

**THE TRINITY HOUSE LUNDY ARCHIVE:
A PAPER IN MEMORY OF THE LIGHTHOUSE KEEPERS OF LUNDY**

By

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INTRODUCTION

The approaches to the Bristol Channel along the northern coast of Cornwall and Devon offer very little shelter for the seafarer during severe weather conditions. Lundy, however, situated at the mouth of the Channel central to the busy sea lanes, is one exception and has provided an important refuge on the leeward side of the island throughout the historic period. Before the navigational aids of the lighthouses were built, the island must also have proved hostile to the mariner, especially during hours of darkness and poor visibility. The number of shipwrecks and marine disasters around the island bear testimony to this. The dangers were considerable; although the tidal streams to the west of Lundy are moderate, they are strong around the island. There are several bad races, to the north-east (The White Horses), the north-west (The Hen and Chickens) and to the south-east. There are also overfalls over the north-west bank.

Some appreciation of the dangers the island posed can be seen from the statistics issued by a Royal Commission of 1859 who were reporting on a harbour refuge scheme. They noted that: "out of 173 wrecks in the Bristol Channel in 1856-57, 97 received their damage and 44 lives were lost east of Lundy; while 76 vessels were lost or damaged and 58 lives sacrificed west of Lundy, thus showing the island to be nearly in the centre of the dangerous parts" (quoted in Langham A and M, 1984,92). A meeting of Bideford council forty-five years later, in 1904, reported that, "over 137 lives, roughly, had been lost in the Bristol Channel area in twelve months, but in October 1886, over 300 lives were lost inside Lundy and from 18-20 steamers foundered" (ibid). An annual register of wrecks was published from 1850 until the First World War, and the first Lundy record appears on the second day of the establishment of the register (ibid, 87). Many of the victims of these wrecks were interred in the burial ground now overlooked by the Old Light.

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The first steps towards improving the situation took place in 1786, when a group of Bristol merchants offered to build a lighthouse and to maintain it at their own expense. Beacon Hill was the site selected as being the most suitable and the foundations were laid in 1787. It seems, however, that the project came to a premature end and the site lay abandoned until 1819 when Trinity House obtained a 999 year lease for the site. The extracts which follow are taken from the Trinity House By (Board Meeting) Minutes, and are of some interest regarding the establishment of the Old Lighthouse:

Thursday 17th December 1818: "A letter from Thomas Grant Jr. Esq., our collector at Bideford, was read returning the Subscription for a Light on Lundy Island, signed by the Ship Owners and Masters of that Port."

Thursday 11th March 1819: "It was referred to Capt. Aaron Chapman and Capt. Brown, to make enquiry respecting the Subscription to Lundy Island Light, at Lloyds, and to take such steps as may be necessary to procure the Signatures of the Ship Owners thereto."

Thursday 8th April 1819: "Capt. Brown laid before the Board the Subscription to the proposed Light on Lundy Island, which he had received from Mr Buckle, Chairman of the Society of Ship-Owners, signed by a number of respectable Ship Owners of London."

Thursday 15th April 1819: "A letter from Sir Aubrey de Vere Hunt Bart., Proprietor of

Lundy Island, dated at Currah, Rathkeale, Ireland, 4th Instant, was read: acknowledging his Receipt of the Corporation's Letter notifying their Intention to build a Light-House on that Island; and referring to his Brother-in-Law, Mr Rice, 5 Weymouth Street, Portland Place, as his Agent empowered to treat on his Behalf in Respect to such Stone as may be wanted for the Building and Ground for the Inclosure. And it was referred to Mr Alexander, our Surveyor, to treat for the Purchase accordingly, with Mr Rice, of such Stone and Land as may be wanted for the Inclosure and Buildings, exclusive of the Lighthouse."

