



▲ Jenny with her husband David at the launch of the LFS publication of Lundy Fungi in 2018 (photo: Alan Rowland)

Jenny George, 1938-2026

With the passing of Jenny George in January of this year, the LFS has lost one of its most distinguished members. It is doubly sad because we had to report the loss of David, her husband and fellow Lundy enthusiast, only last year (see the 2024 Annual Report, p24-25).

Jenny made a tremendous contribution to the development of the LFS for over 50 years, joining in the 1970s and serving remarkably long stints on the Committee from the 1980s right through to 2025. She was also an excellent Chair from 1988-2001 – surely a record which will never be surpassed – and was made Vice President for life from 2002. She coincided with many ‘giants’ of the LFS past such as Myrtle Ternstrom which she freely admitted made committee meetings and AGMs “often quite interesting”.

Jenny oversaw the continued development of the LFS through the 80s and 90s, and was responsible for a number of key initiatives, including the organisation of a successful 60th Anniversary Symposium in September 2006, attended by 112 delegates. Jenny edited the proceedings as a one-off publication, ‘Lundy Studies’, which included a number of important research papers, not least Jenny’s own authoritative account of freshwater ecology on the island. This led to her proposal that the Society should have its own peer-reviewed Journal, complementing the



▲ Jenny George in her trademark pink wellies sampling at Kistvaen Pond in November 2008 (photo: Alan Rowland)

Annual Report but containing more formal publications of Lundy research. She edited the Journal, which she sensibly planned to be biennial, from 2008 to 2020, and was still involved in 2025's Volume 9, refereeing submitted papers and offering useful advice to the current editor.

Jenny was passionate about the role of the LFS in promoting good scientific field studies on Lundy. However the cost of travelling to Lundy and staying on the island was obviously a problem for many, especially students. Jenny's answer was to get the main committee to authorise the setting up of a Grants Sub-committee to evaluate

proposals and provide seed funding for short projects. Many have been successful, leading to publications across a wide range of disciplines in the LFS Journal and entertaining presentations at AGMs. She was still actively chairing the sub-committee until her untimely death.

Jenny joined the LFS in the 1970s as a result of coming to Lundy with her husband David, who participated in diving with Keith Hiscock and others at the beginnings of the detailed studies of the Lundy marine environment. Jenny initially took part in these dives but soon switched to surveying the less well-known freshwater habitats on Lundy: limnology was her main research interest as an academic at the University of Westminster. It was also a reflection of her freely admitted 'poor sea legs' making both dive boats and even the regular crossings to Lundy a trial.



▲ Jenny and David George by the front door of Stoneycroft in April 2005 (photographer unknown)

Jenny and David usually motored down from their home in Holyport to their holiday cottage on Irsha Street in Appledore prior to the passage to Lundy, when Jenny could always be found in the fresh air on the top deck of the Oldenburg, whatever the weather. On Lundy in later years they had several favourite properties including Stoneycroft, but latterly gravitated to Big St Johns as being nearer to the Village. Jenny had a hard and fast rule: *never cook on Lundy* and both she and David enjoyed evenings in the Marisco catching up with the Lundy gossip and meeting old LFS friends. Many of us who had the pleasure of sharing our Lundy time with Jenny and David joined them *en route* in their fascinating house on Irsha Street packed with mementos of their diving exploits, both exotic and home grown. These included a 19th century revolver which they had found in the Thames, under Richmond Bridge, and which Jenny was convinced had been thrown in by a murderer concealing his crimes. The most difficult part of staying with them was getting past the Zodiac Rib on its side in the entrance hall which David always kept well inflated and a squeeze to all except the remarkably slim Jenny, who found it all very funny. She had a mischievous sense of humour.



▲ Jenny taking down data at Rocket Pole Pond with David George in the background (photographer unknown)

Her nephew Peter Webb writes: “Jenny was born and grew up in Worlingham near Beccles in Norfolk before the outbreak of the Second World War. She had a very humble start in life. Her father was a farm labourer and her mother had worked in service in a local great house. She eventually went to school at the Sir John Leman School in Beccles. Despite her parents having quite a poor education this was to be the beginning of an illustrious academic career. She met her husband David at University, beginning a relationship that lasted all their lives. David and Jenny published ‘Marine Life: An Illustrated Encyclopedia of Invertebrates in the Sea’ in 1979, comprehensively illustrated with 1,300 colour photographs.”

Jenny was Professor of Aquatic Biology and Head of the School of Biosciences at the University of Westminster, and eventually became Provost of the Science Campus.

► Jenny George photographed in the 1970s when taking part in dive surveys on Lundy (photographer unknown)



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She was very good at persuading people to follow her ideas, and was quick to spot an opportunity for some new science on Lundy when I arrived to join her staff in the late 90s. In typical fashion she decided that the fungi of Lundy had been little-studied and I was going to do it. Rather unwillingly, I went to Lundy in 2003 with Jenny and David, but I have been going ever since, thanks to Jenny. We had many happy autumn evenings in Big St John's, where I worked on one side of the table with the toadstools while Jenny dabbled in dishes containing her samples from the freshwater ponds on the other. David was told his role was to set up the 'laboratory', which he did with a complex of electrical cables taped to the floor and ceiling. He was also tasked to take pictures of the fungi in the field. The 2018 LFS publication 'Lundy Fungi' by Hedger and George was the result – all down to 'gentle persuasion' by Jenny!

If Jenny had an Achilles heel it was the Lundy ponies. They thought the sample buckets she carried undoubtedly contained delicious food, and her trademark pink wellingtons had to make an undignified retreat a number of times, with the ponies in pursuit. However, even the ponies were unable to suppress her energy for getting out in all weathers, and her happiness to get down and dirty. Another Lundy disciple, Alan Rowland, remembers that "Jenny had no qualms about getting up close to the sample tray and would have her blonde hair dripping with pond water after particularly close encounters."

Alan continues: "I first met Jenny when I joined the Lundy Field Society Committee in 1999 when she was Chair, but got to know her much better when we met up by chance on Lundy in November 2008. She was carrying a bucket and net and various odd items of equipment so I asked her what she was up to. I found that she was off surveying ponds so offered to carry her kit for her. Thus began my long association with her and freshwater biology. In return for carrying her kit, I was given a master class in freshwater biology and invertebrate identification. She tolerated my interest and stimulated my enthusiasm. Subsequently, she took my survey results, evaluated and identified them, and encouraged me to report my findings in an academic way. Without fail she shared her knowledge and survey findings. Jenny submitted many records to the Annual Report and to Lundy Studies. We collaborated on various freshwater papers for the Journal as well as reports to the Annual Report. She set the standard for freshwater recording on Lundy."

Alan and Jenny have since carried out many studies on the 'creatures', as Jenny called them, in Lundy Ponds. Even last year, Jenny was still identifying plankton in samples taken by Alan and sent to her at her home.



▲ Jenny George in October 2025
(photo: Peter Webb)

Jenny's death was unexpected and a great sadness. We shall all miss her, and are richer for having had her as part of our lives. The LFS would not be as successful as it is today without her key contributions to its development in the last 50 years, and it is terribly sad that she will not be with us to celebrate our 80th Anniversary. Jenny was a huge character and we all have lovely memories of her, some of which were shared when LFS members and Jenny's family came together to celebrate her life at her interment alongside her life-long love David in a woodland grave in Greenacres Chiltern Park near Beaconsfield.

Rest in peace Jenny.

John Hedger