

**The Lundy Granite Company: an industrial adventure, by Peter Rothwell and Myrtle Ternstrom**

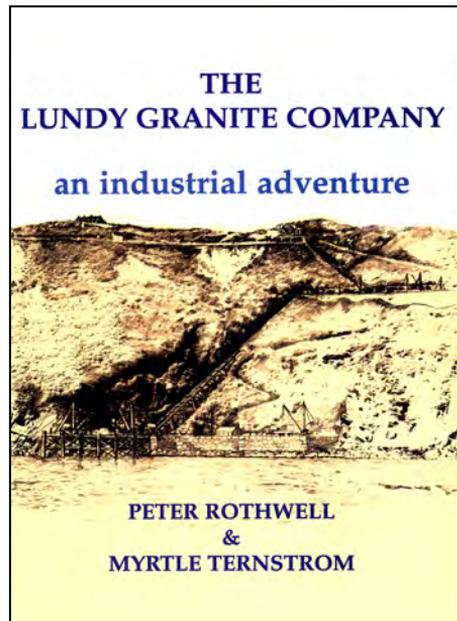
Westwell Publishing, 2008. 186 pages, 96 illustrations. ISBN 095214139-6. £14.99.

Lundy is visited today for its scenery, wildlife, archaeology and especially its tranquillity, and it is perhaps easy to forget a short-lived industrial episode in the 1860s which had a great physical impact on the island. This book pieces together the history of the attempt to quarry granite on a commercial scale and explains why the ambitious scheme failed. Lundy's owner William Hudson Heaven saw the granite as a possible source of income and he sent a sample to the International Exhibition in 1862. The next

year William Columban McKenna negotiated a lease and the Lundy Granite Co. Ltd (his brother Joseph was involved) was formed to open and work granite quarries on the east side of the island. £25,000 was said to have been raised before a second share issue attempted to raise this to £100,000. It was wrongly implied there was a contract to supply granite to the Thames Embankment. Huge sums were spent on laying out quarries, tramways, a shipping place, cottages for an estimated 200 workers, as well as improvements to the farm which was part of the lease. By July 1865 three quarries were in production and a ship was acquired to carry granite across to depots at Fremington near Barnstaple and Highbridge near Bridgwater.

However, only one director ever visited the island (once) and a close relationship between the Lundy Granite Co. and the National Bank, which shared directors, was unhealthy and led to suspect dealings. The granite's quality did not meet expectations and the workers on the remote island were poorly supervised, so by 1869 the company was in liquidation. A contractor, Henry Benthall bought the assets but William McKenna still held the lease and made it impossible for him to work the quarries. Eventually the liquidator took over when McKenna relinquished the lease, but Benthall was soon bankrupt. All was apparently over by the time of the 1871 Census which recorded just the quarry and farm manager, Frederick Wilkins and two quarrymen among the inhabitants, with over 30 houses and the hospital empty. While Heaven had benefited financially for a few years, he received little during the protracted period of liquidation when the quarry and farm buildings deteriorated. Renewed quarrying interest in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries came to nothing.

We may be relieved that the quarries were quickly abandoned before Lundy was desecrated, yet we can also be thankful that even this short period has left some fascinating industrial archaeology to be explored by all those with an interest in Lundy. Important sections of the book interpret the physical remains of the village and quarry complex, quarry workers' cottages and hospital. We see how the abandoned quarries



were connected by tramways to an incline with an unusual brake drum foundation for lowering stone to a quay and jetty, eroded traces of which lie on Quarry Beach.

This informative book is well illustrated with maps, photographs and artist's impressions, while tables and appendices provide more in-depth details. It is a welcome and important addition to the literature on Lundy.

*Peter Stanier*