

LUNDY FROM BEACH TO PLATEAU: A REASSESSMENT

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THE EARLY ROUTE AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE ROAD

The earliest mention of the path from the beach is given by Camden at the beginning of the 17th century, who describes it as steep and narrow, "One way of entrance it hath into it, wherein can two men hardly goe afront together on foote" (Camden 1610, 202. Camden's description is quoted from Sir Thomas de la More, 1478-1535.) This is taken to refer to what is now called the "old path" or the "goat path" which cut into the sideland, and led northwards up from the landing place before curving inland at the entrance to St John's Valley. There is at present no evidence by which a date can be assigned to this path; that it was narrow, steep and uneven could mean that it had been developed by use rather than construction.

The lowest section of this path (from the quay to the site of the former store house) has been widened into the present Beach Road. At the site of the store house the old and new roads diverge; the original path has fallen away and been replaced by steps leading to the old upper section, which can still be used as a short-cut to the Battlements (Fig. 1). When using this route it is easy to appreciate the difficulties that must have attended the transport of loads by this path, whether carried by men or by donkeys.

Langham (1994, 71-5) projects that in the 13th century a path led directly up the cliff from the beach to the castle via a dog-leg bend up the saddle. There is part of a path running south below the castle parade towards the saddle, at a level below the one that leads to Benson's Cave, which may be the remains of such a path or may have been associated with outer defences of the castle which have fallen away. But as there is no documentary record, and the topography of the area has undergone a long series of changes caused by landslips, there is not sufficient evidence to provide a conclusion as to its date or purpose.

Langham states that this cliff path was followed later by a quay and path made by Bevill Grenville. There are some considerations which do not support such a sequence, or suggest that the cliff path was a secondary route:

(i) Before the castle was built there would have been no reason to take the steep climb up the cliff to the castle site. An easier option would have been to use an approach up the sideland and up or across St John's Valley. The habitation before 1242 was located in the present Bull's Paradise, and would have required a path leading inland (Gardner 1971, 8-9; 14-15).¹

(ii) Even allowing for changes in the configuration of the saddle and the area below the castle, the route would have been a climb rather than a path. It would be unsuitable for persons or animals carrying loads, and the terrain is loose shale, which adds to the hazard. Apart from fuel and supplies for the garrison, building materials and armaments would have had to be carried up during the construction of the castle.

(iii) Camden's description of a path dates from before 1610, and before Grenville's works (c1630).

The focus of habitation moved to the castle after 1244, and later evidence suggests that there were two routes in use to the summit at or after this date: one, the climb directly up the cliff, and the other the path described by Camden. Grose's plan of the castle drawn in 1775 shows a footpath from the point where the path turns into St

¹ Calendar of Liberate Rolls, 1240-45, 162: Order, Nov 10th 1242, to "repair the king's buildings in the island of Lundy, so that the king's knights and sergeants living there can dwell there safely."

John's Valley (the Battlements) to the castle, which cuts across the bailey wall and the fosse (Grose 1776, 191-6).² It does not have a gateway, as does the path to the west, which suggests that when the castle was built (1243-44) access was from the west, and that the footpath down to the landing place via the Battlements developed as a short cut. There is no indication of a route up the cliff on Grose's plan.

The use of two paths would be quite logical. The steeper route was much quicker but very strenuous; it could have been used by people who were not encumbered by any load or handicapped by physical limitations. The main path would have been for normal

