

LUNDY - A THIRTEENTH CENTURY LANDSCAPE

by

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ABSTRACT

An early thirteenth century document in the Devon Record Office, Exeter, granting part of Lundy has long been known. This Latin document has been translated into English by one of the authors (FN). Suggestions are made as to the possible identifications of the properties referred to in the document and other sites of relevance to the period are discussed.

Keywords: *Medieval Latin charter, translation, archaeology*

INTRODUCTION

An advantage of Lundy's medieval heritage is that it has been possible to date sites in the field against associated documentary references. Thus the thirteenth century revetted platform (National Grid Reference (NGR) 1333 4586) above Jenny's Cove landing is highly likely to be the site of one of the Mangonels which were licensed to be transferred from Marisco lands in Somerset in 1223 (Brooks, 1931). Likewise the Bull's Paradise complex fits in with the thirteenth century documented events regarding the capture and execution of William de Marisco, the construction of a castle for the King's Constable (Liberate Rolls 1243) and possibly even with the events described in the Orkneyinga Saga (Gardner, 1997).

The early thirteenth century charter in the Devon Record Office, Exeter (ED/M/20) granting land from the Mariscos to the Giffards, names two holdings, a vivary, a cove and a 'southern boundary'. These should be identifiable.

Whilst the Marisco genealogy has a number of Williams and Jordans, only one William de Marisco had a wife named Lucy (de Alneto) and they had a son, Jordan, who was 'of age' sufficient to be party to the transaction. William seems to be last referred to in the Somerset Pipe Rolls of 1229/30 and he and Jordan (ob. 1234) are both buried in Bath Abbey. St John Brooks (1931) links the Lundy Mariscos with their Somerset holdings at Huntspill and, by Lucy's dowry, at (Temple) Cloud in Camely (see also Collinson, 1791). The date of this grant he assesses as being between 1183, when William starts to appear in the records, and 1219, by which time Baldwin Giffard was dead. Baldwin was head of the household of Giffard of Clovelly and Awliscombe, Devon, succeeding his father, and was also mentioned about 1183 in a number of Devon documents (Wrottesley, 1902).

THE GRANT (ED/M/20) (Figure 1)

The purpose of this grant was to provide three (armed) men on the island whenever Marisco required them. The role of the three men is unclear. Three men would not be able to defend the island from raiders and so perhaps they were needed to work the Mangonel or keep the peace on the island. In return, Giffard was allowed to hold two properties and to pasture specified numbers of animals there, as well as to catch a specified allowance of rabbits each year.

The English translation is given below. For the Latin, see Appendix.

Know present and future [people] that I, William de Mariscis, with the consent and assent of Lucy my wife and Jordan de Mariscis my son and heir, and my other heirs, have given and granted and by this my charter have confirmed to Baldwin Giffard and his heirs for his homage and service which he makes to me, Hunwedreswalles with its appurtenances, with a vivary and as the bounds towards the south are perambulated by a view of my men, and Sageswalles with its appurtenances, to have and to hold of me and my heirs to him and his heirs, in fee and as an inheritance, freely and quietly, completely and fully, by the service of bringing three [?fighting?] men to my island of Lundy, to wit one in armour and two in doublets¹ and iron helmets. And when I shall dispose my men thither, he shall dispose his men thither too, and when I withdraw my men from the island he on his part shall remove his. Also, the same Baldwin and his heirs are on that land with his service at my summons when there shall be work, unless prevented by royal service. I grant also to him and his heirs that they shall have on the common pasture 2 horses and 30 cattle and 100 sheep, and all progeny arising from them until it shall be a yearling; and when he shall wish, he can remove his goods from the island as much as and whenever he shall wish. I grant both to him and to his heirs half a hundred conies a year, to take from Swyrchechove, and if Swerchechove does not suffice for taking so many conies, he shall re-lay in the two nearest coves and make to catch them in those, by the view of my Bailiff. And if in any year, for my profit and honour, [some] of his rent shall not have been paid, at the next [...hole...?accounting?] it shall be paid in full. And if [...hole...?any?] of the men of the aforesaid .B. and his heirs by licence of me or my bailiff withdraws from the island, so that no blame [or] suspicion [...hole...?attaches to?] .B. himself or his heirs about the same man, they shall be more fully answerable.² And if any of his men shall be [?accused?] of theft and held at the will of .B. himself and his heirs, they shall either keep the same man under their own guard, or turn [him] over to me or my bailiff of the island until he is judged according to the law of England in my court on the island. I grant also to the aforementioned .B. and his heirs, access to the land in fortifications, in roads and paths, in pools and mills, in waters and in all liberties and [?places?]³ as shall be necessary to him, by the view of me or my bailiff. Wherefore I wish and firmly command