Thursday 29th April 1819: "The Deputy-Master reported to the Board, that Mr Rice had attended at the House this morning, on behalf of Aubrey de Vere Hunt, Proprietor of Lundy Island, to treat for the sale of the Ground that will be wanted for the Inclosure round the intended Lighthouse, and the Stone to be quarried for the Building of the Light House and Premises; And that an Agreement had been enter'd into with him, on behalf of Sir Aubrey de Vere Hunt, for Two Acres of the Land, at the rate of 15 Guineas per Annum, on Lease for 999 years: and to pay the Proprietor for the Fee Simple of the same, at the Rate of 30 Years purchase; for which he is to receive (including Compensation for the right of quarrying all such Stone as may be requisite) the sum of £500: which the Board approved of: And referred it to the Deputy master and Wardens to carry the said Agreement into Effect."

Thursday 27th May 1819: "Capts. Lewin and Gooch, the Committee to whom it was referred to select a proper site for the Light-House on Lundy, having return'd from their Survey of the Island, laid before the Board a Report in writing of their Proceedings, Remarks and Observations: and recommending Chapel-Hill as the fittest Situation for the Proposed Light-House, and the height of the Tower to be 80 feet. The Board concurred in the Report of the Committee and referred it to the Committee of Lights to carry it into Effect accordingly." (See the report in the Select Entries Folio 88.)

Thursday 22nd July 1819: "Mr Weston our Solicitor attended, with a Copy of Mr Attorney General's Report to the King recommending the Grant of a Patent to this Corporation for enjoying the Tolls subscribed to the Lundy Island Light, which is now preparing accordingly to receive the Great Seal."

Thursday 25th August 1819: "A letter from the Foreman, reporting the Progress of the Works at Lundy Island was read: and an application from Mr Alexander for a further Advance of £1000 on Account thereof, was read and referred to the Committee of the Light Houses."

Thursday 10th February 1820: "The Deputy Master acquainted the Board, that a letter being received from Mr George Robinson Jr. stating that the Lantern Lamps, and Reflectors would be completed on the Tower of the Lundy Island Light ready for the first Exhibition of the Light by the 21st Inst. an Advertisement to give Notice thereof to the Trade, has been publish'd in the Daily Papers, fixed up, and printed for Distribution at the several Ports, which the Board approved of." (See Notice Select Entries Folio 93.)

The building was designed by Daniel Alexander, one of the best known of architects and Civil Engineers at this time; the builder was Joseph Nelson. Alexander had succeeded Samual Wyatt as Consultant Engineer to Trinity House in 1807 and designed many lighthouses, the first of which was South Stack in 1809. Some of the building's architectural details are unique, devised because the light was built in the uncompromising position on the highest and most exposed part of the island, facing squarely into the prevailing south-westerlies. The gable-end of the two-storied dwellings faced full into the wind; "Local granite had been used for all lighthouse building and so large were the copings used on this gable, and so heavy the kneelers at its base, that these were supported on special attached square columns. His (the architect's) gesture of defiant confidence was justified, as the interior is remarkably dry" (Haig and Christie 1975, 109 and 216). The building shows something of the admiration Alexander had for Piranesi's prints which show gigantic buildings made of Cyclopean stones.

It was soon realised, however, that the practicalities of the building's cyclopean defiance were not entirely satisfactory, for the height of the tower meant that the main light was often obscured by low cloud, mist and fog. Trinity House then decided to place

two Georgian 18 pounder canons at the base of the lighthouse to serve as an audible fog signal; these were later moved nearer sea level in a purpose-built Fog Signal Station. This station, better known as the Battery, was built in 1863, and consisted of a gunhouse and powder store with two houses for the gun crews and their families. During fog conditions a canon was fired every ten seconds. The buildings of the battery are now ruinous, although the canons are still in situ, despite them having been replaced by gun cotten rockets in 1878.

The Elder Brethren of Trinity House were still not satisfied with these arrangements and eventually decided to build two new lighthouses nearer to sea level at the north and south ends of the island. The building of these lighthouses was begun in 1896 and completed the following year when the Old Light became a day mark. In 1947 The Old Light and its buildings became the headquarters of the Lundy Field Society which had been founded the previous year by Martin Coles Harman, who had bought the island in 1925. The Old Light served the Society as its headquarters until 1968 and has featured on the cover of their Annual Report for many years. The island was bought for the nation by the National Trust in 1969 and is now financed and administered by the Landmark Trust. The Old Light's keepers quarters are now available as holiday accommodation and are still divided into the two original ground and first floor dwellings.

