

## OBITUARY

### Denver Daniels, 1937-2000

With great sadness, we report the death of Dr Denver Daniels, for many years a member of the Lundy Field Society, and a passionate enthusiast for the island. He had been ill for some months with a painful and distressing cancer of the throat, and he died on 27th May 2000.

Denver was a biological psychologist. He did his BSc in psychology at Bristol in the early sixties, spending time at Cambridge to learn about the new work in molecular biology that was going on there; and his PhD, also at Bristol, was devoted to studies of the biochemistry of memory. He remained interested in physiological psychology for the rest of his life, he was a gifted teacher of its often abstruse material, and, to the end of his career, he was most proud of his publications in this difficult area. But while he was at Bristol he came under the influence of staff like John Crook and contemporaries like John Goss-Custard, who were studying behaviour in the field. And, in a fateful move, he was asked to go and help supervise the field course in animal behaviour which the Bristol psychology and zoology departments jointly ran on Lundy. From that moment, he was hooked: on the island, and on ethology. In 1969, after his PhD, he came to Exeter as an Assistant Lecturer in psychology. The then head of department, Leslie Reid, saw the potential that a field course could have in the department's programme, and asked Denver to set one up. In the Easter vacation of 1971, the first Exeter field course went to Lundy, with 20 or so students sleeping in the dormitories of the Old Light; "indoor camping", Denver called it - he was lodged in the hotel.

Since then, every Easter vacation has seen a party of Exeter psychologists on the island, learning how to study animal behaviour, and nearly every year under Denver's expert eye. He took early retirement in 1995, but continued coming to the island with us until a couple of years ago. For generations of Exeter students, the Lundy course (an unlikely option for many of them) has been the absolute highlight of their experience during their degrees. Of course that owes much to the magic of the island itself. But it owed much more to Denver's inspired leadership. He knew the island, its birds and mammals, its history and its myths (which he assiduously circulated and added to) as few others do. He was the best and most genial of companions, and he could get a party going like no-one else: he thought it was as important for the students to spend time in the tavern as in Puffin Gully. But he would not stand idleness, and his fury at behaviour that was inconsiderate to the island's environment or the islanders was spectacular, and effective. He was of the generation that had done their national service, and he kept discipline like a good officer, with humour and firmness. He was equally strict about methodological standards; no student got away with sloppy fieldwork or defective statistics under Denver's supervision.

But Denver did not only go to Lundy to teach. He carried out distinguished research on the behaviour of the island's kittiwake colonies, which was published both in these

Reports and in the leading academic journals. And whenever he had the chance he went to the island just to enjoy being there, with his family, with his friends, or on his own. Denver loved Lundy. For a few years, I had the privilege of running the Exeter field course with him. Every day, he and I would try to meet up at Longroost at lunch time, to exchange notes about how the students were doing, and to sit in the sun watching the silver water below. And after a while, he would draw a deep, contented breath, and say, "When I die, Stephen, I want them to scatter my ashes here". His funeral was on 1st June. His family asked for no flowers, but for donations in aid of the Lundy Field Society. And on Saturday 3rd June they crossed to the island and scattered his ashes at the North End. One of the island's most loyal friends has come home.

STEPHEN LEA  
June 2000

The School of Psychology, University of Exeter has to set up a Denver Daniels Fund in order to help students to go to Lundy. For more information please contact Dr. Paul Webley, School of Psychology, Washington Singer Labs, University of Exeter.