

# HONORARY SECRETARY'S REPORT 2025

*Michael Williams*

The Hon Sec's inbox often receives some interesting enquiries, many of a historical nature. An unusual enquiry was received from the Lucilla Dramatic Society in Crosby who were seeking permission to reuse some of the photos of Lundy from the LFS website to illustrate the programme for a production of a play, 'Heaven's Paradise'. I was also able to provide advice to the Paddle Steamer Preservation Society about some Lundy books and entered into correspondence about an article published in the Puffin Post, for collectors of Puffin Books, which included a competition to win a trip to Lundy in 1967.

We have received some scans of some magnificent illustrations of Lundy made by a mapmaker for the Ordnance Survey in the late 19th century. A donation of magic lantern slides of Lundy in the Heaven era show life on Lundy in the late 19th century. These are a wonderful addition to the historic archive.

2025 saw the centenary of Martin Coles Harman (our founder along with Leslie Harvey) buying Lundy as his private estate. To discreetly mark this anniversary, we reprinted 'Island King' by Tony Langham – the biography of Harman. We also started a project to re-present the medals that hang in the Marisco Tavern, awarded to Martin's son John, that was completed in early 2026.



▲ John Pennington Harman VC. Display in the Marisco Tavern (photo: Alan Rowland)

I was finally able to make a long-awaited trip to the British Library, accompanied by Derek Green and Lars Liewendahl to deposit the Harman family's Lundy stamp archive with the Library's Philatelic Department. This had been identified when we cleared Diana Keast's store in Marlborough in February 2020 and I had agreed with Diana that it should be gifted to the British Library. It is a mine of fascinating postal history and the Library was extremely pleased to receive it.



▲ Donations to the British Library (photos: Michael Williams)

In October 2025 the LFS ran its second Field Studies course, organised and led by Mandy Yates. Unfortunately, the start of the course was delayed by one day due to high winds. Undeterred, thirteen students took part in five jam packed days of teaching which included studying fungi with John Hedger and Mandy Dee, and archaeology with Cressida Whitton. Fortuitously Chris Dee was also on the island and supplemented their learning with excellent bird talks and bird ringing demonstrations. Bee Cox also talked about how the LFS works and Carol Anne Lee gave a talk about seals.



▲ A peaceful moment indoors for the Field Studies Course (photo: Mandy Yates)

Two grants were awarded for research in 2025, both on Fungi and from researchers from Aberystwyth University who undertook their research in November. Ruby Bye used battery-driven traps to catch and eventually identify the spores of fungi in the Lundy air. Sheena Duller worked with John Hedger to survey the Coral and Club fungi in Lundy grassland for Louise Tranter, looking for 'cryptic' (hidden), possibly new, species of the Meadow Coral. Both studies are described in more detail on p92. The results of the DNA studies will be appearing in the 2027 volume of the Journal.

2025 was a bumper year for recording fungi and slime moulds (Myxomycetes) on Lundy, with 37

species found in the field which were new to the island, including one Myxo. The total thus now stands at 899 species of fungi but easily exceeds that figure if records from DNA and cultural studies published in the 2025 volume of the LFS Journal are added, of which more later.

John Hedger visited in March for a week to record microfungi on plants and ran a Foray open to visitors, notable for finding the Spring

Pinkgill, an elegant toadstool unexpectedly appearing in the Narcissi below the Ugly and a new record. As mentioned above, John and Mandy Dee led part of the Field Studies Course in October and over 140 species were found, including nine new records and a number of second records. Furthermore, John helped with the residential Imperial College field course which now has a day surveying fungi on the Airfield and South West Field as a part of the programme and is providing useful long-term monitoring of the fungi in these two sites.

Due to personal circumstances, Sandra and Alan Rowland were unable to undertake the Lundy Cabbage count in 2025. Fortunately, in 2024, the Assistant Warden, Tara McEvoy-Wilding, was instructed in the art of cabbage counting and she, with help from the conservation team was able to make a count in July, recording 4,127 plants, which is an increase of 82% on 2024. Alan, Sandra and the LFS all get a mention in the recently published book, 'Endemic' by James Harding Morris.

There were fewer records of both terrestrial and freshwater invertebrates. A brief survey visit by the National True Bug Recorder, Kevin Rowley, re-discovered the long lost Diving Bell Spider in Ponsbury, later subsequently found by Mark West. Kevin added a number of new Freshwater Bug and Beetle species in particular the Water Measurer. You can read his account of his trip on p36.

Neil Barnes added another Shieldbug, the Hawthorn Shieldbug, to the island list but discovered this has been previously found by Darrin Downing in 2022, which had gone unreported.