THE SITE OF THE OLD LIGHT

It is clear that the building of the Old Light in 1819 was intrusive in an archaeologically sensitive area, as the lighthouse and the keepers quarters are in close proximity to the early Christian cemetery. Prof. Charles Thomas, who carried out the excavation within the Beacon Hill burial ground in 1969, states that the enclosing granite dry-stone wall which was built by Trinity House, can still be seen to be partly imposed on a much older curvilinear enclosure reminiscent of the late Iron Age (Thomas 1994). Thackray makes a similar point, that the building of the Old Light has eradicated any possible former trace of the early beacon or coastal light which may be referenced on Norden's map of 1695 (Thackray 1989,98). I had also come to similar conclusions during my fieldwork on the megalithic solar calendar. In stone alignment 1 (SA1) I had observed that no foresight or backsight existed for stone NTAS 101,099, which is a short distance north-east of the Old Light. Stone NTAS 101,100, in SA2, which is about 100m to the north of this stone is orientated to the same event, the midsummer sunrise, and does have a foresight. It seemed a strong possibility that the building of the Old Light might have disturbed evidence. In SA3 it was shown that Beacon Hill was used as the actual foresight for the midsummer setting sun when observed from the stone situated at the northern end of the Tent Field; today the sun can be observed from this stone setting behind the tower of the Old Light. Again in SA6 I discussed the possibility of this alignment being used in conjunction with Beacon Hill for meridional observations (Farrah 1991,60-1).

The stones with solar orientations would have all been seen from the hill; indeed it seems that the stones have been placed in a rough circularity around the hill, the presence of which dominates the landscape. The only significant exception to this rule is the stone in the Brick Field which was found to be the only stone without a solar orientation. The Lundy stones are all to be found in an area which has been described as an area of high agricultural activity (Gardner 1972); the remains of field systems can be clearly seen in the Beacon Hill area and are thought to have once covered the whole of the southern end of the island (Thackray 1989,93-4). The megalithic calendar would have functioned as a guide to the islanders, providing a temporal control for the maritime and agricultural seasonal cycles by which they subsisted. Integral with the practicalities of such a seasonal calendar were the ritual needs of the community as a thanksgiving to their gods for a successful harvest and to ensure an abundance of crops. Among some communities, the important seasonal divisions of the year became the focus for ritual fire festivals: "All over Europe the peasants have been accustomed from time immemorial to kindle bonfires on certain days of the year, and to dance around or leap over them. Customs of this kind can be traced back on historical evidence to the Middle Ages, and their analogy to similar customs observed in antiquity goes with strong internal evidence to prove their origin must be sought in a period long prior to the spread of Christianity" (Frazer 1970,798). Mountains and hills have played a significant role throughout

mankind's spiritual history. They were held in special reverence as sacred places because they were seen as nearer the heavens and were seen as an interface between heaven and earth, a place where mankind could experience a spiritual communion with his gods. Beacon Hill would have fulfilled the requirements of such a ritual centre and may have been the place where Lundy's pagan communities worshipped.

It was such suppositions as these which made me decide to approach the Information Officer at Trinity House with a request to search the archives for any record of a survey of the Beacon Hill area prior to the building of the Old Light. This enquiry resulted in an archive in which many items were previously unknown. A catalogue of these items has been compiled, but for the completist there are some miscellaneous items of a more specialist nature which are not included here. These additional items are all held at the Trinity House Lighthouse Service Engineering Depot. All the Trinity House archives from the Legal and Information Section have recently been donated to the Guildhall Library. So far, a search for the Select Entry Folios 88 and 93, mentioned in the Trinity House Board Minutes (above) have not been found. These items could be of great interest, particularly regarding the establishment of the Old Light. Of the drawings 1321 (Plate 5, at rear) and 1322 (Plate 6, at rear) are particularly attractive, the originals being colour-washed. But the items which are of special interest are the maps which all have the Trinity House Engineers Office stamp in the bottom right-hand corner and are numbered 1317, 1318 and 1319 (Plate 4, at rear.).

