

Lundy Wardens

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Introduction

The first Lundy warden took up residence in the Old Light in the summer of 1947, and began formally recording observations of Lundy's wildlife. This was an exciting start for what was to be a continually developing post. Field Society wardens were followed by Nature Conservancy Council (now English Nature) funded wardens as the post developed and diversified into its present form. Lundy now boasts a Site of Special Scientific Interest, a Marine Nature Reserve and a full time warden employed by Landmark Trust to ensure these special areas are continually protected. Over the years a wealth of information has been recorded, survey projects have been set up and continued and many visitors to the island have benefited from and enjoyed the help of a resident warden. What follows is a brief account of the changing role of the Lundy warden.

Lundy Field Society wardens

Looking after nature conservation on Lundy has always been a shared task. Throughout the last fifty years the Field Society has supported and assisted Lundy's wardens both practically and financially.

Indeed, the Field Society were responsible for setting up the first wardens on the island and sponsored the post for several years from 1947 onwards.

Initially the warden's responsibilities included the upkeep and maintenance of the accommodation and facilities that visiting Field Society observers and survey teams would use during the summer (Fig.1). The Old Light buildings were, at this time, set aside for Field Society use and housed a very active group of, amongst others, ornithologists, botanists, entomologists and marine biologists. The warden was present to make observations and to coordinate ongoing research projects undertaken by other visitors. Summer visitors to the Old Light had a range of expertise and took on varying duties. Mary Lee accompanied her brother David who was warden during the summer of 1950 to act as sub-warden, cook and cleaner (Fig.2). The season of observations was at this time limited to the summer months with the first volunteers arriving in March and the last leaving in September.

Gradually the warden's season of stay on the island was increased so that observations were continually carried out over most of the year. Peter Davis (Warden 1951-53) was the first warden to see out all the seasons, arriving in January and departing the following December (Fig.3). This greatly improved the scope of observations particularly with regard to ornithology as both spring and autumn migration movements could be recorded.

The bulk of the warden's work was concerned with

ornithological observations and bird ringing and of course domestic duties in the continual battle to improve accommodation in the Old Light. A daily walk known as the "cruise" was undertaken; this consistent route allowed for daily bird counts and migration observations to be made, and gave a clear picture of bird movement around the island.

Each warden in these early years had an extremely high level of ornithological knowledge. Records were gradually built up and added to, and Lundy gained standing as an important bird observatory and a useful site at which to study migration. With the development of the station at the Old Light, facilities for bird ringing were improved and an emphasis was placed on ringing activities. Heligoland traps were constructed and maintained by the resident warden and the wealth of ringing data began to be compiled. By the early 1950s coverage was such that a comprehensive Lundy bird list could be produced. This then became an annual feature in the Field Society's Annual Report. Ornithological work was at this stage greatly advanced in comparison to other ecological observations and an active effort was therefore made to build up a collection of reference material on all Lundy's ecological aspects, to provide information and baseline data for future reference. The warden's task here was to collate results to ensure the wealth of work carried out was put to good use (Fig.4).

The first annual seabird counts were carried out in June 1949. Checking seabird nesting sites and

counting visiting seabirds during the breeding season continues to be an important part of the warden's summer work. Information gathered from seabird counts was originally collated by the RSPB; this task now falls to the Joint Nature Conservancy Council Seabirds Team who take a very active interest in Lundy's breeding seabird populations. Seabird surveys provide just one of several examples of long term research work on Lundy which has provided reliable data over many years and now contributes to make Lundy such a special site.

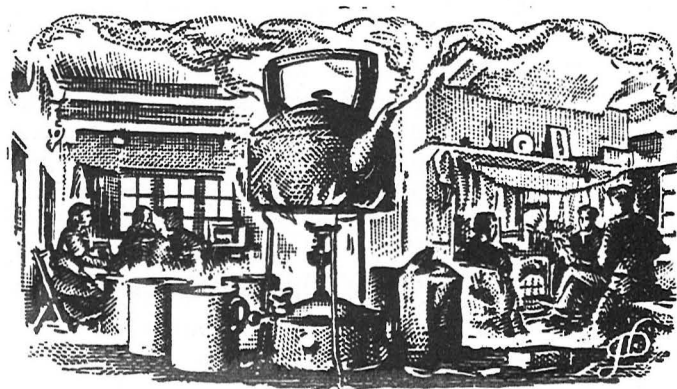


Fig.1. Lundy Field Society quarters in the Old Light, 1948 – basic but comfortable accommodation (John Dyke).

