

Cinderella Time: **Lundy Island**

By Christer Brunström

*(This article is a combination of two articles by Christer Brunström:
“Lundy Island – more than 80 years of local posting”
and “Historic Lundy”*

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In 2009 the tiny island of Lundy could have issued special stamps to mark the 80th anniversary of its very first local postage stamp released on November 1, 1929. Much to my surprise there was no such commemorative issue.

Lundy Island, 11 miles off the North Devon coast in England, operates the world’s oldest and still running genuine local post. Many other small British islands release stamps but very few operate bona-fide postal services. As far as I know only the Summer Isles in Scotland provide a genuine postal service linking the island of Tanera Mór with the Scottish mainland. The Island of Pabay also appears to operate a postal service of sorts, which possibly only exists as an excuse to produce rather expensive commemorative covers. Needless to say current local stamps from all other islands are merely colourful labels of no postal significance.



1954, 20th anniversary issue

So far Lundy Island has issued 336 different stamps, which is quite reasonable considering that it all started way back in 1929. Hundreds of collectors throughout the world are enthusiastic Lundy buffs. There is even a specialist Lundy collectors’ society based in Great Britain.

Lundy is owned by The National Trust and administered by The Landmark Trust, a charity established to restore and preserve historic buildings and landmarks. The island is open to visitors throughout the year and different kinds of accommodation are available. However, most visitors arrive during the summer season and just spend a few hours on the island before returning to the mainland on the *MS*

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Oldenburg, the island's supply ship and major link to the rest of the world. The vessel was featured on a six-stamp set issued in 2008 to mark its 50th anniversary.

The *Oldenburg* set was designed by Swedish collector and Lundy enthusiast Lars Liwendahl who is currently working on set of stamps featuring the island's wildlife and slated for release during 2010. Mr. Liwendahl has been responsible for many of Lundy's stamp issues for quite some time.



MS Oldenburg, 50th anniversary issue

Visitors to Lundy can enjoy fan-



tastic walks and breath-taking scenery. The island has a profuse wildlife which includes the ubiquitous puffin. This rather peculiar bird used to be very common in the North Atlantic area but it is now threatened by the changing environment and over-fishing. However, it is the emblematic symbol of Lundy Island and the stamps still carry denominations in puffin. A puffin is exactly the same as a British penny. The say-

ing goes that in old times puffin birds were used as currency on the island.



Puffin birds feature prominently on numerous Lundy stamps. In fact, the first 1929 stamps began this tradition. A puffin's head was shown on the 1/2 puffin stamp and a full bird on the 1 puffin.

When additional definitives were released in 1930 they depicted the same amount of puffin birds as the denomination. Thus the 12 puffin stamp shows 12 birds.

The island of Lundy has an ancient history. A British sub post office was opened in 1887 at a time when the island had a fairly large population. In 1927 the office was closed by the Mr. Martin Harman, the owner (some jokingly referred to him as the king) of Lundy. For two years the mails were carried for free between the island and the mainland. However, Mr. Harman found this practise somewhat expensive and thus established the local post in late 1929.

Today the local post delivers far more than 30,000 pieces of mail on an annual basis. Many are of course picture postcards mailed by day visitors to friends and relatives back home.

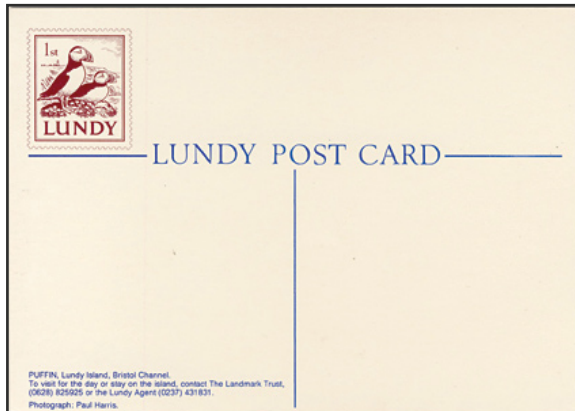
In the early days the local post stamps were affixed to the back of letters and on the left hand side of postcards. The

A cover mailed from Lundy to Carmarthen, Wales, August 16, 1937. A Lundy 1/2 puffin stamp was affixed to the back of the envelope and cancelled August 16, 1937. The LACAL (Lundy Air) airmail



stamp is cancelled: "Aug. 17 1937 / Barnstaple, / Lundy Island." The letter was flown from Lundy and entered the British mail stream at Braunton, August 17, 1937, for transmission to Carmarthen.

writer then had to add the correct amount of British postage. Today they use an entirely different method. The local stamps are now affixed to the front of covers or postcards but on the left hand side. The Lundy rate includes the Royal Mail postage cost which is generally indicated in the form of a meter mark. Thus the rates are the same as those of the Royal Mail plus some five puffin going to the local post.