The Lundy Bird Observatory successfully completed its third and final probationary year as a provisionally accredited member of the British & Irish observatory network. We were delighted to find we had been approved for full accreditation after the Bird Observatories Council AGM in early 2026.

The Bird Observatory now oversees the bird reports and the highlights of 2025 include:

- 166 species recorded (including some for which formal acceptance by British or Devon rarities committees is still pending)
- 4,865 birds ringed (including 889 Blackcap, 753 Manx Shearwater, 517 Willow Warbler, 493 Chiffchaff, 323 Goldcrest, 246 Storm Petrel, 219 Swallow and 217 Meadow Pipit as the most ringed species; the totals for both Manx Shearwater and Chiffchaff being island records)
- An RSPB-led breeding seabird survey, which showed record post rat-eradication populations of Guillemot, Razorbill, Puffin, Kittiwake and Shag, with Lundy now internationally important for its assemblage of more than 45,000 breeding seabirds
- Continued productivity monitoring of auks, Kittiwake and Fulmar, data tagging of Manx Shearwaters and Storm Petrels, colour-ringing of large gulls, and ringing of the first Shag and Oystercatcher chicks since 2000 and 1976 respectively

On the bird ringing front, as noted above, a record total of 753 Manx Shearwaters were newly ringed in 2025, including 339 chicks. Previously ringed birds were recaptured on 499 occasions, the oldest having been encountered first in 2007. Some individuals were caught multiple times through the season, particularly the closely monitored adults breeding in nest boxes, providing a detailed picture of their lives. Fourteen pairs made breeding attempts in boxes, with nine chicks reared successfully.

The long-term colour-ringing study of Wheatears continued, with an estimated 61 pairs nesting in the study area between the Castle and Jenny's Cove. By the end of the season 111 of the breeding adults involved were carrying colour-rings. Adult survival between the 2024 and 2025 seasons, including migration to and from sub-Saharan Africa, was at least 53%. Direct evidence of their long-distance travel came in the form of a Lundy colour-ringed male that was photographed in Mauritania on his way north in March 2025, then seen back on Lundy in the breeding season.



▲ Double rainbow over Millcombe (photo: Tim Jones)

Please continue to add records to the logbook in the Tavern – there is always the possibility on Lundy that you may have seen something unique! It's always helpful to have photographs and as much detail as possible about location, and remember to always add your contact details so we can follow up any queries.

The LFS sent five Conservation Breaks to Lundy during 2025, equalling our recent count. In April, due to a helicopter flight being required, the number of volunteers was restricted to 11. The other four visits had a full quota of 14 volunteers, so a total of 67 volunteers spent a week on Lundy.

The work carried out was varied, including the usual rhododendron seedling searches, drystone wall repairs, fence removal and replacement, sapling care, plus gully and steps clearing, and Church and Museum cleaning. Some unusual tasks were seal surveys, helping with Storm Petrel nestbox checking, archaeological survey training, bracken control, grazing control enclosures removed and gabion filling at Bramble Villas access road.

All leaders reported successful and harmonious trips, and our grateful thanks must go to them: Mandy English, Belinda Cox, Evelyn Rita Northage Hicken, and Hilary Winsor (who led two Conservation Breaks).

The administration of the Society is the most significant part of this role. Over the summer I worked with our Chair, Belinda Cox, to find a new Honorary Membership Secretary and we are pleased to welcome Charlotte Gardner who has been co-opted to the Committee. Our thanks to Lucy Lo-Vel who stepped down from the role due to work commitments.

We look forward to the Society's 80th anniversary in 2026 and this will be marked with a Discover Lundy week on the island in May. Fingers crossed, we will host the AGM on the island during the week, the first time the meeting has ever been held outside Exeter or Crediton. (We did try to do this for 75th anniversary but the COVID pandemic prevented it going ahead.)

We will also be reviewing the recommendations from the Governance Review that was concluded in the autumn. The review has looked at our governance to ensure the charitable aspects of the LFS are fit and proper so we can continue to deliver our objectives effectively and for the public benefit.

My grateful thanks to everyone who contributes to the success of the LFS as we enter our 80th year and to you, our members, for supporting what we do.

## Lundy Field Society Treasurer's Report and Accounts

The society returned a pleasing surplus of £5.8k in 2025 despite significant expenditure supporting conservation projects on the island and it being an LFS journal publication year.

The surplus was in large part due to a very generous legacy donation of £12.1k received from the estate of Diana Keast, former president of the society.

