

ISLAND REPORT

Derek Green (General Manager, The Lundy Co Ltd)

My report this year unfortunately begins with some sad news following the untimely passing of Kevin Welsh, our recently retired Lundy farmer and Island Foreman. Kevin and his wife Julie first came to work on Lundy in 2002 and retired at the end of the season last year. Kevin managed the farm and was promoted to Island Foreman in 2005. He rarely left the island and was one of those people who could turn their hand to almost anything. A larger-than-life personality, Kevin will be sorely missed by everyone who knew him.

The last year has also seen the passing of Diana Keast, which marked the end of a very special era in Lundy's history. Diana was classed as true 'Lundy Royalty' and she remained passionate about Lundy throughout her life. She was a great help and mentor to me during my early years and her legacy will endure for generations to come.

2021 will be remembered first and foremost for Covid and the lockdown from January to April. During the lockdown we took the opportunity to complete outstanding project work from the previous year which was postponed due to the pandemic and the furlough scheme. At Hartland we tarmacked the helipad, luggage bays and helicopter approach to further improve the facility for both staff and visitors.

On the island, Millcombe had a make-over with a splendid new kitchen, handmade by the Landmark team at our Honeybourne workshops. Once complete, the kitchen was delivered to the *Oldenburg* in Sharpness and shipped across for fitting in January. Further up the island, Stonecroft had a coat of paint which was ably applied by the Conservation Team. In the Tavern, restoration work to the island's Reception revealed the historical bread ovens which had been built by the Lundy granite company mid-19th century. A fascinating feature of the island's history, we are carefully restoring and leaving them exposed for everyone to enjoy. Our thanks go to Charlie Smith and Rachel Thompson of Old Light Building Conservation for their painstaking attention to the project.

We were fortunate at the beginning of the year to also have received some funding from Historic England through their Heritage Stimulus Fund which allowed us to complete re-pointing works to the exterior of Old Light Upper and Lower, as well as finally completing the restoration of the stairwell spindles in the tower, a project which had been running for almost five years. Other work included within the funding was to complete more re-pointing works to Millcombe's historical garden wall, behind Government House, which allowed us to involve some of the islanders as an alternative to being furloughed. All of the work had to be completed by the end of March which proved a challenge logistically with a lack of readily available materials and scaffolding to erect. However, with a degree of determination and persistence, we were delighted to be able to see all three projects to completion.

The Old Light additionally benefited from a fresh coat of paint to the exterior of the upper lantern room in April, when contractor painters working on Lundy North lighthouse found themselves with some time on their hands after completing works for Trinity House ahead of schedule. It was too good an opportunity to miss and, after some negotiation, the unplanned works were duly completed, and the tower is now looking in fine shape.

Back in the village we were delighted to have bid for and received funding from the North Devon Biosphere to refurbish the Rocket Shed, Rosie Ellis being given the challenge of managing the project. The building is now looking fantastic and has been renamed the 'Museum'. We are grateful to signwriter Jimmy Campbell of Ilfracombe for providing his iconic Lundy style to the new sign.



Rosie outside the refurbished Museum (photo: Derek Green).

Following the lockdown there was concern about lack of income for the first quarter of the year. However, following a further bid to the Government's Culture Recovery Fund we were relieved to successfully receive funding of £500,000 to cover the loss of income during that period. Director Anna Keay subsequently wrote and thanked the Chancellor of the Exchequer personally.

With the Covid vaccine becoming readily available by March, we were fortunate enough to be able to bring a team from the local NHS to Lundy and vaccinate all the islanders en masse, but in true Lundy fashion the planned helicopter trip to bring the medical team over was cancelled due to fog on the day. The *Oldenburg* crew were duly mustered at short notice and the ship came to the rescue. We sailed with half-an-hour of tide to spare with just three passengers and a coolbox full of vaccine, the only cargo on the day, and everyone on the island received their jabs.

Lundy finally opened on 13th April with a host of restrictions which proved a challenge for everyone, particularly on wet change-over days when the Marisco Tavern had to remain closed. To overcome this, a large tepee was erected to provide shelter and complimentary drinks for visitors. However, the weather soon intervened and the tepee was shipped back to the mainland in more pieces than it arrived – unfortunately it hadn't quite lived up to its 150 mph wind rating!