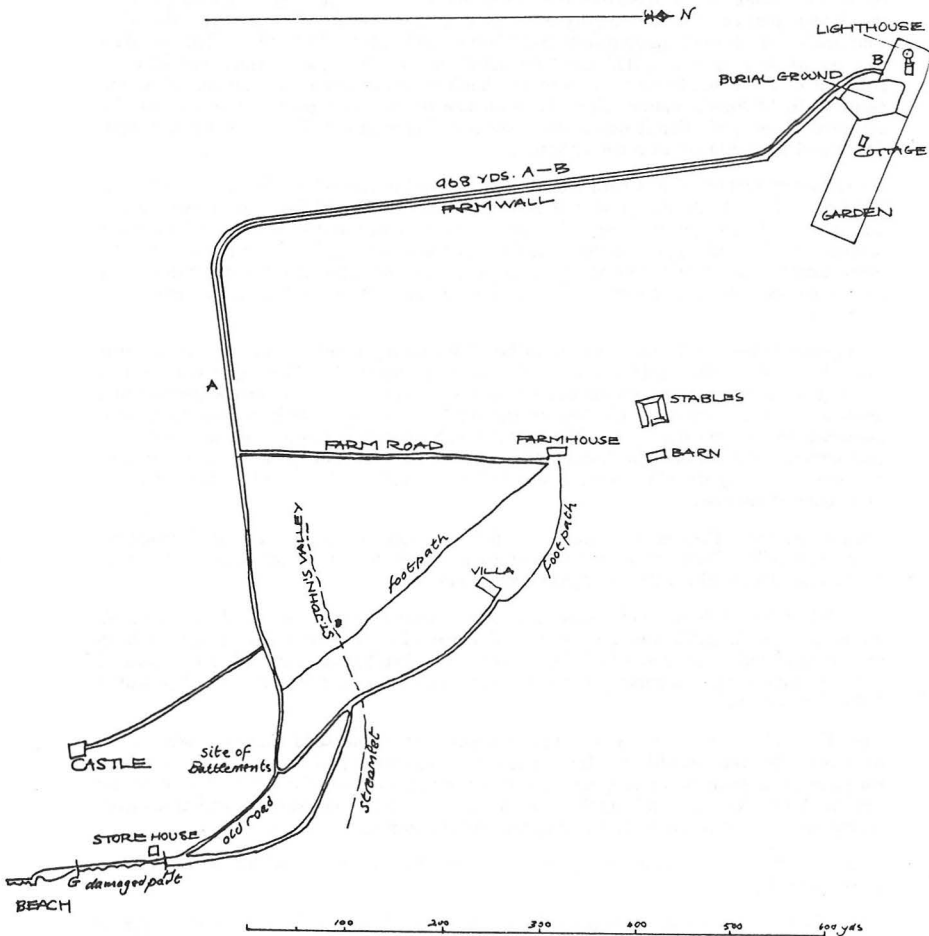


Figure 1. Drawing made from Trinity House Engineers' Archive, Plan No 1329, 1842, by Peter Rothwell ("Site of Battlements", "St John's Valley" added).

use, and certainly for the carrying of loads, the use of pack-animals, and for driving stock. As now, at the turn into St John's Valley there could have been a choice between the footpath to the castle, or paths up or across the valley.

The existence of two ascents is confirmed by the account written in 1752: "The Path to the House was so narrow and steep that it was scarce possible for an Horse to ascend it - the Inhabitants generally by the Assistance of a Rope climbed up a perpendicular Rock in which were steps cut out to place their feet when they landed by the cave or magazine, where Mr Benson lodged his goods..." (Anon 1787, *North Devon Magazine*, 1824. All references that follow to the writer of 1752 and 1787 are taken from this source.)

There would have been little inducement to use the very steep climb after c1776 once the main habitation was at the farmhouse, and after the new road was built by 1839. Although such a route has been used very occasionally within living memory, the loose shale makes it dangerous as well as taxing.

The transportation of heavy loads up the old path must have been a particularly onerous and time-consuming task during the building of the Old Light (1819-20), and for carrying supplies of oil and fuel subsequently. Cargoes were landed on the beach, carried to the store-house, and then gradually moved up to the lighthouse by manual labour or donkeys. When William Hudson Heaven built his new house in 1836-38 he decided to improve the path so that horse-drawn carts could be used.

In 1837 Mr Heaven wrote to the Trinity House Board in relation to his contract for haulage for the lighthouse, and invited participation in the construction of a new road for their mutual advantage (THGM 30 010, Vol 30, 354; 631). A letter from his agent refers to the work being done on it in 1838, and by July 1839 Trinity House reports recommended making an agreement with Mr Heaven to use "his part of the road" (the newly-built section).³ The Trinity House plan of 1842 (Fig. 1) shows the old path and the new section of road, which Heaven cut out from the store house up to the present Battlements on the present route past the entrance to the Villa. As Trinity House had declined to share in the expense of making the road, they were not permitted to use the new section, although they had a right of way over the original route. Eventually in 1842 agreement was reached for Trinity House to use all the road in return for paying for its maintenance.⁴

