

STEPPER POINT NEWS SUMMER 2007 VOLUME I ISSUE 10

Patrons: Peter Prideaux-Brune and Rick Stein OBE



Staff Changes.

Derek Lindsey, Station Manager at Stepper Point since the reopening of the Lookout in 2000, has decided to step down. Derek worked tirelessly on behalf of the NCI and has seen Stepper Point transformed from an empty shell to the present excellent facility. He also guided the Station through its recent Declared Facility Status (DFS) event and it was fitting that he should receive the award on 9th November 2006. Many thanks, Derek, for all your tremendous hard work and dedication. You will be a hard act to follow.

Following the AGM held at the Memorial Hall on 10th May, a postal ballot to elect the next Station Manager was held. The two candidates George Barnes and Colin Davey both polled 19 votes each in the resulting count after a 100% turnout. The situation was referred to the NCI Trustees in London, who after some deliberation, have asked Colin Davey to be the new Station Manager with a 6 month probationary lead in period. Congratulations Colin!

Many of the 'old hands' have taken this opportunity to also stand down from the Committee, so Colin is now in the process of forming a new team to carry on the excellent work in the past and to meet the challenges of the future. More about the new team in the next newsletter.

One post already filled is that of Treasurer. Richard Wilson will take over from George when the annual accounts have been completed on 30th September 2007. However, Richard has already taken over the 'Friends of Stepper Point' responsibility so anyone wishing to communicate on this subject please see details provided later in the newsletter.

The Royal Cornwall Show

For the first time, NCI Stepper Point was showcased at the RCS. For three glorious June days 7th, 8th and 9th, volunteer watchkeepers manned the NCI 'stand', distributing leaflets and information about the NCI to an interested public. This was a very successful public relations exercise but it did, of course, have its costs. Exhibiting at prestigious shows such as the RCS does not come free and our costs in site rentals and exhibition requisites were £239.92 and we only took a total of £70.16 in the tins.



Pictured at the NCI Stand at the Royal Cornwall Show are, back row from left to right, George Barnes, Dave Towndrow, Peter Thorpe; seated facing, George and Anna Turpin, seated John Battersby and under table, Fred!

Other Fundraising

Two successful fundraising days were staged at Tesco (Wadebridge) and Trago Mills (Liskeard) On Thursday 14th and Sunday 17th June. The totals raised were £181.18 and £65 respectively.

A barbeque and fun night will be held at The Well Parc Hotel, Trevone on Wednesday 15th August 2007 starting at 6pm.

Overseas Visitors

'We do not understand the concept of the Coastwatch in East Timor' was a comment written in the Visitors' Book. This book has been kept in the watch since its opening and it makes interesting reading especially noting the wide range of people from overseas. One family came all the way from Padstow! Australia!!' To date the breakdown of overseas signatories is as follows:-

Germany 35, Australia 20, Canada 20, USA 14, Switzerland 14, New Zealand 12, Holland 7, Poland 3, Denmark 3, France 3, Belgium 3, Finland 1, Sweden 1, Uruguay 1, Lanzarote 1, East Timor 1.

‘... and here is the Weather Forecast’

The force of the wind is always keenly monitored by all watchkeepers and we frequently get requests from members of the general public and inshore fishermen as to the strength of the wind and especially its direction. In an ‘off duty’ moment, NCI Exmouth produced their alternative interpretation of the famous Beaufort Scale.

- Force 0.** Nothing moves including watchkeepers
1. Slight draught from downstairs
 2. Door now closed, still get a draught
 3. Paperwork begins to flap, but not watchkeepers!
 4. Pencils and pens start to roll about
 5. All exits secured, paper still blows around
 6. Side windows let in water (with sound effects)
 7. Windows misted, vision precluded
 8. Buckets readied
 9. Windows leak, an internal water feature is observed
 10. Lookout vibrates
 11. No lookout!
 12. Phone coastguard from nearest pub

Wreck and Rescue around Padstow’s Doom Bar (Lodenek Press)

This previously mentioned book will be available at £7.95 from all local outlets in August. Any Friends of Stepper wishing to order a copy please contact the author, Brian French at sbfrench@tiscali.co.uk

History and Development of the NCI; A guide to All Stations

This comprehensive history of the NCI with an illustrated guide to all the 36 National Stations, compiled by Brian French, is due to be published by Ingoldmells Press in early 2008. Again contact Brian as above for further information

An Incident Recorded

Watch keeper Peter Thorpe who was on duty on 10th June 2007 answered a phone call from Falmouth CG at 16.52. A ‘999’ call had been made by a woman on the coast path who had observed a rubber dinghy carrying two children and a green canoe paddled by a girl. Her concern was that they could be drifting out to sea. Falmouth asked whether they were in our view. At 16.55 Peter confirmed he could see the ‘targets’ but that they seemed to be in no distress. FCG asked us to keep observing.