¹ Probably padded leather jerkins, cheaper body protection for foot-soldiers.

² A sizeable hole in the parchment affects two lines of text and makes the meaning of this sentence uncertain.

³ Unidentified word.

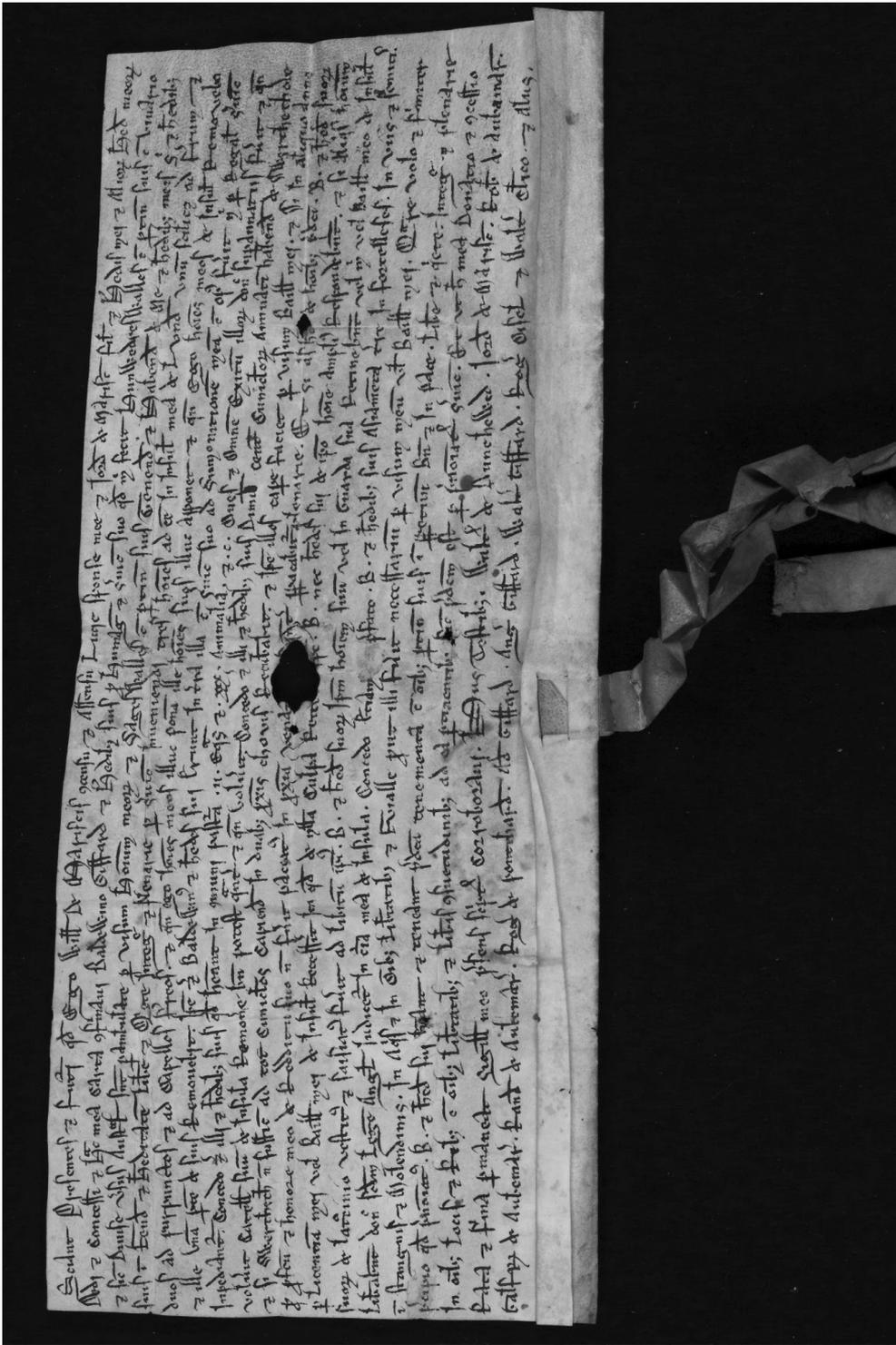


Figure 1: The grant from Marisco to Giffard. (Devon Record Office ref. ED/M/20)

that the aforementioned .B. and his heirs have and hold the aforesaid tenements with all their appurtenances in perpetuity, well and in peace, freely and quietly, completely and fully, in all places and things with all liberties and free customs pertaining to them as is aforesaid, by the aforementioned services. And so that this my gift and grant may fully and firmly stand, I have confirmed the present writing with my seal. These [being] witnesses: Walter de Dunehewed, Jordan de Marisco, Robert de Aubamare, Geoffrey de Aubemare, Ralph de Aubemare, Roger de Pontiharde, Adam Giffard, Engelbert Giffard, Walter Giffard, Roger Oisel and Walter the Clerk, and others.

PROPERTIES AND LANDSCAPE FEATURES

The properties and features referred to in the grant are:

- a) 'Hunwedreswalles' and its appurtenances, together with
- b) the vivary, and
- c) an unspecified area of land 'as the bounds towards the south are perambulated, by view of my men';
- d) 'Sageswalles' with its appurtenances;
- e) 'Swerchechove', from which they may take fifty conies a year; if there are not enough from there, then from the next two coves.

So where were these places?

'Hunwedreswalles'='Wedres' or Widow's Tenement? (NGR:1359 4665; SMR 108075)