It is not clear whether the rest of the road was widened and surfaced at that time, but it seems likely that that work, too, was carried out by Heaven by 1841. In 1829 Trinity stores were carried up by men; "a work of considerable labour" (THGM 30 052, Vol 1, 5). In 1832 Denham described "...the only tolerable landing-place, and from whence, a bridle-path communicates with the cart roads leading separately to the Light-house and farm," which suggests that the roads where carts could be used were on the plateau as indicated in Fig. 1 (Denham 1832, 5). The engineer's report on the "New Road from the landing to the LightHouse" indicates that the whole length was renewed (THGM 30 010 Vol 30, 184, 354; Vol 32, 530 (1841). Further support is found in Chanter's statement (1871, 560) that Trinity House built the road from the beach to the lighthouse which was corrected in the subsequent monograph (1878, 24) to: "This road was made some years since by the present proprietor," presumably from information given to him by the Rev H G Heaven. The statement that Trinity House had built the road from the Battlements to the plateau (Langham & Langham 1960, 71; Langham 1994, 62) therefore seems very doubtful.

² Grose's plan also shows a capstan at the entrance to the cave, where goods were presumably hauled up the cliff (reinforcing the contention that they would not be carried up at this point). Benson smuggled and secreted tobacco on Lundy, PRO T 1/352.

³ HA, letter from Malbon to Heaven, 30.05.1838: "Smith has finished half the road and looks well..." THGM, 30 052, Vol 5, 208.

⁴ THGM 30 004, Vol 22, 155; 30 010, Vol 33, 193. Heaven appears to have been unaware that Trinity House had carried out all the repairs to the road during De Vere Hunt's ownership (Landmark Trust Archive, correspondence 1821-27).

In 1852 Heaven widened the road at the junction of the old path and the new road, and the battlemented wall was constructed to improve safety on the sharp curve (THGM 30 052, Vol 21, 93, 295).

The use of the term "road" is perhaps misleading, since what it referred to was in reality a cart-track, but it does serve to distinguish it from footpaths. It is notable that many of the early maps show a footpath across St John's Valley and across Millcombe to the farm; two similar routes, which skirt Brambles bungalow, can still be followed as short cuts, and may possibly represent an early route to Bull's Paradise.

Repairs to the road along its seaward section have been recorded on innumerable occasions in the Vere Hunt Letters (Landmark Trust Archive, 1821-7), Trinity House archives, and the Heaven diaries. Apart from routine road-mending there have been periodic landslips that have involved quite extensive rebuilding, as recently in 1954, 1969 and 1979.

THE QUAY AND SLIPWAY

Bevill Grenville, about 1630, wrote to his father that he had "lately made a quay and harbour there at my great cost, which the island ever wanted before..." (Stuclely 1983, 59). This indicates that it was the first quay built, at least in living memory, and that he constructed some kind of protective pier.⁵ Langham (1994, 73) states that the present quay is the original 16th century one started by Sir Richard Grenville, but there is no evidence for this, and the statement that it was completed in the 1580s by his grandson, Bevill, must be in error as he was not born until 1596.

The writer of 1787 says that "Sir John Warren begun a Quay which was never finished," and the plan drawn up for Warren's projected pier extends from "part of old pier" shown on the extreme right edge of the page as a pile of rocks.⁶ Britton & Brayley (1803, 249-51), whose information dated from 1794, wrote that "...on landing the visitor is obliged to climb over various craggy masses, before he can reach the steep and winding track that leads to the summit".⁷ A Trinity House plan for repairs to be made in 1842 (No 1328) shows the quay marked as "Trinity Quay" which, together with the marker stone "TH 1819," indicates that it was built by Trinity House in conjunction with the lighthouse. Thus, in 1819 any remains of Grenville's c1630 or Warren's c1775 quays would have been either incorporated or obliterated.⁸

An early undated postcard shows the path and part of the quay with a semi-circular extension on the seaward side, with a capstan, for which there is as yet no explanation (Langham 1995, 16).⁹ It is not shown on the Trinity House plan (Fig. 1) nor on the plan for alterations to the slipway in 1892 (Fig. 2). It is difficult to draw any conclusion from a study of the present structure, as repairs and alterations have been carried out many times, notably 1918-21 (NTA).

