

Lundy Island and the Puffin Stamps

By Jim Pettway

Located about 10 nautical miles across the Bristol Channel from the shore of Devon, England, lies Lundy Island. Today ferry service by which visitors and mail is carried to and from the island to Devon, England, takes about 2 hours and covers about 22 total miles.

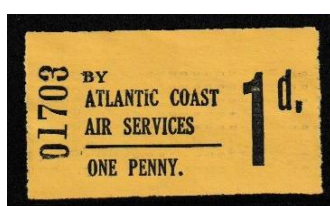
While always technically administered by Britain, it has had private owners over the years. One of these most notable owners was Martin Coles Harman who bought Lundy Island in 1924, proclaiming himself king.



The General Post Office, the state postal system carrier of the United Kingdom, opened on the island in 1887. At the end of 1927 the General Post Office ended its presence on Lundy Island and for the next two years “King” Harman carried the mail to and from the island without charge aboard the MV *Lerina*. On November 1, 1929, he decided to offset his expenses by issuing two postage stamps and thus began the puffin monetary system on Lundy Island. One puffin, the only world currency named for a bird, is equivalent to one English penny. Lundy Island is not the largest home of the Atlantic puffin, though a colony of puffins live at Jenny's Cove on the island. The largest population of the Atlantic puffin is Westman Islands off Iceland's south coast.

Two “Local Carriage Labels” or “Local Stamps” were approved by King Harman. The first two Lundy Island postage stamps issue in 1929 were the 1/2 puffin in pink and 1 puffin in blue. These and later the 6, 9 and 12 puffin stamps were printed by Bradbury Wilkinson & Company, Ltd. The later stamps were issued July 9, 1930.

Mail from Lundy Island to the mainland of England originally required a puffin local stamp and Great Britain stamps in the amount required to reach the mails ultimate destination. Early puffin stamps were required by Great Britain to be applied to the reverse side of the envelope. In 1962 the General Post Office approved affixing the local stamps to the front of the postcards and in 1992 to all mail but not too close to the British stamp(s).



The option of airmail service was made available to mailers following discussions with R.T. Boyd, founder of the Barnstaple and North Devon Flying Club and Mr. Harman. The service would be between Lundy Island and Heanton Court Aerodrome, North Devon, England. Martin Harman built a landing field on the island and regular airmail service began in 1935.

Hurriedly prepared labels for the Atlantic Coast Air Services (A.C.A.S.) were first used on April 1, 1935. The A.C.A.S. changed its name to Lundy and Atlantic Coasts Air Lines Ltd. (L.A.C.A.S.) and new labels were issued.



Airmail service to and from Lundy Island required three types of stamps or labels; first a Lundy stamp, then an A.C.A.S. or L.A.C.A.S. label and finally a British stamp. Airmail service was discontinued during April 1939.



Beginning in 1974 Lundy Island stamps incorporated the puffinage (Lundy stamp charge) and the United Kingdom (UK) rate. The Lundy Island stamp is now the only postage stamp required for mail between Lundy Island and the UK.

Go online to <https://www.landmarktrust.org.uk/lundyisland/discovering-lundy/lundy-post/> to order available new and historic stamp issues and items. Lundy Island stamps continue to be issued.