

A HYPOTHESIS FOR THE ORIGIN OF THE HOUSE BY THE CASTLE ON LUNDY

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ABSTRACT

The building to the south-east of the castle has not yet been dated, but is ascribed to Thomas Bushell (1643-48, Thackray, 1989, i, p.38). An argument is advanced for its having been built by Bevill Grenville c. 1630, and repaired by John Borlase Warren in 1775.

Keywords: *Lundy, Castle, House.*

NOTE: The house (Figure 1) has hitherto been referred to as Old House. Since the former farmhouse is now named Old House North and Old House South, the name of Castle House is adopted in the present paper in order to avoid confusion.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

When Sir John Borlase Warren bought Lundy in 1775 the island was in a state of considerable neglect (Ternstrom, 1998). In that year he sent the Revd Thomas Martyn, a professor of botany, to the island to give his opinion on it. In his report Martyn wrote that "...there is but one dwelling-house and the remains of an old castle the said dwelling-house consisted of two stories, and three several [separate] rooms on each floor, which was in a very ruinous state and condition notwithstanding the said Sir John Borlase Warren had caused the same to be repaired..." (PRO C38/669). Steinman-Steinman, in 'Some Account of the Island of Lundy', published in 1836, quoted Martyn in full, and assumed that the house that Borlase Warren repaired, and the house that he built were one and the same: "The farmhouse - that repaired by Sir J. B. Warren - stands between the castle and the lighthouse; and this is the only residence on the island, except for a cottage for the accommodation of the Trinity Company". In this he has been followed by subsequent writers (Thackray, 1989; Langham, 1994), but the available evidence can afford a different interpretation.

The anonymous writer who left an account of his visit to Lundy in 1752 mentioned that there were two houses and the castle, without any differentiation of location: "The houses miserably bad, one on each side of the Platform, that on the Right was inhabited by Mr Benson and his Friends, the other by servants, the old fort was occupied by the Convicts... In front of the House are Five Guns planted." It is presumed that Platform refers to the castle parade, and that there was another building there in addition to Castle House. The engraving of the castle in Grose (1776), which is dated 1775, supports this, as it shows a house with pitched roof to the east of the south end of the castle, and the remainder of walls of another building in the foreground (Figure 2). The 1804 sketch

map in the Public Record Office, which is based on a visit made c1775, shows two buildings on the parade, and aerial photographs taken in 1996 show distinctly the outlines of three buildings: Castle House, the Smithy, and another adjoining to the north (NMR 15434/23, 15434/28). The date of the Smithy has yet to be determined, but its absence from Grose's plan (Figure 3) suggests either that at that date it was reduced to its present level and was not visible, or- less likely- that it was built subsequently.

The writer of 1752 returned to Lundy in 1787, by which time the island belonged to John Cleveland, and his careful description included "...a Platform where two roads meet, the one conducts you to the castle, the other to the House lately built by Sir John Borlase Warren." Clearly the house and the castle lay in different directions, with the platform in this case referring to a flat area which is thought to have been at the crossroads at the top of St John's Valley (Ternstrom, 1996), or at the Battlements (Langham, 1994). Martyn asserted that the house repaired by Borlase Warren was old and ruinous in 1775, and the writer who was able to compare 1752 with 1787 confirms that the farmhouse was built between those two dates, as he "...went to the House Sir John Warren built for his own residence..." This was the proprietor's house, except that one servant "...had the liberty granted him by Mr. Cleveland to live in the House built by Sir John Warren." Thus, in 1752 the visitor stayed in the house on the castle parade used by Benson, and in 1787 in the recently-built farmhouse.

EVALUATION

1. The anonymous writer refers consistently to the house built by Warren, and that the Castle House was in bad condition in 1752. He is careful in his descriptions, and does not say that Warren's farmhouse was either repaired or rebuilt. Budd, the tenant appointed by Warren in 1778, was still on Lundy in 1787, and would have given first-hand information to the visitor. No reference has been found to a previous building on the site of Warren's farmhouse.
2. On archaeological evidence (Dunmore, 1982) the Castle House is considered to date from *circa* the mid-seventeenth century. It was then, so far as is known, the principal residence.
3. Beville Grenville owned Lundy from 1619 to 1643, and was much engaged with it about 1630 when he was carrying out "great works", but he was counselled against any building which could appear to be fortification as being politically risky (Forster, 1872). This would have ruled out restoration of the castle, but Grenville would have needed accommodation on his visits, and it is suggested that he built Castle House instead. The ground was already levelled for the parade, ample cut stone was to hand in the castle environs, and it had the same advantage as a look out point as the castle did. The house is described as "...a substantial stone building and must have been an important residence..." (Thackray, 1989). That is, accommodation for a gentleman, not for labourers or servants, whose housing at that period would almost certainly have consisted of a single room (Vancouver, 1808). Since accommodation would also have been

needed for his servants and workers, this either already existed when Grenville started building, or was built, or possibly re-built, by him.