An inspection of these maps suggests that these numbers are not in the order in which the maps were drawn-up, and the correct sequence should be, I suggest, 1318, 1317 and 1319. Map 1318, "A Sketch of Lundy Island" (February 1819) is a crudely executed representation of the island. Of special interest are two locations indicated with survey details for the building of the Old Light. One of these locations is on Chapel Ground, which was the name originally given to Beacon Hill. The other location is some distance north of this and is indicated by "a high knoll, 6 feet below Chapel Ground". There are bearings indicated by two lines from this latter location through Tibbets Hill. A written memo along this line states, "Bearing of the South head of the Sand Bank Masked by Tibbets hill". Tibbets Hill is also indicated as being 21ft below Chapel Ground. There is also a very faint arrow and note above "Bearing Bristol Channel" pointing to a path running from the Chapel Ground to the village, which reads, "a regular path way already established".

Map 1317 seems to be the work of the same cartographer but is a far better executed representation of the island; the detail on the map is of far greater accuracy. Again the same two locations are given as in Map 1318, but now there is greater detail of bearings. Chapel Ground gives three bearings to the north, St. Ann's lighthouses, Milford Harbour and North by compass (Magnetic North); to the south there are five, three of which are Hartland Point, Hartland Church and Hartland Quay. The second location, to the north, is detailed as "high hill, 6 feet-Chapel Ground". To the north the bearings are the same as those given for Chapel Ground. The bearing from this second location to Tibbets Hill has the note alongside reading, "On accurate measurement it is found that Tibbets Hill would not mask a light in a line with the Helwick Sands in this direction. The identification of this "high hill" to the north and 6 feet below Chapel Ground is almost certainly the cairn (NGR SS13244476) on Acklands Moor (NTAS 101,094) described by Thackray (1989): "A grass covered stony cairn, which measures 8m diameter and 0.3m in height, occurs on a high point to the north of Acklands Moor. There is a large depression in the centre containing two stones; on the south edge of the mound is a large, flat stone which may possibly have been the cover of a cist." Accurate identification of this site is difficult because it has been considerably mutilated by a quarry immediately adjacent and to the east of the cairn which is now often filled with rainwater (NTAS 101,094). Thackray suggests that the remains might simply be an Ordnance Survey cairn or upcast material from the quarry. The field system to the east of the cairn is also described by Thackray (NTAS 101,096) and can be clearly seen on Maps 1317 and 1319.

A bearing taken from the cairn to Tibbets Hill with a prismatic compass of 24 degrees compares favourably to the same bearing given on the map from True North of 24.5 degrees. A handwritten note in the margin of the top left-hand corner of this map reads, "Lundy Island. Watermark on paper 1817", which could suggest that this map is of an

earlier date than Map 1318. But given the corrective detail of the bearing from the second location to Tibbets Hill, it seems that Map 1317 must be of a later date.

Map 1319 "Plan of the Island of Lundy" is of a higher standard of draughtsmanship though some of the details do have a resemblance to details in the other two maps. The lettering on Map 1319 has many marked similarities to that on Map 1318. The lighthouse on Chapel Ground is clearly established. The only date on this map is 1820. The Trinity House Minutes, dated 10th February 1820, state that the Lundy Island Light would be ready for its first exhibition by the 21st of that month. It is possible that the map was drawn-up prior to this date as part of the Trinity House notice to mariners mentioned in these minutes. If this assumption is correct, then the Trinity House map is the earliest accurate map of the island known. However, some caution is necessary as the maps were drawn-up for Trinity House purposes and might not be so accurate as far as field boundaries and other topographic features are concerned. The map would certainly pre-date that surveyed by Lieutenant A.W. Robe of the Royal Engineers which was a correction of a survey made in 1804 by Mr Thomas Compton of the Corps of Military Surveyors and Draughtsmen for the Ordnance Map of Great Britain. It was from Lieutenant A.W. Robe's map from which the first edition of the one-inch to one-mile OS map was engraved (British Museum, map room, catalogue no. 299b).