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Volunteer helpers and research workers

Summer volunteers were initially involved in survey and monitoring work rather than in practical conservation tasks. The first call for practical assistance with conservation work was made when the alarming rate of spread of the rhododendron was noted. Volunteers since then have been called upon again and again to assist with what is probably one of the warden's main headaches – the control and containment of rhododendron along the east sidelands. These days Lundy has the help of up to eight volunteer weeks a year with work parties from the Lundy Field Society, the National Trust, British Trust for Conservation Volunteers and Hartland Heritage Coast, gallantly tackling a range of tasks from dry stone walling to tree planting. Tree planting and maintenance has always been a favourite task of Field Society groups, but in Lundy's harsh conditions it is not an easy one (Fig.5).

The early 1960s saw the first visit of a university group to the island – a tradition which continues to this day. This first group carried out ornithological research, producing a contribution for the Field Society's Annual Report. Today Lundy welcomes more university groups each year to carry out a number of research tasks, many of which overlap the warden's remit, assisting with such things as counts of the Soay sheep and estimates of kittiwake breeding success. Lundy has developed strong links with Leeds University biology and ecology students who are being encouraged to conduct honours research projects on

the island. With guidance, these projects can be valuable both to Lundy and to the students who certainly benefit from a spell on the island.

Development of the warden's role

In the late 1960s the Field Society had to cut back on expenditure: the warden's period of stay was at first reduced to a summer season and then in 1968 lack of funding made it impossible to directly employ a warden. Volunteers were however unstoppable in their enthusiasm for unravelling Lundy's natural history. To a certain extent the lack of a warden inspired the recording and reporting systems which remain so successful today. A visitor log book was drawn up and made available for all those staying on the island to record their daily observations. At the end of the year the data from the log was then used to compile the annual bird report.

1969 was a time of change, with the Landmark Trust taking Lundy on a long-term lease with the aim of opening up properties on the island to visitors whilst still keeping it beautiful and accessible. Landmark were keen to appoint a warden and Nick Dymond, previously working as a migrations officer for the British Trust for Ornithology, took up post in 1971. He was able to devote a large amount of his time to Field Society duties and natural history observations, and the Field Society were once again able to join the Bird Observations Council. Although a full time warden had returned to the island, the log book, which had proved



Fig 2. David Lee (centre boat) and Mary Lee (stern right) arriving at the Landing Bay, June 1950. David Lee stayed as warden from March to November 1950; his sister Mary was his assistant responsible for cooking and cleaning in the Old Light. (Photo: by kind permission of Mary Percy.)

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both popular and effective, still remained in the Tavern to allow visitors to assist with observations.

Although Nick's work was proving very successful, the Landmark Trust were suffering financial difficulties which sadly meant the post of warden was again lacking funding. It can, however, be said that Lundy was continually wardened both by Field Society representatives visiting the island and by knowledgeable members of permanent staff, who, when not working as barmen, were either out observing or bird ringing. And what better place to inform people of Lundy's wildlife than from over the bar! So although there was no formally-employed warden there was no break in the amount of research being carried out on the island. Naturalists continued to visit and the Annual Report continued to record their findings. Experienced naturalists amongst the staff carried out the traditional observation duties and were able to provide visitors with information as well.

An important step forward for the future protection of the island's terrestrial habitats was achieved in 1976 with the designation of much of the island as a Site of Special Scientific Interest. This designation aims to guard the land by guiding management techniques and practices used. Site of Special Scientific Interest designation has recently been reinforced by proposals to include the island as a Special Area of Conservation under the EU Habitats and Species Directive.

