

David George, 1938-2024

David was well known to many on Lundy for two reasons: firstly his important contributions, begun in 1971, in partnership with Keith Hiscock and others, to the study of the marine environment around Lundy; secondly his role as the other half of a life-long partnership with Jenny George, who for her part began and continues the study of freshwater biology on the island. Their regular visits to the island over the years would in any case have resulted in a legacy of knowledge of both the marine and freshwater ecology of Lundy, but from 2003 David also began work on terrestrial matters by getting involved in a project with John Hedger to photograph and catalogue the fungi on Lundy, a third string to his already impressive academic bow.



▲ David at Hammers, September 2018 (photo: Jenny George).

David was borne in Portsmouth, a naval town, and was always ready to tell stories of his father, who was a Naval Engineer and a strong character, something David himself also showed throughout his life: typically, his dislike of the name John led to an insistence on using his second name. He studied Marine Biology at Southampton (1956-62) followed by postdoctoral years in Canada (1962-64) and a return to work for the rest of his academic career in the British Museum (Natural History) where he worked on marine invertebrates especially polychaetes and sponges. He commuted from Holyport near Maidenhead, where he and Jenny had made their home in a house appropriately called *Sabella* after a genus of very pretty marine fan worm. He was a pioneer underwater photographer and took many early and important pictures of marine life during expeditions to both tropical and temperate marine areas including the first photographs of living Pogonophora worms taken on an expedition to Norwegian waters. He and Jenny published in 1979 'Marine Life: An Illustrated Encyclopedia of Invertebrates in the Sea'.



David first went to Lundy in August 1971 when he took part in a diving expedition (led by Keith Hiscock) to survey the waters around Lundy. The results showed how diverse the marine community was and resulted in Lundy becoming a voluntary marine reserve. He continued diving around Lundy throughout the 1970s and 1980s and focussed on the marine bristle worms and sponges. He took many photographs of Lundy's invertebrates and algae during this time which led to two publications on worms and sponges

◀ David photographing fungi on the Airfield, September 2018 (photo: Jenny George).

in the LFS Annual Reports in 1974 and 1983. The research of Keith Hiscock and his team (including David) led to Lundy becoming the first statutory Marine Nature Reserve In the UK.

David and Jenny soon established a base in Appledore, making access to Lundy easier by buying a small cottage in Irsha Street. Many have enjoyed their hospitality while en route to the island, although they had to squeeze past the zodiac boat David kept fully inflated on its side in the hall of the house! Travel to Lundy before the Oldenburg was on several boats, including the small Lundy Gannet, the Polar Bear, Balmoral and the paddle steamer, Waverley. David visited Lundy nearly every year, often on the LFS annual day excursions, including the infamous trip in 1988 when the Waverley did not return to Lundy until the early hours of the next morning to pick up the stranded LFS members, who had spent a happy night in the Tavern.



▲ Jenny and David George with Graham Colman sampling at Pondsburry, January 2006 (photo: John Hedger).

Apart from his underwater photography David also took many photographs of Lundy's land flora and fauna and was an expert in macrophotography. By the 2000s he had realised that the future was in digital photography and purchased a Minolta to complement his existing film camera, at first taking both film and digital images. This coincided with the beginning of a new project with John Hedger to catalogue and photograph the fungi on Lundy. The first trial visit in autumn 2003, staying in Stoneycroft, was a success; they got on well, and David continued thereafter to make autumnal visits with John and Jenny, walking with unflagging energy over the whole island to search for and photograph the fungi, often lying flat on cold wet ground to get the right close-up shots. Once in position no conversation was allowed as he strived to get the perfect photo. Woe betide those who broke the rule. He preferred the brighter and more colourful fungi, and was more reluctant to do his best for ones he regarded as 'brown jobbies' and 'grey jobbies'. However many autumns saw him up at the North End helping to count the fruit bodies of the Grey Waxcap, often getting shelter in John O'Groat's House in bitter winds to have lunch. The fungus is still known as the 'Grey Job'.

The accumulation of the photographs and the growing species list of fungi over the years led to the proposal for the LFS to publish a book on the fungi of Lundy. The task was made easier by the careful way David had curated his photographs, now all of course digital. A bequest to the LFS from Tony Langham's estate eventually made the project possible and the book appeared in 2018, jointly authored by David and John Hedger. It features many of David's superb photographs and is the authoritative book on Lundy Fungi, a great legacy.

David continued in robust health doing heavy gardening and moving his large pots containing his collection of Tree Ferns until autumn 2024 when he developed heart problems. He died on 31st December. He had a woodland burial on 29th January 2025 attended by over 40 people, including two representatives of the LFS Committee, on which Jenny continues to serve. Fittingly his beloved Minolta camera was buried with him. We extend our sympathy to Jenny for her loss and hope she will continue to be as active as ever in the affairs of the LFS.

*John Hedger
with thanks to Keith Hiscock and Jenny George.*