

### **U3A TRIP TO LOOE ISLAND**

On Wednesday 20th May some lucky members of the U3A (with one or two extras to make up the numbers) enjoyed a great trip to St. George's Island off Looe - commonly referred to as Looe Island. This was a follow on from our talk by Abigail Crosby on The Marine Environment at the beginning of the year.

The island was purchased by two sisters back in 1965 for £22,000.00 - which was a fair amount of money in those days. They made their home there in Island House (which had been built by the Customs people to keep an eye on smugglers) and they lived there for the rest of their lives. The last surviving sister, Babs Atkins, died in 2004 bequeathing the Island to the Cornwall Wildlife Trust to be managed as a nature reserve.

The Island has two wardens who live there permanently and also a more elderly couple who first went there as visitors and stayed to help the sisters as they grew less able in their later years. We were met off the boat by the wardens and escorted up to Island House where the first group were waiting (the boat only takes 10 - 12 people at a time) and our tour began! The island is a very important breeding site for a great number of sea birds, and has the second largest colony in Cornwall of great black backed gulls. We were observed by grey seals as we made our way round the island - or maybe it was just the one seal who was following us? The island is unusual in that it has wooded areas as well as grassy cliffs and shingle beaches and 22 Hebridean Sheep live there somewhere although we have no idea where they were on the day we visited! They are very hardy so stay out in all weathers grazing the scrub to keep it more suitable for wild flowers and butterflies.

We were very lucky with the weather as you can see from the photographs and very grateful to Hilary who not only organised it all for us but baked cakes as well for us to have with our picnics!

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