Other income, led as usual by subscription income (£11.7k), remained broadly stable, although we also caught up with two years of gift aid claims (£3.5k) which had been delayed while we were auditing and updating our gift aid records.

Significant non-recurring financial outlays during the year included funding for new safety equipment for the island conservation team's Rigid Hull Inflatable Boat, the development of the Marine Protected Area website, and a new Camera for the island to monitor seal productivity.

The society also agreed to fund two scientific research projects into fungi on the island for £1.7k.

Other significant costs included continued funding for the society's Conservation Break programme, and those associated with the successful Field Course event held in March as well as the costs of the production of the bulletin, the journal and the annual report.

The value of our investment fund increased by £5.9k to £93.2k reflective of the positive performance of global stock markets during the year. We also hold £65.3k in cash, most of it in an interest-bearing bank account.

Overall the society remains in a very strong financial position with substantial reserves available to be deployed in future years in support of our charitable aims.

John Shelley, Honorary Treasurer



## Income and Expenditure for the year ended 31 December 2025

Income	Notes	2025	2024
Subscriptions		11,691	11,762
Legacies		12,087	-
Jennetts Trust donations		2,040	2,040
Other donations		824	856
Gift aid	1	3,508	-
Conservation break deposits		3,360	2,680
Field Courses		3,652	-
Book sales		1,186	1,220
Postage		-	7
Bank Interest		1,020	314
<b>Total Income</b>		<b>39,368</b>	<b>18,879</b>
<b>Expenditure</b>			
<b>Support &amp; Governance Costs</b>	<b>2</b>		
AGM Expenses		663	853
Committee Expenses		556	155
Insurance		185	-
Book / Publicity Printing Costs		478	283
Postage		133	94
Stationery		-	6
Stock Value Reduction	3	-	1,885
<b>Charitable Expenditure</b>			
Bulletin		1,139	1,663
Annual Report		5,431	5,217
Journal		6,964	-
Website		119	112
Conservation Breaks		7,487	6,918
Field Courses		4,666	2,182
Charitable Projects		4,478	1,620
Grants		1,266	4,096
<b>Total Expenditure</b>		<b>33,565</b>	<b>25,084</b>
<b>Surplus (Deficit) for the year</b>		<b>5,803</b>	<b>(6,205)</b>

## Balance sheet as at 31 December 2025

	Notes	2025	2024
<b>Current Assets</b>			
Stocks (Books)		166	295
2025 field course accommodation booking		-	712
2027 field course accommodation booking		1,151	-
2026 Discover Lundy accommodation booking		7,854	7,854
Cash at Bank		65,268	27,737
<b>Total Current Assets</b>		<b>74,439</b>	<b>36,598</b>
<b>Less Current Liabilities</b>			
Advance subscriptions		1,077	658
Advance conservation break deposits		2,455	2,680
Discover Lundy 2026 advance payments		26,010	-
Other Creditors		4,568	-
Grant Commitments		1,726	460
<b>Total Current Liabilities</b>		<b>35,836</b>	<b>3,798</b>
<b>Net Current Assets</b>		<b>38,603</b>	<b>32,800</b>
Other Assets - 7im Investment Fund	4	<b>79,300</b>	<b>79,300</b>
<b>Total Net Assets</b>		<b>117,903</b>	<b>112,100</b>
<b>Reserves</b>			
Brought Forward		112,100	118,305
Surplus (Deficit) for the year		5,803	(6,205)
<b>Closing Reserves</b>		<b>117,903</b>	<b>112,100</b>

### Notes to the Accounts

- 1) Gift aid claims for two years were made in the year following a delay to claims in 2024.
- 2) As the society spends almost no money on fundraising all expenditure can be classed as charitable under charity accounting rules. The split between support expenses and charitable activity is provided to give members a clearer insight into how we spend their money.
- 3) The stock value reduction in 2024 related to the write-off of the value of our remaining copies of Lundy Fungi as it seemed unlikely that these would sell.
- 4) The unrealised gain on the value of our investment portfolio is not shown in the accounts. As at 31<sup>st</sup> December, the market value of the investments was **£93,195** (2024: £87,294).

## Lundy Field Society Accounts Examination for 2025

'I have examined the accounts of the Lundy Field Society for the year 1st January to 31st December 2025 as presented to me by the Honorary Treasurer. I have confirmed the accuracy of the accounting statements and that they properly reflect the underlying accounting records. My examination provided me with no evidence that these financial statements do not provide a true and fair view of the Income and Expenditure, and Assets and Liabilities, of the Lundy Field Society for the year ended 31st December 2025.'

Robin O Hall, Honorary Independent Examiner,  
22nd February 2026