There was formerly a limekiln on this quay, which was destroyed by a landslip in 1954 (Langham 1995, 61). The practice of burning lime with culm (coal dust) for both fertiliser and building purposes was widespread by the later 18th century. Alongside the

⁵ The pirate, Salkeld, "obliged his prisoners to carry stones for the purpose of forming a quay for a port" (Langham 1994, 34). Salkeld (1610) was not in possession for very long and it is unlikely that the purpose was fulfilled. There was a considerable amount of pier building carried out on the North Devon, Cornwall and Somerset coasts in the late 15th and early 16th centuries, probably related to the development of maritime exploration, privateering, and trade.

⁶ The writer holds slide copies of this, the plans for a fort, and Borlase Warren's elegant intended residence.

⁷ Steinman Steinman (1836) takes some of his description from Britton & Brayley, citing "1794... Feltham's MS penes John Britton Esq."

⁸ Lack of distinction between a pier (a construction projecting into the sea) and a quay (a landing place) can confuse the issue.

⁹ In this photograph the original point of divergence between the old path and the new road is also clear.

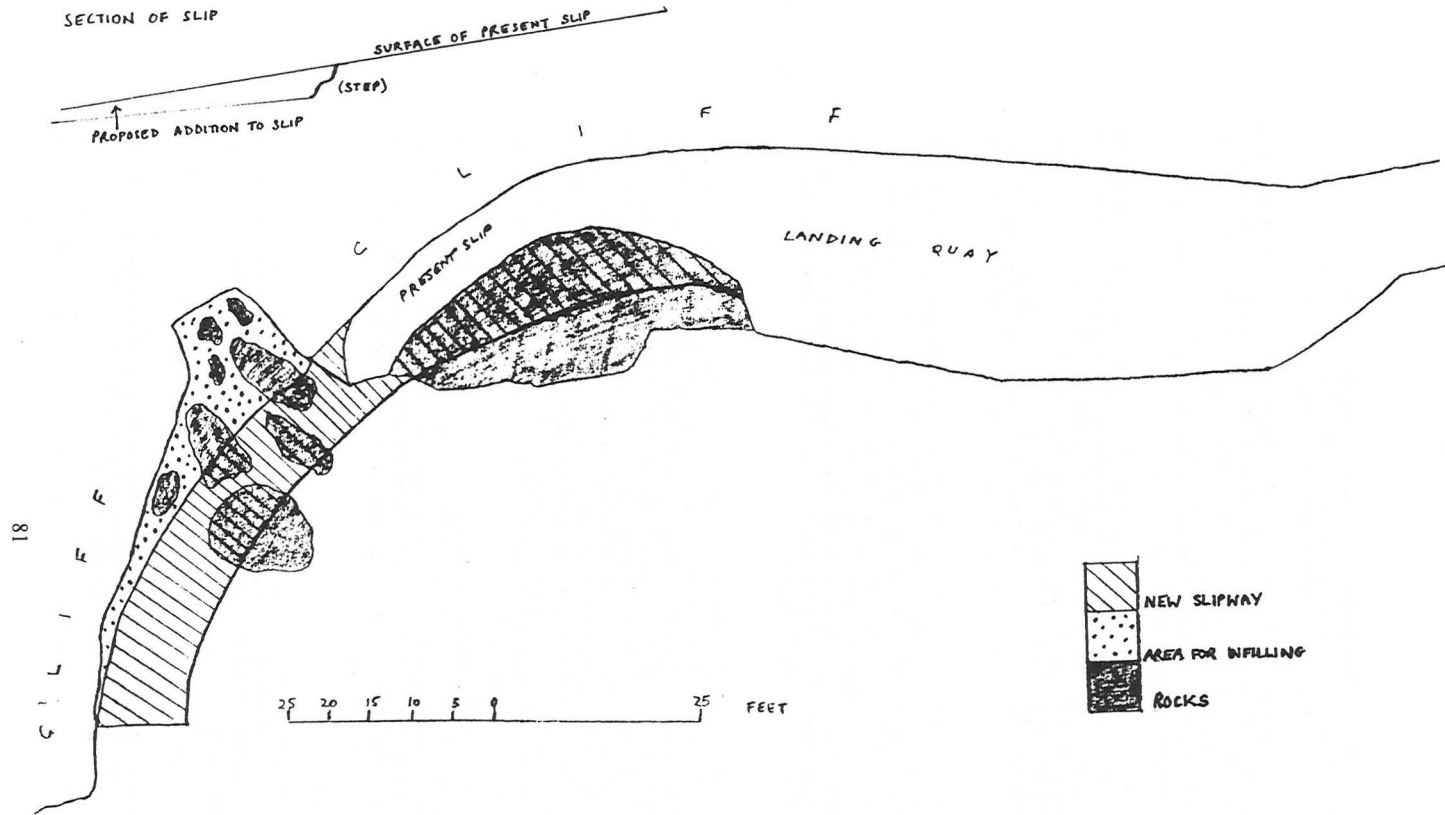


FIGURE 2. Trinity House Legal Archive, Plan No 6847A, 1892 (Tracing)

site of the limekiln is an excavated cave of unknown date that was known as "the culm cellar" during the Heaven ownership, but which may have been made earlier as a storage place for goods until they could be carried up to the plateau.¹⁰

A slipway from the quay to the beach is shown in the 1842 plan and in 1892 as much narrower than the present one, and curved around a large rock (Fig. 2). This slipway ended in steps to the shingle; once it was possible to use carts for haulage to the plateau, it was necessary to make up a ramp whenever these were to be used on the beach. In 1892 Trinity House blasted the rocks and rebuilt the slipway, making it both wider and longer, and eliminating the step (NTA 1892).

The 1819 marker stone on the quay is one of a number of waymarkers to the lighthouse, of which only one other remains (with inscription now obliterated) just west of the crossroads. Gosse (1853, III, 9) describes "a broad road, marked off by stone posts at regular intervals, each bearing conspicuously painted the letters T.H." He refers to the road at the present West Side field as "thirty feet wide," which seems excessive, but if the area was undrained the path could have been spread out by the need to avoid wet patches in what were referred to as the "boggy fields" (THGM 30 010, Vol 33, 57-8).