There is a classic and well-preserved medieval long house, north of Threequarter Wall, known traditionally as Widow's Tenement. It is 14 metres long x 4.5 metres wide, with a byre at the east for stock and a raised solar at the west for the family. (Figures 2 and 3).

A careful study of the Widow's Tenement site, reveals that the medieval enclosures over-run Prehistoric field boundaries and there are one or two ruined hut sites within the complex. Investigation of the south-east corner of Widow's Tenement byre produced not only thirteenth century pottery but hand-made prehistoric fabrics from the old ground surface. The structure is similar to those at Hound Tor on Dartmoor, [Beresford, 1979; Newman, *et al.* 1995]. The term 'Widows' (Widders) may well be a corruption of the medieval 'Wedres', while the remains of the stone 'walles' were recognised as a tenement or holding consisting of a house and its associated enclosures. The meaning of the prefix 'Hun-' is not clear.

Whilst the medieval period is well represented in the south of the island, with the settlement at Bull's Paradise and Pig's Paradise, as well as the Castle site, the whole landscape appears to have consisted of Bronze Age field systems with their associated hut sites. There are however other sites mixed up with earlier field boundaries which, like Widow's Tenement, may well be thirteenth/fourteenth century (Blaylock, 2007).

'The Vivary'='Pondsbury? (NGR:1345 4550; SMR 108302)

A vivary is usually taken to refer to a fishpond, but can refer to a game enclosure. In this case however the gaming facility appears subsequently as a separate item, so the vivary here should mean a fishpond. There are a number of boggy areas on the island, but the