THE AUTOMISATION OF THE LUNDY LIGHTHOUSES

The final chapter in the history of Lundy's navigation aids for the mariner commenced in 1970/71 with the automisation of Lundy North. This provided for the conversion of the main light to electric illuminant, the existing 1st Order mercury float optic being replaced with a 2x4 panel 4th Order revolving optic, mounted on an AGA gearless pedestal. The character of the light, a Group Flash of two every twenty seconds, was retained with a slightly increased intensity giving a geographical range of nineteen miles. The siren fog signal equipment was replaced with an electric fog signal giving two blasts every thirty seconds, powered by two Ruston and Hornsby air cooled 2YWA diesel engines. A fog signal stack and corridor were brick-built forward of the engine room and a fog detector was installed and was operative from 17th May 1974. All the alarms and indications for monitoring the station were transmitted to the base station remote control equipment at the South Lighthouse. This line used an additional circuit on the existing overland telephone poles, but being exposed to severe weather conditions, telemetry failures between the two lighthouses were a frequent occurrence so the station remained manned. This situation was improved when the GPO laid a coaxial cable underground in 1976 linking the two lighthouses. On Friday 5th November 1976 Lundy North was declared "automatic" and on Monday 8th November THV Stella removed the Lundy North crew leaving the station unmanned.

In the spring of 1991 a project team from the Trinity House Engineering Directorate at East Cowes commenced work on a second upgrade, converting Lundy North to solar power. It was decided to utilise the existing brick-built fog signal stack for this conversion, the solar panels and the light unit being located on the roof. There are eighteen solar panels, twelve for the main light, one for the emergency light, three for the telemetry and two for the domestic supply. The light by Orga of the Netherlands comprises of a main light giving a flash of 0.12 seconds with an eclipse of 14.88 seconds with a range of fifteen nautical miles. This is mounted above the emergency light which was a one second flash every fourteen seconds with a range of ten nautical miles. There is no fog signal; this was discontinued at Lundy North on recommendation of the Trinity House Navaid Review of 1987. The monitoring and control of the station is from Nash Point Lighthouse via a telemetry link using a cellphone and a Trend 1Q131 controller. It is anticipated that the automisation of Lundy South Lighthouse will commence in August of this year with conversion to solar power. A total of thirty-two solar panels are to be located in the south-west garden of the dwellings. The main and emergency light unit will be by Orga, the same type as at Lundy North. The tower will be retained for this conversion and the main and emergency light will be located in the lantern. The main light will have a flash of 0.13 seconds with an eclipse of 4.87 seconds and a range of fifteen nautical miles. The emergency light will have a 0.7 second flash with a 4.3 second eclipse with a range of nine nautical miles. There will be a SA850 three stack electric emitter fog signal with a two second blast every twenty-three seconds. The

monitoring and control will be from the base station at Holyhead, Anglesey.

If automisation of Lundy South proceeds according to plan, it is expected that the keepers will be taken ashore on December 12th, 1994, bringing to an end 174 years of lighthouse keeping on Lundy. Over the years the Trinity House vessels, helicopters and keepers have often proved an important asset in the island's welfare. The census returns for 1871 and 1881 show that the lighthouse keepers and their families were a substantial part of the island community. Out of a population of sixty islanders in 1871, twenty were lighthouse personnel, while in 1881 a population of fifty-one included eighteen lighthouse personnel (Langham 1986). They often participated towards the island's husbandry when labour resources were low, besides enlivening many a conversation. To these "sea monks", lighthouse keeping was always more a way of life, as John Fowles has aptly written, "that even those sailors in stone ships, offshore lighthouse men, can still enter into a very curious emotional relationship with their towers; not at all the sort of thing that the economic view of man as mere smoke in the wage-labour wind allows for" (Fowles and Goodwin 1978, 19). That curious emotional relationship was greatly enhanced for the keepers who were fortunate enough to be sent to Lundy, widely acknowledged as being one of the best appointments in the service.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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APPENDIX - CATALOGUE TO TRINITY HOUSE LUNDY ARCHIVE

(Trinity House Lighthouse Service Engineers Department)
Compiled by Caroline Thackray and Robert W.E.Farrah.