4. The Trinity House map of 1820 indicates that the farm and settlement were at the castle before Warren built the new farmhouse and “New Town”, and that an enclosure, and cultivated fields adjacent to the castle were still in use at the date of the map. When the island was put up for auction in 1822, the bill of sale described “A dwelling-house, substantially built of Stone, which might at a moderate expense, be rendered fit for the Residence of a respectable Family..” and, separately at the bottom of the page, “There is also an Old Castle... in a ruinous state...with a spacious Esplanade in Front... a Farm House (but much dilapidated) adjoining the Castle. There are also Two Labourers’ Cottages,” (British Library MSS, 1822).
5. The descriptions of the Castle House, which Martyn (1775) said had six rooms, differ from the particulars of the farmhouse given in 1822, when it consisted of “An entrance Hall, Two Parlours, Five Chambers [bedrooms], Kitchen, and Domestic Offices..,” that is, nine rooms. The Castle House measures approximately 25 ft by 25 ft (7.62m x 7.62m) and could have contained six small rooms, although there is no present sign of a staircase so that access to the upper storey may have been by ladder or, possibly, external.
6. Grose’s engraving of 1775 shows the Castle House with a pitched roof intact, which suggests that it had recently been repaired as the house was “miserably bad” in 1752, and the island was described as neglected after the death of Earl Gower in 1754 (Ternstrom, 1998).
7. Thackrays’ excavation of 1984 (Thackray, 1985) revealed two occupation levels in Castle House.
8. Bushell, never one to conceal his achievements, made no claim to have built the house, or other than to have “restored the castle from the ground” (Bushell, 1664), indicating that by the time of the Civil War (1642) the castle was a ruin. In which case there would have been at least one other accommodation in use.

CONCLUSION

On the basis of the above considerations it is suggested that the Castle House was repaired as an interim measure to provide accommodation for Warren, pending the construction of a new and bigger farmhouse in a position that was more favourable both for shelter and for water supplies. If this were the case, Warren’s plans in 1775 would have been in three stages: repair of the Castle House for immediate use, followed by the building of the farmhouse suitable for his own and his servants’ use until his gentleman’s residence should be completed (Figure 4). After that the Castle House and the farmhouse would have been available for tenants or employees.

The substance of this paper has been extracted from the author's unpublished Ph D thesis, 1999: 'Lundy: an analysis and comparative study of factors affecting the development of the island, 1577-1969, with a gazetteer of sites and monuments.'

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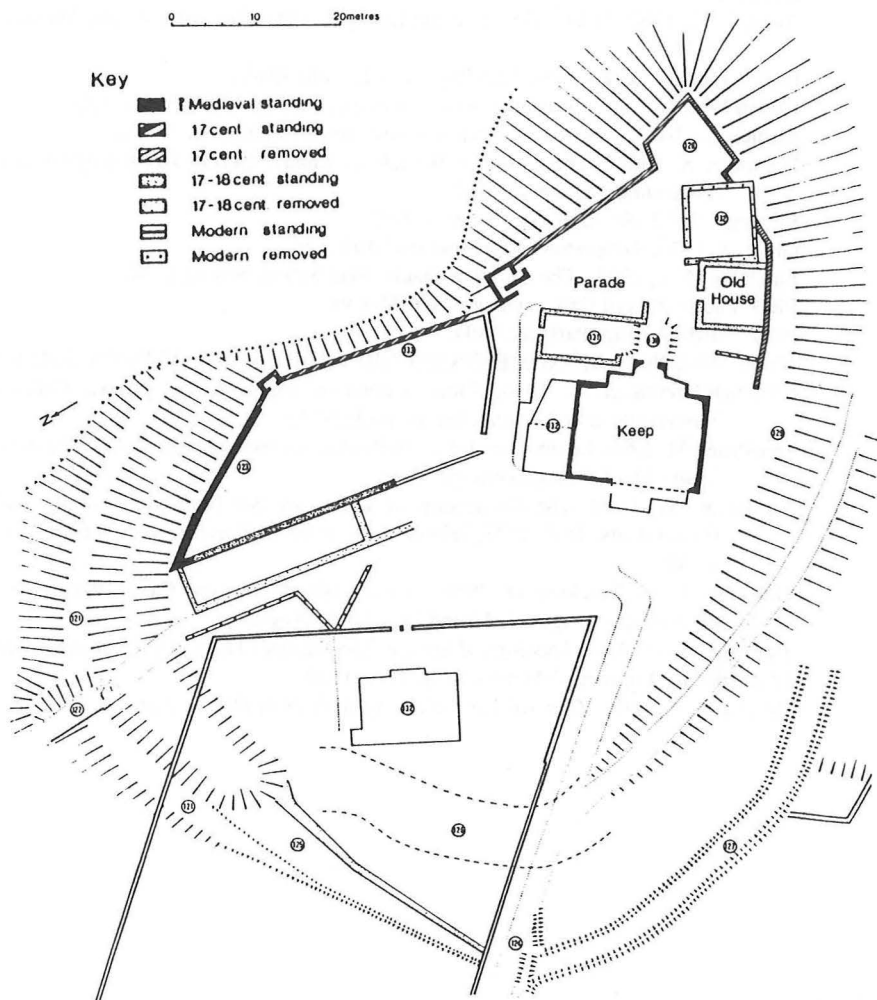


