

# *Collecting "Puffinage" on Lundy Mail Before 1992*

André Dufresne

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Ever since I started collecting Lundy stamps in the late 1960's, I had imagined the scene: the boat has come in from Bideford (or Ilfracombe, depending on the date), and the mail bag is in the possession of Mr. Gade. As a resident of Lundy, I would wait a little to give him the time to sort the mail. After an hour or two I would walk to his office to claim my mail. He would then tell me how much Puffinage I owed, I would hand him a few pence in payment and I would get my letters duly stamped with Lundy stamps cancelled upon payment. I had seen pictures of his office so my imagination would do the rest.

But is it the way Puffinage was really collected? During my last visit with Tom Baker and Sharon Read I spent a few hours, like I always do, going over their amazing Lundy collection and I came upon the illustrated invoices which shed a new light on how Puffinage was collected on incoming mail. Unfortunately, the pictures are not so good. I took them in a hurry with my old mobile phone and Tom and Sharon gave me permission to use these pictures to illustrate this article.

One invoice bearing number 381 dated April 4th, 1953, to John Vicary at Stoneycroft is on a printed invoice form of M.C. Harman, Lundy, Bristol Channel with the words "via Bideford GPO" ruled out and a handstamp reading "c/o Devonair Ltd, / Wrafton Gate / Braunton / N. Devon". It covers twice "fetching wood from Beach to Stoneycroft" at 10 shillings per trip and "Puffinage: 3 shillings 10½ pence". Mr. Gade wrote "Received with thanks" and signed it on April 27th, 1953.

In his book "My life on Lundy", Felix W. Gade tells us that John Vicary was a young man in his early twenties who had secured permission from Mr. Harman to live the life of a crofter at Stoneycroft, to which Mr. Harman surprisingly agreed. He arrived in October 1951, with some difficulties owing to the lack of appropriate ships able to carry his horse and tools to Lundy due to post-war conditions. He worked as Jock Rockford's helping hand on the farm and he also attended the aircraft with his four-wheel cart and horse Gay Boy to carry loads to and from the Hotel, Store or Tavern.

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But eventually he was hospitalised for several months in the Summer of 1952. He came back to Lundy in the Spring of 1953, which is when these invoices were issued to him. John Vicary is also mentioned on page 56 of "Lundy By Air" by Stan and Joan Rendell and a picture of him with horse Gay Boy and cart carrying loads from the aircraft is shown on page 55.

Invoice number 419 (Fig 1), is dated July 7<sup>th</sup> (1953, year cut off), with the same heading, and again it includes Puffinage although in my photo the amount is cut off. The invoice also covers the cost of moving all John Vicary's possessions from the beach to Stoneycroft.

The second invoice to John Vicary, number 442 (Fig 2), is dated October 5<sup>th</sup>, 1953. Again, it has the same heading. Among other things it includes rent to 1<sup>st</sup> December 1954, and Puffinage to the amount of 2 shillings 9 pence plus two shillings in British postage.

There is one more invoice to John Vicary, numbered 322 (Fig 3) in Tom and Sharon's collection that is worth mentioning. It is an earlier invoice dated September 25<sup>th</sup>, 1952. The words "Lundy" and "via Bideford G.P.O." are ruled out and a boxed straight-line handstamp reading "Via G.P.O. Ilfracombe, N. Devon" is added. September, 1952 is the exact month when Devonair's last airplane was repossessed by the hiring company which explains the "via G.P.O. Ilfracombe" handstamp. What is interesting with this invoice is the two mentions: April to Sept. 20<sup>th</sup> (1952), for radiograms (6 shillings half penny) and April 28<sup>th</sup> (1952), for "radiogram sent by Mr. Vicary, 4 shillings 2 pence". The payment was acknowledged by Mr. Gade on 2<sup>nd</sup> December 1952. Vicary was by then out of the hospital but he had not yet returned to Lundy which he did only in the Spring of 1953, by which time air transportation had resumed, hence the "Devonair" handstamp on Fig 1 to 3.

So, it seems from these invoices that Puffinage was not paid upon receipt of mail but that it was added on a running bill to be paid periodically, a sensible approach.

I wish to thank Tom Baker and Sharon Read for their kind permission to reproduce these invoices from their collection.

**M. C. HARMAN** 419  
**LUNDY, BRISTOL CHANNEL**  
 Vm. BIDEFORD G.P.O.  
 c/o DEVONAIR LTD.  
 WRAFTON GATE  
 BRAUNTON  
 N. DEVON  
 In A/c with *Mr. John V. King*  
*Stoneycroft*

*July 7*

Carriage 1 saddle	
" 1 horse collar	
" 1 load drift timber	
" 1 cart pack	
" luggage to Stoneycroft	
" 145 lbs goods	
air freight, 1 saddle 9 1/2 lbs 23°	
" 1 collar 6 lbs 23°	
" 1 cart pack 13 1/2 lbs 23°	
" 270 lbs goods 23°	
Freightage	
Received with thanks	
pp M. C. Harman	
W. V. King	
July 9. 1953.	
E & OE	

Fig 1



# M. C. HARMAN

LUNDY, BRISTOL CHANNEL 322

Via AIRPOST

Telegrams—  
Lundy,  
Via Hartland Point  
Coastguard Station

Via G.P.O., ILFRACOMBE, N. DEVON

Sept 25<sup>th</sup> 1952

In A/c with

M<sup>r</sup> John Vicary

Date		£	s	d
	B/A.	6	8	1 $\frac{1}{2}$
	Loss gal. petrol.		18	6
	• 4 gals lubricating oil. freight.	1	9	
	• freight on petrol.		4	2
April 17 <sup>th</sup>	• radiograms.		6	$\frac{1}{2}$
April 28 <sup>th</sup>	• radiogram sent by M <sup>r</sup> Vicary.		4	2
Received with thanks				
p.p. M <sup>r</sup> C. Harman				
J. A. T. S. S.				
Dec. 2 <sup>nd</sup> 1952.				

ESOE

£ 9 10

Fig 3