Over the years there has been a plethora of Lundy literature. In 1984 Stanley Newman released the very first edition of the *Stamps of Lundy Island*. He also published handbooks of Lundy postal history.

In 2009 the fifth edition of the *Stamps and Postal History of Lundy Island* was published. It was edited by Jon Aitchison and it is much more than a basic catalogue listing of Lundy stamps and postal history. In fact, the 237-page volume is very much a very detailed handbook of Lundy philately.

The book is replete with detailed information about stamps, printing figures, varieties, essays, proofs, booklets, postal stationery, postmarks, cachets and much more. There are excellent blown-up illustrations of many varieties which makes the book easy to use.

Mr. Aitchison has spent a lot of time studying the Lundy stamp market. Prices have been adjusted both upwards and in many cases downwards to reflect current market conditions. The scarcer material is generally substantially up while the more common stamps see price reductions.

I feel this book is a valuable contribution to this most interesting collecting area. For more information contact Tithehall Publishing, Old Tithe Hall, Start Hill, Near Bishop's Stortford, Hertfordshire CM22 7TF, Great Britain (email: britishlocals@aol.com).

The Royal Mail fee is indicated by a printed frank which gives the mailer a lower cost. At times it is cheaper to mail a letter from Lundy than on the mainland.

On May 26, 2012 Lundy issued five stamps that feature historic events which have not previously been commemorated. The stamps themselves have a most interesting history. The Lundy postal service invited the art students of Petroc College in Barnstaple to take part in a design competition. The winner was Sarah Lewis who had painted a delightful picture of the Old Lighthouse on Lundy. She was then commissioned to prepare the five designs based on suggestions by Swedish collector Lars Liwendahl. He had also produced the guidelines for the design of the stamps.



At the end of the 19th century, lobster fishing was an important activity on the island. Based on an old photograph Miss Lewis produced a painting of fisherman George Thomas holding two live lobsters. The scene

is depicted on the 41p stamp.

The 54p denomination illustrates the oldest event in our set as it is devoted to the construction of the Marisco Castle in the 1240s. The stamp shows building methods known to have been used at the time.



In the 1860s, the Lundy Granite Company was founded and it was active for many years. They even built a small railway to carry the granite from the quarries. It is all depicted on the 64p stamp.



There have been several attempts to build a jetty on Lundy but it was not until 1999 that the present jetty was finally completed. Thanks to this jetty it is now a lot easier to land both passengers and cargo on the island. The image on the 89p stamp shows the construction period.



The £1.40 top value is devoted to what very possibly is the most important event in Lundy's modern history. In 1977, Queen Elizabeth II celebrated her Silver Jubilee. As a part of the celebrations the royal family travelled around the UK on the royal yacht *Britannia*. On August 7th she visited Lundy. The royal party had a most pleasant day on the island and before returning to their ship the Queen met with all the islanders.

This year marks the Queen's Diamond Jubilee and the stamp can be considered as Lundy's participation in the celebrations.

The set was printed by Cartor, the French security printers, in sheets of 21 stamps. The designs are all based on Sarah's water colour paintings. The two lowest denominations had printings of 25,000 copies each; 10,000 copies of each were printed of the higher values. It is expected that the printing will cover the needs of the local post for the next two years.

In the case of the new historic stamps there are depictions of a puffin in the sheet margins.

On 26 May 2012, a temporary post office was established in the island's pub. One can easily imagine the hectic activity when hundreds of first day covers and other philatelic souvenirs were produced in response to requests from worldwide Lundy collectors.



Above, visitors outside the Marisco tavern; right the Marisco Tavern, St. Helena's Church (the tower of which can be seen behind the tavern) in the photo and post office.

Readers wanting to add these stamps to their collections are advised to contact the Lundy Postal Service at the following mailing address: Lundy Island, Bristol Channel, Devon EX39 2LY, England. The postage and packing costs for orders outside Europe are £4.85. They do accept payments by credit card. A list of all available stamps and other items can be obtained from the local post. Please also note that all stamps issued prior to 1990 are no longer valid for postage.

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