Until the landslip of 1954 there was another stone on the quay giving notice that the island was private property (Langham 1995, 61). Its origin is unknown, but possibly it may have been put there following Heaven's disputes with the steamer companies over landing rights in 1870 (HA: Diary July 20, Aug 4, Aug 31 1870; Lundy Log p121). Another loss from the quay during the 1954 landslip was a granite store-hut known as the Bait House. It was originally one of two store houses belonging to Trinity House (LTA, Vere Hunt Papers 1821-27); the upper one was later used for a fisher-cottage and called "Sea View" (Langham 1995, 16).

THE COVE

In 1921 a slipway was cleared of rocks and a sea wall built at the Cove to give a landing place for use in easterly winds (though not north-easterly, when no landing can be made on this side of the island) (NTA, engineer's plans and reports 1918-21). The discovery of walling placed to join up a protective line of rocks suggests that it had been so used previously (*ibid*). A cart track was to have been blasted across to it from the beach, which was started but not completed, and the fact that the Cove is cut off from the beach and the road except at low tide severely limited the use of this landing place. Even at low tide it was necessary to scramble across the rocks to the beach, or to climb up to Lamatry, for which purpose a rope was installed and a few steps put in place. Once on top of Lamatry a path and the lighthouse steps led down to the beach. Either of these routes required free hands.¹¹

Landings were normally made on to the beach by small boats, and a wheeled wooden landing stage was in use for excursion traffic from the 1930's. In 1990 the Landmark Trust cut a new road through the shale cliff from the beach to the cove, which has now brought this landing place into regular use. During the course of these works the former steps from the beach to the lighthouse were destroyed, and another way up was constructed from the new road.

THE PLATFORM

There are two references to a platform: Salkeld in 1610, and the account of 1787. Loyd (1925, 53-5) places the platform where the old steep path curves inland (the Battlements) and refers to the 1787 text. Langham (1994, 76-7) follows Loyd, but refers both to Salkeld and the 1787 account.

Salkeld was reported to have "set his captives... to building walls for a fort and

¹⁰ A storage place would have been necessary as ships would discharge on to the beach, but the work of carrying goods to the plateau sometimes took several days. The interior of the cave appears to resemble Benson's Cave, which was excavated before 1726.