Figure 2: Widow's Tenement looking east; the solar is nearest the viewer

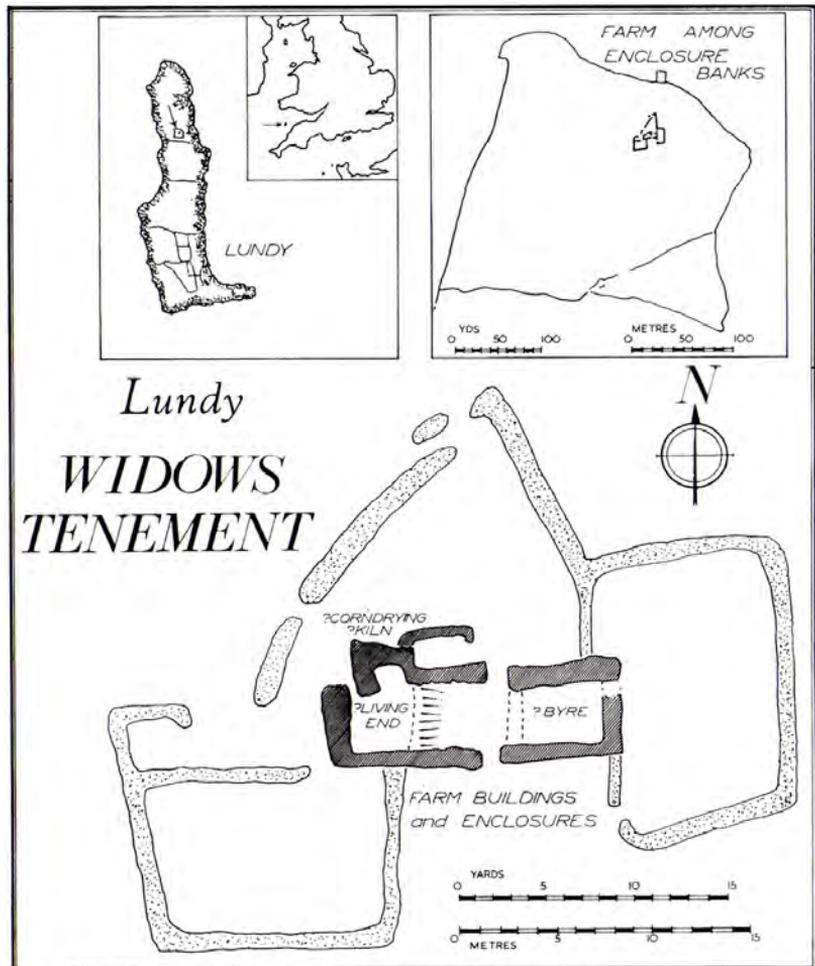


Figure 3: Plan of Widow's Tenement long-house. (Philip Rahtz mens et del)

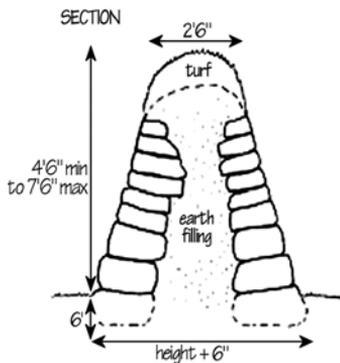
main contender must be Pondsbury. It is a natural boggy basin into which water would settle and in recent times, it has been dammed on its western side. Although fairly shallow it still contains fish (Figure 4).



Figure 4:
Pondsbury -
the 'Vivary'
looking west
(photo:
Jennifer Ellis,
2007)

The bounds towards the south=Quarter Wall? (NGR:13014505-37351450; SMR 108361)

The land granted to Giffard extends to a boundary 'towards the south ... perambulated by a view of my men'. Although there are various early field boundaries to the south that might have been this boundary, the most striking candidate is Quarter Wall. The other



cross walls - South Farm, Halfway and Threequarter Walls - are straight and coursed. Quarter Wall is quite different: a Devon 'hedge' of typical medieval construction, a meandering wall of stone and earth (Figure 5). There are ditches running on the north and south sides of this wall which may well be the remains of earlier boundaries (Figure 6).

Figure 5: A 'clawdd' - the basic medieval hedge, of earth core and battered stone facings, found throughout Wales and the West (from 'Dry Stone Walling', BTCV book)



Figure 6: The Quarter Wall, the boundary 'towards the south'.

