



▲ Tony and Jane pictured by the gate to Big St John's in October 2022 in what was to be their last time together on Lundy (photo: Tim Davis).

Anthony ('Tony') John, 1941–2023

Tony John, a long-standing member of the LFS, first visiting Lundy in 1975, died on 11th August 2023 after a twenty-month battle with cancer.

One didn't have to spend much time with Tony to realise what a fine all-round naturalist he was. His natural history library was all-encompassing and a joy to dip into. Tony's wife Jane relates how hours were spent in second-hand bookshops, on one occasion between home and Scotland, looking for a copy of *Fair Isle and its Birds* – which was triumphantly found, eventually! He was an avid lepidopterist, trapping and releasing moths both in his garden and on his visits to Lundy, entering his wildlife records in the LFS logbook and compiling the moth and butterfly reports in LFS Annual Reports. Lichens too featured high among his many interests. He loved islands, with visits to Bardsey, Fair Isle and the Inner Hebrides as well as Lundy. Annual trips with family and friends to North and South Wales and later also to Scotland to climb the Munros became a summer ritual.

Tony was born in Guildford on 29th September 1941. In 1946, the family moved to Melton Mowbray, Leicestershire, where his father worked as a GP. Educated at Ampleforth College, Yorkshire, Tony excelled in long-distance running, setting new school records. Accountancy was quite unable to hold him, and a variety of jobs followed, including steel fixing in the construction of tall buildings. Realising his real interest lay in science, he studied for an honours degree in Botany and Zoology at Nottingham University, graduating in 1965.

In 1968, he met and married Jane, with whom he raised two daughters, Frances and Emily. By this time, he was based in Edinburgh as a Marine Biologist at the Sir Alistair Hardy Foundation, specialising in plankton, work which took him to West Africa, India and Australia, where he

trained analysts. In 1976, the Foundation was transferred to Plymouth, where Tony remained until retirement in 2009.

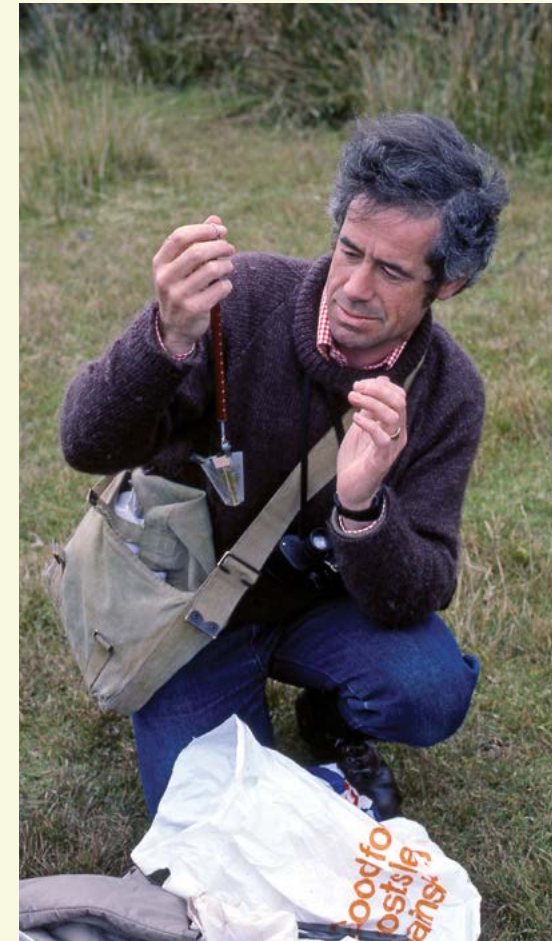
It was during a holiday with Jane in Glen Prosen, Angus, that an encounter with an Oystercatcher feeding near their rented cottage sparked an interest in ornithology. This quickly developed into a passion and – based in their Dartmoor cottage home and having gained a ringing permit – Tony began a long-term study of Dippers on the Rivers Tavy and Plym.

From the mid-1970s into the 1990s, Tony was the inspirational editor of *Devon Birds*, the quarterly newsletter of the Devon Bird Watching & Preservation Society (now Devon Birds). He was a member of the editorial team that produced the *Tetrad Atlas of the Breeding Birds of Devon*, the first survey of its kind in Britain, carried out between 1977 and 1985. Tony contributed thirteen flawless species accounts to that first 'Atlas' and nine to the follow-up *Devon Bird Atlas 2007–2013*. He also wrote numerous 'Nature Notes' for various local journals.

Tony's last visit to Lundy with Jane came in October 2022, during which, despite failing health, he attended every evening logbook call-over during their stay.

His ever-present sharp sense of humour and ready smile made him a delightful companion. Simon John, giving the eulogy at Tony's funeral in Yelverton, aptly described his brother as, "inspirational, a good friend, kind, gentle, patient, a holy man, principled, spirited, determined, with an infectious enthusiasm, a sense of adventure, an encyclopaedic font of knowledge of all aspects of the natural world, and very generous in sharing it." Those who were fortunate enough to know Tony will miss him greatly and remember him always.

Tim Davis
with thanks to Jane John and Simon John.



▲ A gleeful Tony John weighing a Firecrest, the first he had ever ringed, captured in the now defunct Quarter Wall Heligoland Trap in October 1986 (photo: Tim Davis).