Figure 1: Plan of the Castle.

The building between Castle House and the East Bastion, the original Lloyd's 1884 Signal Station, has been demolished.

Dunmore, 1982, p155. (Reproduced by kind permission of Devon Archaeological Society).

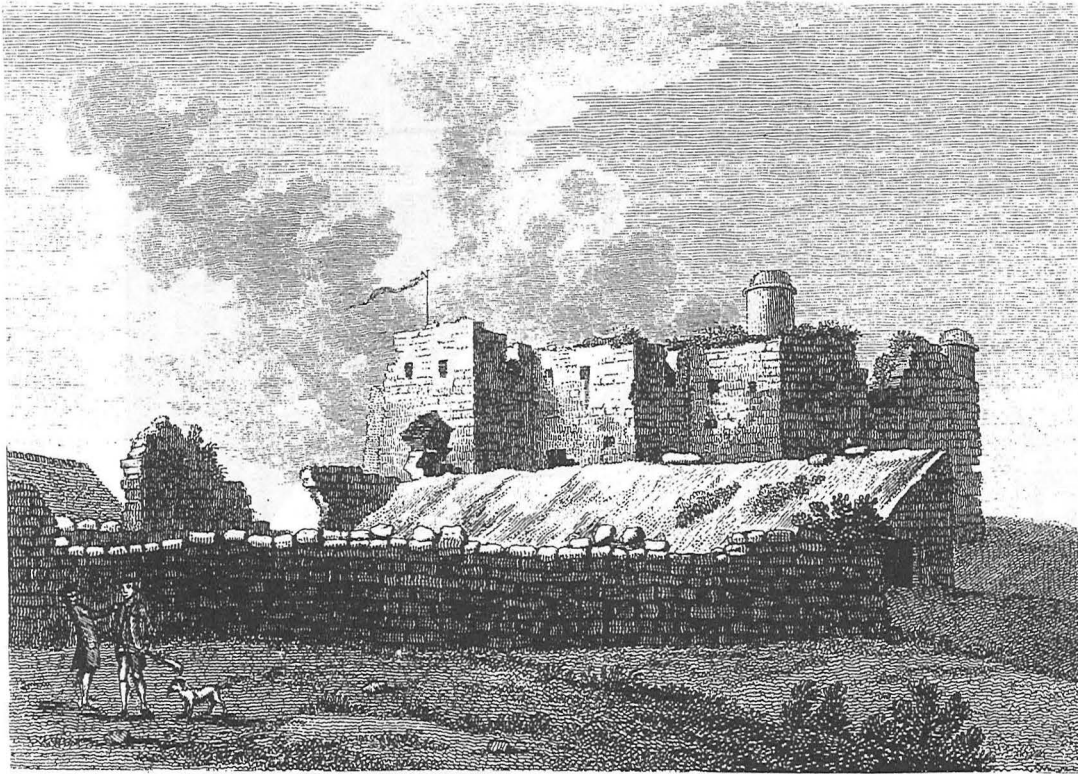


Figure 2: Engraving of the Castle from the North East.