‘Sageswalles’=?East sidings (NGR:13834661; SMR 108067)

At the foot of the eastern slope, 15 metres above the cliff edge and continuing the line of the Threequarter Wall, is another long-house, terraced into the slope with a N-S alignment, measuring 19 metres x 7 metres (Figure 7). Is this ‘Sageswalles’? As with Hunwedreswalles, the possessive name plus ‘walles’ and the associated ‘appurtenances’ suggest a medieval stone-built tenement. However, a possible alternative is given in Blaylock (2007).



Figure 7: The long house at the foot of East sidings, from the northwest - ‘Sageswalles’?

Swyrchechove/Swerchechove

‘Dimidium centenarium Cuniculorum’, fifty conies (a year) may be taken from ‘Swyrchechove’ or ‘Swerchechove’ and if not from there then ‘in duabus proximus chovis’ - from the next two coves. It is interesting to note the deliberate effort to emphasise, in the Latin ‘chove’, the phonetic value of the hard ‘c’ of the English word ‘cove’.

Rabbits were obviously abundant on the western cliffs, burrowing into the exposed slippage, and it may be that Jenny’s Cove was the medieval ‘Swerchechove’, although there is no real evidence to confirm this. The present name of Jenny’s Cove dates from the shipwreck of the ‘Jenny’ in the eighteenth century. This reference has been taken to suggest that Lundy was among the earliest of established warrens. There is a rectangular enclosure south of Halfway Wall (west) which may possibly have been a warren. The Isles of Scilly had rabbits by 1176 as witnessed by a tithe grant to Tavistock Abbey (Finberg, 1947). The use of the word ‘recuperabit’, related to ‘recumbent’, seems here to mean the re-laying of flat nets over the burrow entrances, as illustrated (Figure 8). It is a succinct description of the trapping procedure. Hares were often chased into loose long nets by hounds, but with rabbits, ferrets were used. The money from the sale of the rabbit skins was to contribute to the cost of the castle and garrison (Liberate Rolls 1243). In 1274 sales were estimated as 2000 rabbits a year.

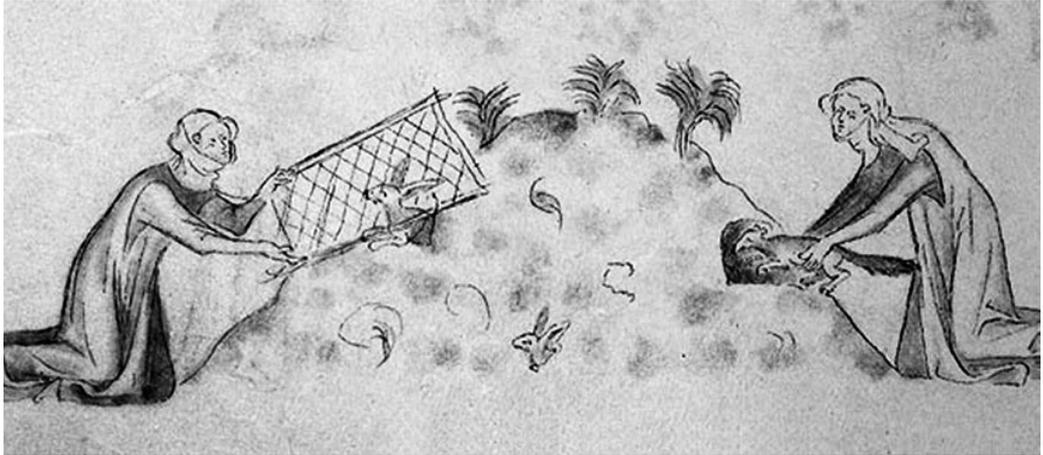


Figure 8: Women slipping a ferret into a warren and holding a portable flat net.
(from *The Queen's Psalter*, thirteenth century. British Library, MSS Royal 2b vii.)