Marine Wardens

During the 1970s work began in earnest to try and establish the sea around Lundy as a Marine Nature Reserve (MNR). A comprehensive picture of the marine environment around Lundy was gradually being built up: the area was found to be extremely special and after designation as a Voluntary Marine Nature Reserve in 1973 the case for Lundy's designation as England's first Marine Nature Reserve was pushed forward (see Irving and Gilliland, this volume).

With designation of a Voluntary Marine Nature Reserve (VMNR) the first marine warden (Nigel Thomas) spent five summer months on the island. This was seen as a pilot project to assess whether the marine reserve message was getting across to users of the reserve. A code of conduct was distributed to visitors and the warden helped to explain this and tried to encourage users of the reserve and particularly divers to adhere to it. There was a great deal of interest from visiting divers and an increase in diving activity.

Although marine research continued at a fierce pace, the sea was without a warden until the early 1980s. In 1983 and 1984 a Marine Liaison Officer (Robert Irving) was posted over the summer, acting as the Nature Conservancy Council's representative on the island with the remit of working towards statutory MNR designation. The lack of a warden on the island at this time meant that the Marine Liaison Officer worked to fill this role as well as pushing forward MNR proposals. The warden's tasks diversified to include

guided walks, slide shows, preparation of interpretive materials and dissemination of information to users of the reserve. The more traditional survey and monitoring tasks were also continually carried out. A visitor centre was set up in the Linhay with wildlife displays and information. This set the ground work for the way the warden's tasks would develop to encompass a large element of interpretation and visitor liaison.

Developments in recent years

Lundy entered the 1980s as an important site for bird observation; an area of heather moorland protected by SSSI designation; a VMNR; and an area for which a wealth of natural history information had been collected. During the early 1980s the Field Society were as active as ever on the island, bi-annual field study holidays were run as well as practical conservation weeks to carry out tasks such as tree planting and the ever-necessary rhododendron work.

Although the island was still without a warden, events were continuing apace. In 1985 the Lundy Marine Consultation Group was formed to coordinate and support the MNR proposals. This forum for all parties interested in and concerned with the establishment of the MNR continues to guide the progress of the reserve and coordinate the warden's work today. The designation of England's first MNR in 1986 followed many years of hard work and was a great achievement for Lundy and all those involved. The reserve brought with it the financial help of Nature



Fig. 3 Peter Davis, warden 1951-1953. All the early wardens were chosen for their extensive ornithological knowledge, and they recorded bird observations daily. (Photo: by kind permission of Jennifer Langham.)

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Conservancy Council (now English Nature) funding which now makes the warden's post secure for the future.

The new warden (Neil Wilcox 1986-1988) started to prepare a management plan concerning mainly terrestrial aspects of management such as tree planting and rhododendron control. Several projects that had previously been carried out by Field Society members came into the warden's remit such as seal surveys, seabird counts and the production of leaflets. The warden's time was shared between practical conservation (with an emphasis on rhododendron control and tree planting), and interpretation, including the production of display materials, guided walks, talks and slide shows. Survey work and monitoring were still of great importance, as of course was continually joining in with other island duties as necessary. The log book still had its place in the Tavern and the bird report continued to feature in the Field Society's Annual Report.

Today the warden works to a management plan produced by English Nature in close consultation with the Landmark Trust and the Devon Sea Fisheries Committee. Although still heavily involved in terrestrial conservation, a large part of the warden's work is now marine based. A zoning scheme has been produced for the MNR, which develops the original code of conduct,

providing clear information on the restrictions within the reserve. It is the warden's job to ensure users of

the reserve comply with and understand the importance of this code of conduct, as well as other restrictions, to protect both seabird and seal populations during their breeding seasons.

Each summer season Lundy greets an increasing number of staying and day visitors; the warden is their primary contact for information and advice about the island's wildlife and how best to spend time on the island. Regular guided walks are conducted on a range of topics from seabirds to seashore. Would the first Lundy wardens ever have foreseen leading snorkelling sessions or designing underwater viewers for use in rock pools!