The pandemic had a significant effect on visitor numbers for the year, though the total was still well up compared to 2020. Some 7,997 day-trippers and 5,059 stayers managed to get to Lundy, with *Oldenburg* completing 83 sailings and the helicopter 16 flying days – remarkable given the impact of the pandemic and lockdown. As a result of the deferral scheme introduced by Landmark through which people could defer their holiday, the island's properties had an extraordinarily busy year with 96% of all available nights booked throughout the year. 2021 has seen the Vestry become more readily available for bookings, and details were published on the website for the first time. As a result, it enjoyed a healthy first year occupancy of 78% and has firmly become a popular island property.

The effect of the pandemic brought additional cruise ships to the island, as they were restricted from their normal routes, and as a result we enjoyed visits on 16 occasions from a variety of vessels, including the *Hebridean Sky*. In total, over 800 cruise ship passengers disembarked and climbed the beach road over the year, all vitally helping the island's coffers.



Goliath and her crew at work on the Jetty (photo: Derek Green).

2021 marked the 75th anniversary of the LFS, but unfortunately plans for the ever-popular 'Discover Lundy' week were cancelled due to the restrictions. However, the occasion was marked when a new montage about the LFS and its work was hung in the Wheel House. Following the tradition of the Lundy Postal Service, a new set of stamps was issued to mark the occasion.

During the year, we took the opportunity to refurbish the Jetty fixtures and fittings, now 21 years old and in need of some TLC. Local company Severn Seas Shipping were awarded the contract and, using their trusty tug *Goliath*, works to the Jetty began during periods of calm weather. The long dry summer provided a challenge for the island's water system and historical water sources were brought back into use with new bore-hole pumps fitted to alleviate the problem. Plans have been submitted to Torridge District Council to increase the capacity of the island's reservoir at the earliest opportunity.

Back on the mainland the marketing team had a quiet year with most shows cancelled, and so we took opportunity to refurbish the iconic exhibition trailer and vehicles with new livery in readiness for 2022.

The *Oldenburg* had a busy year and an unexpected overnight visit to Sharpness in August to replace a propeller following some blade damage. She returned to Sharpness in November for her annual dry-docking, and what should have been a straightforward programme turned into a challenge when we discovered that the steel deck at the aft end had failed the ultrasonic inspection. Intergranular corrosion underneath the deck timbers meant that we had to find a solution to replace the entire steel deck. Following some discussion with the Maritime and Coastguard Agency and the Class Society (quality standards for the ship structure), we eventually agreed to replace the deck over several years due to the extraordinarily high cost of the work and time required to carry it out. Twenty-five percent of the deck was finally replaced but this meant that we had to rewire and refurbish the entire aft saloon below, which meant work continuing back in Bideford until March. Other works at the dry dock were completed successfully and the ship finally returned to Bideford mid-February of 2022.

During the period at Sharpness we used local charter boats from Bideford and Ilfracombe to supply the island, which was particularly busy as a result of the previous year's deferrals.



Oldenburg in dry dock at Sharpness and, below, the Lundy team (photos: Derek Green).

Over the year we saw a number of staff changes, with Dean Jones and Zoë Barton, Kevin and Julie Welsh, and Dave and Fiona Bradley leaving the island. This created opportunities for others, and I'm pleased that stalwart Tom Carr has ably taken over the running of the farm, while Rosie Ellis has stepped up to become our new Warden, assisted by Stuart Cossey who joins us from Bardsey Island with his partner Megan. In the Tavern, Alice Waterfield has taken on the role of front of house manager and Teresa Davies has taken on the challenge of managing the kitchen as head chef. We wish them all well in their new roles.

Looking ahead to 2022 it is clear it is going to be a busy year as the popularity of the island continues to spread. We look forward to progressing our plans to increase the capacity of the water reservoir and also the power station with a view to introducing renewables across the island. We have developed a draft plan for a new power generation system in partnership with the National Trust, based on a model currently used on Fair Isle in Scotland.

2022 also brings the twice-postponed Lundy Marine Festival which I am sure will be well supported by everyone who visits and loves Lundy.

I hope that the Field Society has a successful year and we look forward to seeing you back on the island. I would also like to take the opportunity to thank you all for your continued support over the past challenging year.

