

# Island Studies

Fifty Years of the Lundy Field Society

The Lundy Field Society

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## Island Studies Fifty Years of the Lundy Field Society

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**For Peter Cole and Tony Langham**

## Foreword

Lundy is a small island, composed largely of granite, set in the approaches to the Bristol Channel on the west side of mainland Britain. It has a striking appearance, its sheer cliffs rising on all sides to some 100m, but with its plateau sufficiently level and its resources sufficiently rich and diverse to have enabled settlement, subsistence and farming over a period of some 10,000 years. Although it appears from maps to lie relatively close to the mainland coast of north Devon, Lundy is, by British standards, an isolated island. Although often hard to believe, it can be an inhospitable place, once being described as, "so immured with rocks and impaled with beetle-browed cliffs, that there is no entrance but for friends".

Today Lundy has a considerable following with large numbers of people enthusiastic about and dedicated to the preservation of its character, not to mention its precious natural and historic resources. Some of the most dedicated and enthusiastic have over the years formed themselves into groups, clubs and societies: the Lundy Collectors Club; the Friends of Lundy; and the Lundy Field Society. Of these organisations the Lundy Field Society is the oldest, with its fiftieth anniversary passing in 1996.

Four years ago, the then Committee and Officers of the Lundy Field Society began to consider how its fiftieth anniversary might be celebrated, and one proposal, from the editors of this volume, was that a book should be produced, seeking to document and publicise the important work undertaken by the Field Society over that period. The proposal was warmly endorsed and this volume is the result. Our aim has been to cover fully the range of work undertaken on and around the island, and to address its worth both locally and more widely within each discipline. Much of this work has been undertaken by eminent scientists and academics and some is of national, even international, significance. With some disciplines, particularly those involving birds, mammals and archaeology, numerous projects have been undertaken over the years by various groups and individuals, and the authors here were asked to provide overviews covering aspects of this work. For those less familiar with Lundy, or those whose interests are perhaps specific and scientific, some general papers are included. Charles Thomas and Clive Harfield present some new perspectives on Lundy's history; John Schofield and Jennifer George offer some general thoughts on the significance of islands for the types of research documented in the papers which follow. There are also contributions documenting the history of the Field Society (the first "official" history to appear in print) and, to close, the role of the Lundy wardens. As well as the obvious emphasis on research, managing Lundy's

natural and man-made resource is not forgotten: Robert Irving and Paul Gilliland provide insights into the setting up and management of the Marine Reserve, while Caroline Thackray and Julia Abel Smith discuss the archaeological sites and built environment respectively.

We are not aware of a comparable publication covering such a range of subject matter, and this has presented a significant challenge in editing this volume. Aware that many readers will be unfamiliar with the detail and some of the general issues raised in some of the papers, we have tried to ensure that all are written such that the lay reader can understand their content. We hope that has been achieved and apologise if any jargon has got through the net.

Many have helped in the production of this volume. We are of course grateful to the contributors for agreeing to help, for keeping tight to our brief, and for meeting deadlines. The committee members and officers of the Lundy Field Society (1992-6) gave advice and made helpful suggestions concerning the format and content of the volume: Jennifer George, the Society's current Chairman, and Ian Lovatt, its Treasurer, made notable contributions. We are most grateful to John Dyke for allowing us to reproduce his drawings. Thanks also to Peter Rothwell and Ann Westcott. Peter and Ann both gave advice and practical assistance throughout, while we are particularly grateful to Peter for providing the cover illustration. The production of this volume in its present form would not have been possible without

financial assistance, and we are indebted to English Nature and the World Wide Fund for Nature for their support in this regard. Finally, it seems an opportune time to express thanks on behalf of the Field Society to the occupants and inhabitants of Lundy, the staff and crew of the MS *Oldenburg* and its predecessors, and, from 1969, the staff of the Landmark Trust at Shottesbrooke, for all their kind assistance with and support for all aspects of scientific research and fieldwork undertaken on Lundy over the years.

Anniversaries are opportunities for reflection and forward thinking. This volume concentrates on the former, documenting what we are proud to describe as our achievements over fifty years. We hope this volume does justice to those involved, and provides the necessary inspiration for another fifty years of achievement. Things do look good. The Annual Report, in which virtually all of the work undertaken on Lundy is documented, is receiving more contributions covering a wider range of subjects certainly than at any time over the past ten years, and perhaps ever. There are also some exciting (and potentially hugely significant) projects now in their early stages. We would be only too delighted if the equivalent volume in 2046 were to describe the achievements of the Field Society's first fifty years as comparatively insignificant compared to those of the second fifty.

Anniversaries are also occasions on which individual achievement is noted, and many references are made in the volume to some of those who helped shape

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the Society in its early years. When plans for the anniversary were first discussed four years ago, two long standing members of the Society took a prominent role, giving practical help and valuable advice; both fully supported the volume we proposed. It was especially sad, therefore, that both died before the plans came to fruition. Tony Langham (1928-95), perhaps the most quoted individual in the various bibliographies in this volume, and Peter Cole (1929-94), both Honorary Secretary and Vice President at various times, are greatly missed. It seems entirely appropriate that this volume should be dedicated to their memory.

Robert Irving  
John Schofield  
Chris Webster

November 1996