818 Table of Reference - Specifying the materials of which the building and the finishings are constructed.

1317 Map of Lundy - Lundy Island. Watermark on paper 1817.

1318 A Sketch of Lundy Island (Taken Feby 1819)

1319 Plan of the Island of Lundy 1820.

1320 Sketch of the Bristol Channel in the vicinity of Lundy Island (from the latest chart) 1819.

1321 Lundy Lighthouse, Elevation 1820.

1322 Lundy Lighthouse, Vertical Section.

1323 Lundy Lighthouse, Plans.

1324 Lundy Lighthouse, 1820. Plan of The General Disposition.

1325 Sketch of the Bristol Channel in the Vicinity of Lundy Island.

1326 Plan of the Ground belonging to the Corporation of Trinity House on Lundy Island. 23rd January 1828.

1328 Road on Lundy Island, c. 1837.

1329 Lundy Island Road from the Beach to the Lighthouse.

1330 Lundy Lighthouse, Elevation towards SSE. Also front Elevation of Low Light.

1339 Lundy Lighthouse, Elevation showing Low Light. December 1863.

1340 Lundy Lighthouse Plans. December 1863.

7172 Lundy Island, Arcs of Illumination of Proposed Lighthouses. Surveyed by Staff Commander George Stanley, R.N. 1879.

7190 Lundy Island Northend, Proposed Lighthouse and Siren Fog Signal. 24th Sept. 1894.

7192 Lundy Island Southend. Proposed Lighthouse and Explosive Fog Signal. September 1894.

7285 Lundy Island New Lighthouse South End. Ground Plan. 13 April 1895.

7286 Lundy Island New Lighthouses South End, South West Elevation. 13 April 1895.

7349 Lundy Island New Lighthouses North End. Ground Plan. 19 March 1896.

7467 Lundy Island New Lighthouses North End. East Elevation and Longitudinal Section. 7 July 1896.

NO REFERENCE: Memorandum entry ? "Lundy: A Statement of the heights to which a Light House Tower must be built on the Chapel Hill, to be visible over Tibbets Hill in a

NE direction towards Worms Head."

NO REFERENCE: Lundy Lighthouse, Vertical Section at A and B on Plans. Plan at Level of First Floor. Plan of Watchroom. Plan of Lantern. 22nd September 1866.

NO REFERENCE: Lundy Island Ordnance Survey. Second Edition, 1906. Written Note: See Engineer's Report Dated 8th December, 1913. Right of Way Shown by Red Line.

CATALOGUE TO TRINITY HOUSE, LUNDY ARCHIVE
(Trinity House Lighthouse Service Legal and Information Section)
Compiled by Robert W.E. Farrah.

1. Abstracts of title of Sir Aubrey de Vere Hunt, Baronet, to the Island of Lundy dated 11.6.1819.
2. Lease by Sir Aubrey de Vere Hunt, Baronet, to Trinity of a piece of land on Lundy Island for 999 years dated 1.7.1819.
3. Agreement between Trinity House and Revd H.G. Heaven for improvement of a landing place on Lundy Island dated 26.7.1892.
4. Exchange of land on Lundy Island from Revd H.G. Heaven to Trinity House dated 17.10.1899.
5. Supplementary abstract of title to land adjoining Lundy South Lighthouse - Ann Heaven dated 1908.
6. Conveyance of land adjoining Lundy South Lighthouse from Revd H.G. Heaven to Trinity House dated 19.11.1908.
7. Deed of declaration of right of way - Revd H.G. Heaven and others to Trinity House dated 29.5.1914.
8. Abstracts of title M.C. Harmen to two sites of land on Lundy Island dated 1898.

FOR ENQUIRIES CONCERNING ITEMS IN THE T.H. CATALOGUES.
For further information on the Trinity House Lundy Archive contact:

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