Conclusion

Throughout the years each warden on Lundy will no doubt have found conflicting demands on their time and energies. It can often be a very demanding balancing act between survey work, visitor activities, practical work and helping to keep the island running smoothly. Over the years there has been considerable commitment from each warden, and to list their individual achievements would require a volume in itself. Although the warden's duties have changed over the years, there has always been a continuity of purpose to protect Lundy's natural environment and improve our understanding of this special island and the sea surrounding it.

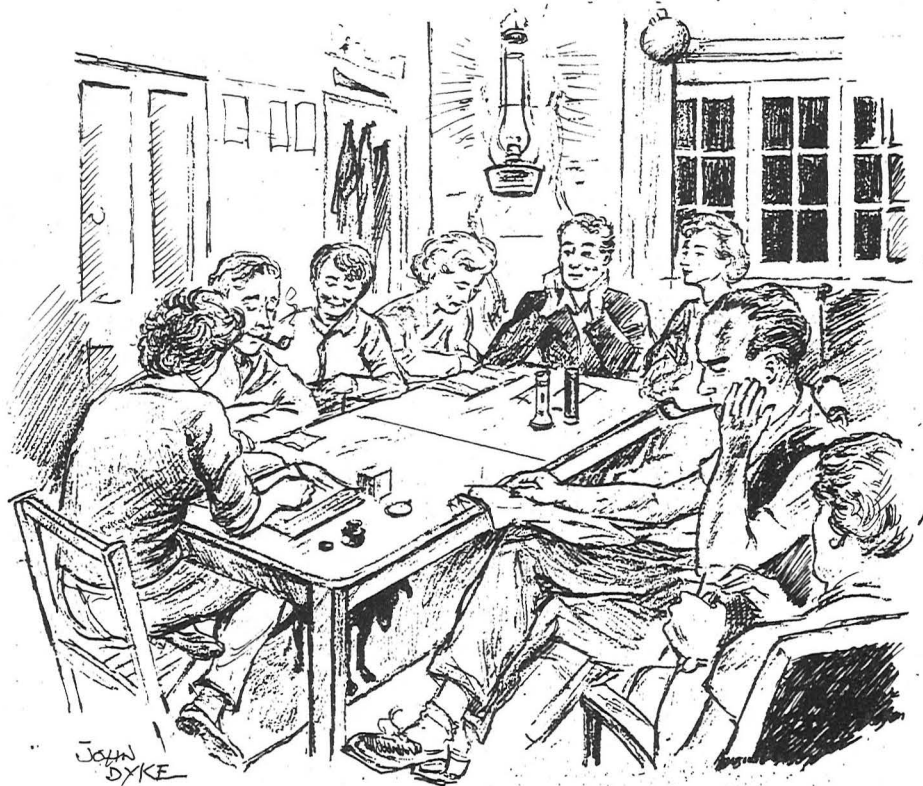


Fig.4. Barbara Whitaker (warden 1954-1957) at the head of the table in the Old Light common room. Each evening the log book would be filled in with records of the day's observations. Barbara was an excellent ornithologist and rock climber, well known for climbing in bare feet (John Dyke 1957).

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APPENDIX : List of Lundy Wardens

<i>Warden's name</i>	<i>Date</i>
Rowland Barker	1947
Hugh Boyd	1948-9
David Lea	1950
Peter Davis	1951-3
Barbara Whitaker	1954-7
Bill Workman	1958
Michael Jones	1959-64
Jonathon Sparrow (died in post)	1965
Clifford Waller	1965-7

1968-71: *No resident warden on the island; the log book system for residents and visitors to record their observations is set up and proves very successful.*

Nick Dymond	1972-3
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1974-85: *No warden on the island; the log book system continues to work well. Observations and ringing records were kept by the following island representatives:*

Mike Rogers	1975-7
Richard Campey	1978-80
Keith Mortimer	1980-3
Mary Gade	1984-5

<i>Warden's name</i>	<i>Date</i>
Neil Willcox	1986-8
Andrew Gibson	1989-94
Emma Parkes	1995-6
Liza Cole	1996—



Fig 5 Tree planting above Millcombe 1978



Plate 40

Snorkelling

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