¹¹ Blasting for the track was begun behind the Sentinel rock and the first section of the track cleared.

constructing a platform for cannon to command the road. He brought three pieces of cast-iron ordnance on shore and a cannon...to be planted on the fort and on an old ruinous castle adjacent" (the deposition of William Younge, 1610, given in Langham 1994, 34-5).

There is little evidence for, and some objections to this suggested site for Salkeld's platform. "Road" was the common term for an anchorage, and there was at that time nothing that could be considered to be a road on the island. It would have been extremely important for Salkeld, a pirate, to command the anchorage, and it is unlikely that cannons placed according to Langham's diagram of the platform, lying just behind the profile of the sideland, would have been able to target ships in the bay.¹² Cannons would hardly have been necessary to defend the narrow steep path against intruders on foot. Another account, given by escaped prisoners, was that Salkeld "compelled his prisoners to pull down the stones out of the rocks to make a platform for his ordnance, and means to build a fort in that place where in times past, by report, there has been a castle" (Historical Manuscripts Commission 1970, Salisbury XXI, 209-10). It is more probable that Salkeld made some kind of platform at the castle parade to be suitable for cannons, which were just coming into general use at that time, and which would have been much more effective when fired from a greater height and with a shorter trajectory.

The visitor in 1787 wrote that "You ascend the Island by a Narrow Path, just wide enough for a horse to go up, which leads you to a Platform where Two Roads meet, the one conducts you to the castle, the other to the House lately built by Sir Borlase Warren, wide enough for carts, and where they land [goods] that are to be carried off, or brought on the Island." That is, there were two roads wide enough for carts at the top of the narrow path. Langham identifies this place with the platform proposed as Salkeld's at the Battlements, but the two descriptions, 177 years apart, do not necessarily refer to the same thing.

An obsolete meaning for "platform" was "a flat, elevated piece of ground; a table-land, a plateau" (*The Compact Oxford Dictionary* Vol 2, 1971, 966). It could mean a level area, not necessarily a construction. Taking account of the writer of 1787 and Denham (1832), the logical place for a platform would be the point where loads could be transferred between pack animals and carts. The cart roads went in one direction to the castle, in the other to the farmhouse, and (after 1819) to the lighthouse (Fig. 1). Carts could not possibly have been taken up the steep narrow path from the Battlements to the castle, and the platform itself would have had to be big enough to allow room for turning. The "Farm Road" and the road to the castle can be seen on the 1822 map and the 1842 plan (Fig. 1) as leading from the top of St John's Valley, though they do not meet on a crossroads as at present.

If men, carts, or pack animals were loaded, regard would have had to be paid to the terrain over which they travelled, so that demanding gradients and boggy ground would both be avoided. The maps show that the cart track to the farm was originally further west than it now is (running approximately along the line of the present Tent Field wall). This would have been an easier gradient than the present path, and would have avoided marshy ground around Golden Well, which is now covered over and the water conduited. This topography can be appreciated if the site is viewed from the elevated point on Castle Hill to the south-east.

Taking all these points together it seems most likely that Salkeld's platform for cannons was at the castle parade, and that the 1787 platform where loads were transferred to and from carts was a level piece of land somewhere between the Castle Road and the Farm Road; most probably at the junction with the former, so that loads could be divided at the first junction on the way up. Denham's engraving of the seaward view of the path (Fig. 3) does not show anything that might be interpreted as a platform at the present Battlements, neither does the painting made by De Serres c1775 (Denham Lt H.M., map 1832, PRO: MFQ 1260).¹³

¹² It is necessary to envisage the site without the present good vantage point from the Battlements, which was constructed by Heaven in 1852. The profile of the sideland, seen from the north, is a regular slope without apparent alteration apart from the present path.

¹³ A photoprint of the De Serres painting can be seen in Millcombe dining-room.