Grose, 1776

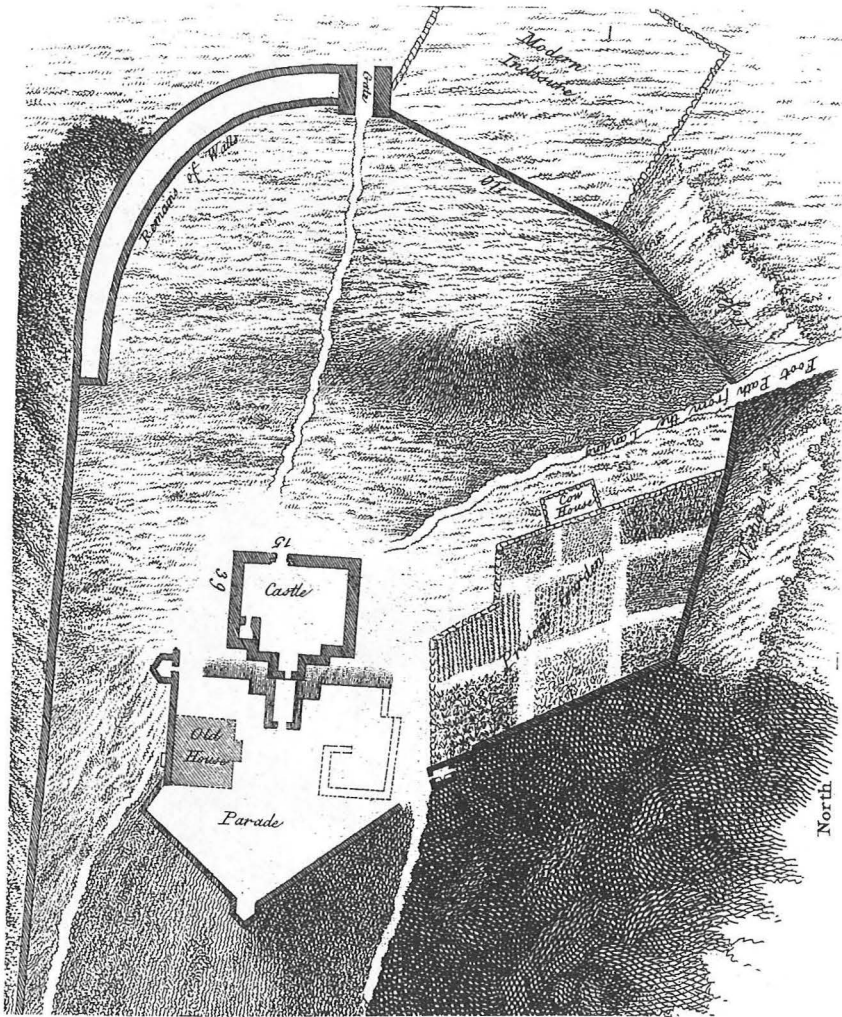
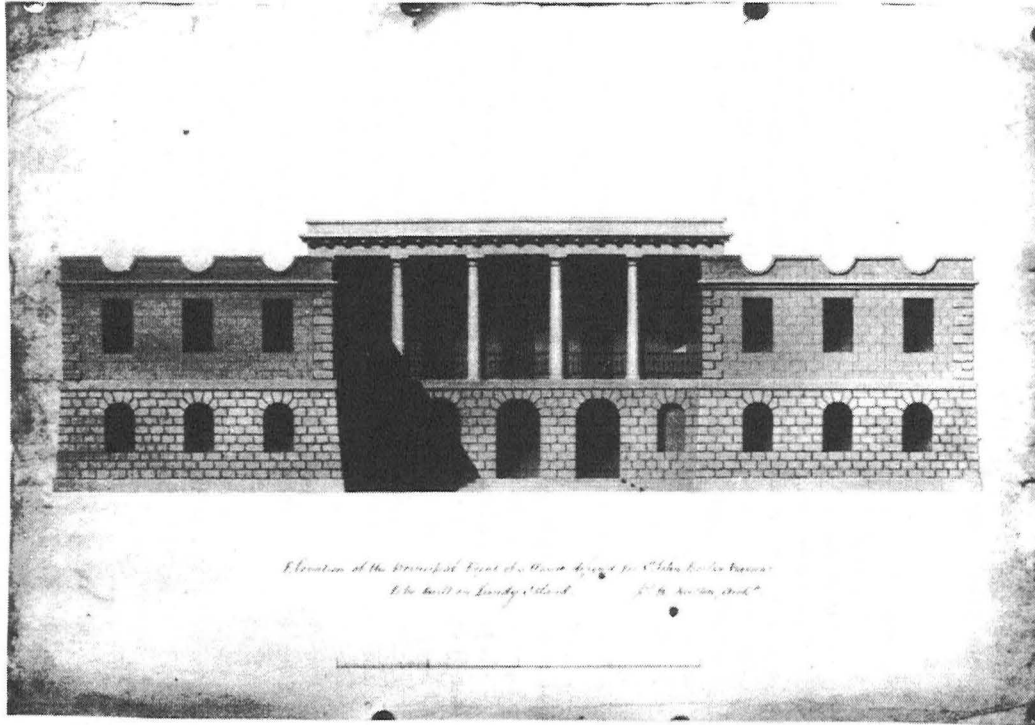


Figure 3: Plan of the castle. Grose, 1776.
The N-S measurement of the castle should be 51.



Elevation of the Principle Front of a House Design'd for Sir John Borlase Warren to be Built on Lundy Island
By W. Newton, Architect.

Figure 4: 'Elevation of the Principle Front of a House Design'd for Sir John Borlase Warren to be Built on Lundy Island' (W. Newton, architect, 1775).
Author's collection.