At 17.10 Peter phoned Falmouth to say the targets were out of sight under Stepper Point. The canoes came back into view at 17.23 and appeared now to be drifting out to sea on a falling tide and with the wind Force 4 blowing from the SE. Peter phoned FCG and suggested that assistance should be readied. At 17.24 the Rock ILB was tasked to attend and moments later the fishing vessel Blue Fox (PW460) closed with the canoes. Peter relayed this to FCG and they contacted Blue Fox who agreed to assist. At 17.26 Blue Fox attended alongside the canoes and waited for the ILB which arrived at 17.24. The girls were taken on board and the dinghy and canoe were taken in tow. At 18.10 FCG stood the operation down and thanked Stepper for its assistance.

Peter phoned the Rock ILB and discovered that the children were trying to paddle to Newland Island!

A potential disaster averted – which is why we do the job!

The Daymark

The most interesting feature of Stepper Point, Padstow, is perhaps **not** our newly refurbished and extended Watchhouse, magnificent though it is. The question most frequently asked by walkers who pass by the Watch on the Coastal Path is, “What’s that chimney thing over there?” That ‘chimney thing’, standing on the cliff edge about fifty yards North-West of our Station is the Daymark. It is a stone tower, 40 ft high, 240 feet above sea level, visible from 30 miles away and 177 years old.

In the late December of 1826 Henry Price Rawlings wrote to the *Royal Cornwall Gazette* ‘in support of such means ...for the averting of calamities to which the shipping interests have been exposed since time immemorial in the vicinity of Padstow harbour’. Price Rawlings cited 96 vessels lost in or near Padstow from 1800 to 1826! In 1929 the *Padstow Harbour Association for the Preservation of Life and Property from Shipwreck* was formed, with Price Rawlings as chairman, under the patronage of the Reverend Charles Prideaux- Brune, with a brief to make the entrance to Padstow harbour less hazardous.



The construction of the Daymark, as a ship’s visual guide to the harbour entrance, was part of a series of measures taken by this body including the building of a lifeboat house at Hawkers Cove and the installation of capstans along Stepper Point to help incoming vessels clear the notorious Doom Bar. The Daymark cost the sum of £29, and money was raised by giving donors voting rights in the *Harbour Association*. One guinea would buy one vote. There was some discussion about putting some sort of beacon in or on the Daymark but this was never taken up. (Trevose lighthouse, West of Stepper Point, was eventually built in 1847)

So the Daymark still stands, and despite being declared ‘UNSAFE’, is a regular place for rest, refreshment and shelter, and if walkers come up to the Watch they get a free history lesson as well.

Stepper Point Puzzler

Starting from the shaded W in the centre, move up or down or sideways but NOT diagonally to find the path through 16 meteorological terms.

E	E	C	L	I	H	U	T	Y	R	E
R	O	L	C	M	E	M	I	F	O	C
G	N	E	Y	A	T	I	D	E	W	A
E	E	T	C	R	E	H	T	A	E	S
D	M	P	E	O	B	A	R	T	N	T
E	R	U	R	S	W	S	E	R	A	C
O	R	T	A	I	I	S	R	O	U	I
T	N	A	D	O	N	I	P	H	G	R
L	L	A	P	S	D	O	E	D	U	R
I	N	F	E	R	F	N	O	N	H	N
A	R	D	E	O	N	T	M	S	O	O

Answers are on page 6 of the newsletter. No cheating!