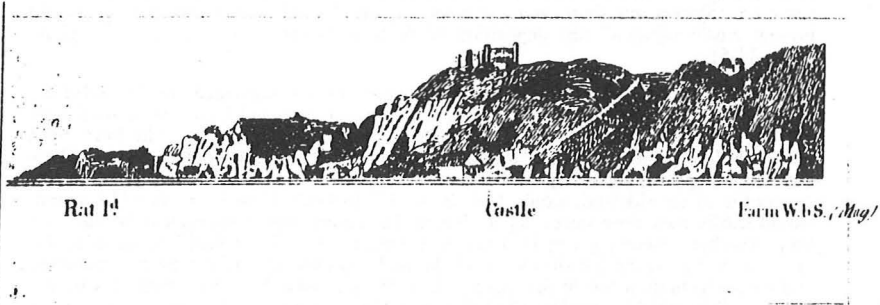


Figure 3. Lt H M Denham, engraving from map, PRO: MFQ 1260, Admiralty, 1832 (enlarged detail)

There are as yet uninvestigated remains of masonry at the foot of the path from the Battlements to the castle, which Langham (1994, 76) identifies with Salkeld's platform, but until the site is investigated the origin or purpose must be uncertain. A further description by the writer of 1787 may be borne in mind: "At some small distance above the landing Place are the Remains of an Ancient Wall, on each side the way, supposed to be built to guard the Entrance to the island, as the only accessible part there, and where tis said there was a Chain formerly fixed." If this was situated at the junction of two paths (to the castle and up the valley) it would be the obvious place to halt invaders, having the tactical advantage of height above them as they climbed up the path from the landing place.

ALTERNATIVE LANDING PLACES¹⁴

Jenny's Cove on the west coast, at the Pyramid Rock, is sometimes used when easterly winds in the bay make landing impossible there. Landing is onto rocks, and the climb up is taxing.

Pilot's Quay was the commonly-used west side landing until a landslip in 1935 made it unsafe. There were steps cut out to assist the access, and the sideland is not too steep at this point.

Montagu Steps were constructed by Christie's engineer (1918-1920) on the west side, north of the Shutter (NTA 1918-21). Rungs were set into the rock for landing at low tide, then steps to a path across a sloping slab with a handrail, and then further steps and handrail up the sidings. The use of this point for landing requires a considerable degree of seamanship; also most of the handrails have gone and the path has loose shale. The landing has been little used. Evidences of the landward end of the suspension bridge to the *Montagu* (1907) can still be seen by this path.

Rattles Landing ("Smuggler's Path"), Denham (1832, 8) refers to as a "temporary anchorage for small vessels... from whence the only (scrambling) access to the Island can be effected apart from the regular landing-place." It is on the south coast and was used occasionally when conditions made it necessary, but no recent use has been made of it owing to the difficulties both of the landing itself and the access.

Lamatry beach is a possible sheltered landing place, but the climb up is so difficult that only one shipwrecked sailor is recorded as having used it (HA, Lundy Log 1877, the *Ethel*).

¹⁴ See Gade F (1978, 54; and 86).

“Hell’s Gates” (south-west of Rat Island) was also used occasionally when necessary by the Heaven family, who seem to have been fairly intrepid. The stiff climb up over Lamarty meant that its use was very limited.

Landing on the flat rocks at Brazen Ward is easy in calm conditions, and the climb to the top relatively simple, but it has been little used as it is at a distance from the village, and faces east, so offers little advantage of weather conditions over the Landing Bay. That it had been used at one time, possibly for landings by stealth, is indicated by the small but strong defensive fortification there, which is thought to date from the 16th century (Gardner 1971, 21-3).

Quarry Beach also faces east, and has the disadvantages of large boulders and of being at some distance from the village. There is a usable path down from the quarry terrace, but it has a drop at the bottom where the quay has washed away. The quarry company built a wooden jetty which was washed away in a gale after they ceased operations, and the landing place has not been used since c1871.

The existence of a watch-house and battery on the NE sidelands, thought to be of 16th-17th century date, would indicate that it was a point where a landing could be made (Thackray 1989, 28-9). At the north east point a small landing place was constructed for the North Light by Trinity House in 1897, which can still be used to get close views of seals and nesting seabirds.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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REFERENCES & ABBREVIATIONS

HA - *Heaven Archive* (copies held by the writer)

LMA - *Lundy Museum Archive*

NDRO - *North Devon Record Office*

NTA - *National Trust Archive*

PRO - *Public Record Office*

THA/Eng - *Trinity House Engineers' Archive, Isle of Wight*

THGM - *Trinity House Archive, Guildhall Library MSS*

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