations, commemorative Lundy stamps will be issued in conjunction with the island authorities. For this, Alan Rowland has been working with the Lundy stamp consultant Lars Liewendahl.

As reported last year, Jenny George retired as Editor of the LFS Journal following publication of the seventh volume in early 2021, and André Coutanche also stepped down as Production Editor. Tom Dickins took over as Editor and committee discussions started to consider how the Journal might evolve in terms of its editorial management.

Sue Waterfield, who manages the Lundy General Stores, has been appointed as the Society's Island Representative, succeeding Grant Sherman in the role. We look forward to working with Sue in the years ahead.

In February and early March a working party convened twice in Marlborough to sort through the Harman family's archives, cared for by our President, Diana Keast. A very considerable amount of material relating to the family's ownership of Lundy has been identified and was transferred to the North Devon Record Office, located in Barnstaple Library. Meanwhile the philatelic archive will join the Lundy stamp collection at the British Library.

The website was enhanced with records of Lundy observations by taxonomic group, in addition to online submission to iRecord, operated by the national Biological Records Centre (BRC), and publication in summary form in the Annual Report. New members are now able to sign up on the website too.

Despite limited on-island activities by the Society during the year, Belinda Cox was still able to edit and produce an excellent and entertaining annual bulletin, *Discovering Lundy*, that was distributed to members in early 2021.

Thank you for your continued support through these turbulent times.