Visit our Patron at the beautiful 16th Century Elizabethan mansion of Prideaux Place, Padstow. Telephone 01841532411

Crowds flock to see rare falcon

by Tony Davies (watchkeeper)



The Stepper Point lookout sits just above the South-West Coast Path, at one of the most spectacular locations on the entire North Cornwall coastline, so it’s no surprise that it attracts visitors from all over the country, and indeed the world. Nothing could prepare us, however, for the exotic and glamorous stranger from the frozen north who dropped in last winter around the shortest day, took a shine to the place, and decided to stay until the spring equinox.

Watchkeeper Dave Towndrow spotted her first on a cold December morning, sitting on a wall just west of the lookout: a big hawk, buzzard-sized, pure white marbled with black on the wings and breast. Dave recorded the sighting at the lookout, but nothing more was seen of the mysterious visitor until a month or so later, when Tony Davies spotted her huddled against the cold on a gatepost just above the Hawker's Cove cottages. This time he was able to watch her closely through binoculars for around ten minutes, and to confirm that she was, as we had suspected, a superb specimen of the largest and fiercest of falcons, the **Gyrfalcon**. The white plumage indicated that she came from Greenland (Scandinavian birds are darker), the gunmetal blue of her bill and feet that she was a young bird, and the imposing size told us that she was a female (with falcons, the female is not only deadlier than the male, but larger too). She took up residence in the greenstone quarry below the lookout, flying out at dawn every day to hunt over the farmland to the south, and returning at dusk to settle down for the night. The Gyr is a great rarity in Britain (only two or three are spotted every year, most of them in the far north), and once word got out she – and we – were besieged by up to two hundred birders, some driving three hundred miles or more overnight for the chance of a 'tick'.

Around the end of February she tired of the celebrity circus and moved across to Pentire Point, where she continued to tantalise and occasionally thrill her admirers for another three weeks, before slipping quietly away one spring morning on the long, hazardous journey home. If she arrived safely, she may well have youngsters of her own by now, and it's not impossible that one of them may turn up on Stepper some winter morning. Like all our visitors, it'll get a warm welcome if it does.

Puzzle Answers

Windspeed, rainfall, tornado, isobar, trough, depression, front, monsoon, hurricane, weather, cyclone, temperature, degree, climate, humidity, forecast!

Visit our Patron at the Padstow Seafood Restaurant.

Telephone: 01841532700.

e-mail. reservations@rickstein.com

Friends of Stepper Point

If you have enjoyed reading this edition of our newsletter, please feel free to pass it on to a friend, whom you think could be interested in supporting us.

You may wish to visit our web site at www.stepper-point.co.uk where you will find regular updates of newsworthy items and information about our worthwhile project.

Membership forms for the Friends of Stepper can be printed from our website, or feel free to photocopy or use the form on the reverse of this page of the newsletter. Standing Order forms can be requested from the Treasurer, 01841-520517 or e-mail rwilson707@btinternet.co.uk.

If you are a taxpayer in the UK, by signing the membership form on the reverse of this newsletter it will enable us to claim an gift aid refund from the Inland Revenue of 28.2p on every £ of any donation you have made to us since the year 2002.

Stepper Point Contact Numbers

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Treasurer Designate: - Richard Wilson 01841-520517
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Membership Secretary: - Peter Barrett. 01208-841342
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Call Jamie on 01841-532380 01841-533088 07989435826
Pvh.com@virgin.net

Friends of Stepper Point - Application Form 2007

I/We would like to join the Friends of Stepper Point.

Name(s): _____

Address: _____

_____ Postcode: _____

E-mail: _____

I enclose _____ annual subscription of £15.00 (Adults)

and/or _____ annual subscription of £10.00 (Under 16's)

Please forward subscriptions to the address below:

(Cheques payable to 'NCI Stepper Point')

Hon Treasurer, Pegasus, Porthcothan Bay, Nr Padstow. Cornwall PL28 8LR

Subscribers will receive our newsletter on a twice yearly basis.

I would like a receipt from NCI Stepper Point.

I would like to make an additional donation of £_____.

If you would like to donate regularly by Direct Debit or Standing Order, please contact our treasurer who will forward the necessary form to you.

If you would like to receive the newsletter by email (saving us time and postage) please delete as applicable: YES / NO

Gift Aid

I certify I am a taxpayer in the UK and wish my contribution to be claimed in accordance with the rules applying to gift aid to charities.

I understand that I can cancel my contributions without any obligation at any time, by informing my bank and the Treasurer of NCI Stepper Point in writing.

Signature Dated