CONCLUSIONS

There are few names on Lundy which can be regarded as more than 200 years old. From this early thirteenth century Marisco grant we now have three named medieval places - two 'walles' or tenements and one cove - together with a fishpond and a territorial boundary, and evidence for early rabbit trapping, all of which can be tentatively identified with physical evidence on the ground.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We thank the 'old guard' who helped survey the then barren landscape many years ago; all merit inclusion, but particularly Professor Philip Rahtz who gave a sort of seal of approval and produced the plan of Widow's Tenement which appears here. We are indebted to the Devon Record Office for permission to reproduce document ED/M/20 and to Jennifer Ellis for photography; also to Shirley Blaylock for giving current National Trust interpretation of their more recent work. The views expressed in this paper are those of the authors alone.

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APPENDIX: Transcription of the grant ED/M/20

Sciant Presentes & futuris quod Ego William De Mariscis consensu & Assensu Lucie spouse mee & Jordani de Mariscis filii & Heredis mei & Aliorum Heredum meorum / Dedi & Concessi & Hac mea Carta confirmavi Baldewino Giffard & Heredibus suis pro Humagio & servicio suo quod mihi fecit Hunwedreswalles cum pertinenciis suis cum vivario / & sicut Divise versus Australe sunt perambulate per visum Hominum Meorum & Sageswalles cum pertinenciis suis Tenendum & Habendum de Me & heredibus meis Sibi & heredibus / suis in Feudo & Hereditate Libere & Quiete Integre & plenarie per servicio Inveniendi tres homines ad [certem?] In Insula mea de Lunde unum scilicet ad ferrum & / duos ad purpunctos & ad Capellos Ferreos & quando ego homines meos illuc ponam ille homines suos illuc apponet & quando Ego homines meos de Insule Removeo / & ille unam partem de suis Removebit. Ipse etiam Baldewinus & heredes suis Erunt In terra illa cum servicio suo ad Sumonitionem meam cum opus fuerit nisi per Regalem servicium / Inpediantur. Concedo etiam illi & heredibus suis quod habeant In communi pastura .ii. Equos & .xxx. Animalia. & .c. Oves & Omnem Exitum illorum donec superannatus fuerit & quando / voluerit Catell suum de Insula Removeere bene potest quantum & quandum voluerit. Concedo & illi & heredibus suis Dimidium centenarium Cuniculorum Annuatim habendum de Swyrchechove / & si Swerchechove non sufficit ad tot Cuniculos Capiendos In duabus proximis chovis Recuberabit. & Ipse illos capere faciet per visum Baillivi mei. & Si In aliquo Anno / pro proficium & honore meo de Redditu suo non fuerit paceatus In proxima vend...[hole]...nter? perperacabitur plenarie. Et si as h...[hole] de hominibus predicti .B. & heredum suorum per Licenciam mei vel Baillivi mei de Insule Recessit Ita quod de nulla Culpa Rete...[hole]...?ipse? .B. nec heredes sui de ipso homine amplius Respondebunt. & si aliquis hominum / suorum de latrocinio vestitus & saisatus fuerit ad libitum ipsius .B. & heredes suorum Ipsum hominem suum vel In Guarda sua Retinebunt Vel mihi vel Baillivi mee de Insule / Liberatunt donec secundum Legale Anglie Iudicetur In curia mea de Insula. Concedo Etiam prefato .B. & heredibus suis Asiamenta terre In fortelleses. In viis & semiti / in stangnis & Molendinis. In Aquis & In Omnibus Libertatibus & [...iale] prout illi fuerit necessarium per visum meum vel Baillivi mei. Quere volo & firmiter / precipio quod prenominatus .B. & heredes suis habeant & teneant predicta tenementa cum omnibus pertinenciis suis in perpetuum Bene & In pace. Libere & quiete. Integre & plenarie / In omnibus Locis & Rebus cum omnibus Libertatibus & Liberis consuetudinibus ad ea pertinentibus Sicut predictum est per prenominata servicia. Et ut haec mea Donatio & Concessio / Rata & firma permaneat Sigillo meo presens scriptus Corroboravi. Hiis Testibus. Wa[l]terus de Dunehewed. Jordanus de Marisco Robertus de Aubamare / Galfridus de Aubemare. Randulphus de Aubemare. Rogerus de pontiharde. Adam Giffard. Angilbertus Giffard. Walterus Giffard. Rogerus Oisel & Walterus Clerico & aliis.