

CREDITON HISTORY GROUP'S BIG PROJECT

The Crediton group are just about to start on a very big project concerning the properties in the High Street and a very excellent map done of them in 1745, a short time before the fire of Crediton. If you or your family have lived in any of these properties you may be able to help. If you are interested please let me know (jeanwilkins1@btinternet.com or 851337)

The 1745 map was constructed to show the frontages of each property, as at the time, various additions were being made which were narrowing the High Street. This was affecting the market traders who had their stalls down the centre of the street and had to pay for them. Crediton have very good records of their population through the years to back up this research.

At the moment they are applying for grants as they intend to stage an exhibition in the Museum and to produce a book. They would welcome expressions of interest.

Lundy – A Landmark 50 Years

Many of you will have visited Lundy for the day or for a holiday, and so be familiar with the island. Some of you will have also seen how it has been improved over the years. This recent history was the subject of a CAHZoom talk by Simon Dell MBE.

Simon is a retired police officer and gained his MBE for his work with Community Policing and the Dartmoor Rescue Group. He is an experienced speaker on both Dartmoor and Lundy Island, with which he has a long association. Indeed, he is one of 12 Lundy Ambassadors whose remit is to raise awareness and help to save the buildings there.

Lundy has seen the presence of man from prehistoric times, but its exposed and inaccessible position, 10 miles from the Devon coast in the Bristol Channel, has resulted in frequent changes in ownership. Powerful families and pirate dynasties have fought over control of the island, and the Crown has granted it to various people over time.

In 1836, Lundy was purchased by William Hudson Heaven and it remained in the family for the next 82 years over three generations. His son, the Rev. Heaven, built St Helen's Church, completed in 1896, and consecrated by the Bishop of Exeter the next year. The Bishop had a difficult journey across to the island, taking five hours instead of the usual two, and reputedly making the irresistible remark that he had passed 'through the Jaws of Hell to the Kingdom of Heaven'.

The Heaven family leased land to a granite mining company for quarrying, but loss of income from their sugar plantations and also poor investments meant that there was never enough money to run the island, and so it was sold in 1918 to the Christie family of North Devon, and then again by them to Martin Coles Harman in 1924.

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The Harman family were the last private owners. They used the island as a holiday home, and had a managing agent, Felix Gade, who lived there permanently with his wife, Rene. The couple did much to make Lundy a welcoming place for visitors. Martin Harman's eldest son, John, was killed in the war and there is a memorial to him in the old stone quarry on the east of the island. His brother, Albion, died unexpectedly in 1968.

Furthermore, a serious landslip destroyed part of the road up from the landing place and this, together with the large amount of capital investment needed on the island after two World Wars, made Albion's sisters, Ruth and Diana, and his widow, Kay, reluctantly put the island up for sale.

By 1969 the island was run down and poor, with the historic building derelict and neglected. There was public concern about rumours that it was to be bought by the mafia, or scientologists, and so an all-party group of Devon MPs formed a group to try to ensure a safe future for Lundy. The National Trust was approached but, without an endowment, they were unable to make the purchase.

The rescue came from Sir Jack Hayward, a wealthy philanthropist, property developer, and president of Wolverhampton Wanderers football club. He loved islands, and indeed lived on the Bahamas. He bought Lundy for £150,000 and then donated it to the National Trust, which created The Lundy Company within its organisation. This enabled the Trust to lease Lundy to The Landmark Trust, which had been founded four years earlier by another philanthropist, Sir John Smith, to protect and save smaller historic buildings.

In 2019, Lundy celebrated 50 years since it passed into the hands of the Landmark Trust. Over this time there has been a solid and ongoing programme of investment and improvement, funded by the visitors who stay in the repaired buildings. The key element was access, and so a large ship, the Agdleo, was bought to transport materials from the mainland. The road was rebuilt, and a landing boat was also bought to move the materials on to the landing slip.

The hotel, the tavern, the old Marisco Castle and other buildings such as the coastguard cottages and old signal cottages were repaired. The old lighthouse was a particular challenge but is now restored and has the keepers' cottages as more holiday accommodation. The MS Oldenburg was purchased to act as the island's main ferry for supplies and visitors, and in 1987 the Queen visited in the Royal Yacht Britannia, a clear recognition of how successful the programme of renovation has been.

Staff accommodation was needed to service the holiday cottages and the hotel and tavern, so temporary prefabricated buildings were placed in a field. They are still there, well maintained and in good condition. St Helen's church has also needed thorough restoration, and is now St Helen's Centre, acting as a study, lecture and exhibition space, as well as a church and even a refuge in poor weather. The access road has needed constant work and stabilisation, and a new jetty has been built to ease landing and transport of supplies. There is a new diving hut which is also used for school visits.



Sir Jack Hayward died in 2015, and according to his wishes, his ashes were scattered on Lundy in a poignant ceremony. His generosity has enabled the present thriving and modern Lundy to be created.

Simon's talk was plentifully illustrated with photos of the events, buildings and people he mentioned, and after he finished there were many questions from people who have visited the island. He has written a book which covers the 50 years of the Landmark Trust and Lundy

.Isobel Hepworth

Pub award

Congrats to the Beer Engine on winning the “2021 Rural Pub of the Year” award from the real ale enthusiasts at the Exeter and East Devon CAMRA. The award was one of two prizes received from the CAMRA people on a visit to the village pub. Award No. 2 was for having been in the Good Beer Guide for 40 years – an achievement that dates back to 1981, when the pub was known as The Barn Owl.



In a short item on its Facebook page, the Beer Engine thanked its current customers, the pub's previous owners and the people from CAMRA. “We are thrilled that we have managed to maintain the high standards required. Our job now is to keep the streak going!”

Photo: The Beer Engine Facebook page