

OBSERVATIONS AT BEACON HILL CEMETERY, 1988

by
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BACKGROUND

Professor Charles Thomas on first seeing Beacon Hill Cemetery with its no less than four preNorman inscribed Christian stones remarked that "This is the most interesting and important cemetery in Northern Europe."

Apart from the work of Keith Gardner (L.F.S. Ann. Reports 15, 16, 17) and Charles Thomas et al (L.F.S. Ann. Report 20) there has been little disturbance of the site, and Douglas Hague was most careful when he erected the four Celtic inscribed stones in a protected site within the boundaries of the cemetery (see 'The Early Christian Memorials', D.B.Hague, Aberystwyth, 1982) to avoid disturbance to other possible graves.

KNOWN GRAVE SITES (see Fig.1 and Key to burials)

Among the papers bequeathed to the author by the late Miss Eileen Heaven, is a rough plan of the cemetery drawn by Amelia Ann Heaven (undated, but dating from about 1900) which lists the sites of both the graves that are marked by inscribed headstones and also the unmarked sites known at that time.

Graves marked by inscribed headstones: Nos. 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 10, 11, 12, 15 and 16.

Unmarked known sites: Nos. 8, 14, 17 and 21.

The Heaven Diaries list Nos. 6, 27 and 28: and the Rev. Mr Heaven mentioned another site, No. 29.

Archaeological work in 1969 revealed the extent of the Dark Age Cist Grave complex No. 22; but the original sites of the four inscribed stones Nos. 23, 24, 25 and 26 are not known. (The Tigernus stone, No. 24, was unearched when grave No. 1 was being dug but this is not necessarily its original site.)

Miss A. A. Heaven's grave is marked by a headstone, No. 1.

Martin Coles Harman's and that of his wife Amy Ruth are marked by large granite boulders on which are affixed handsome bronze plaques, and the grave of their son Albion is also clearly marked nearby:- Nos. 18, 19 and 20.

The graves of Felix Gade and his wife are also clearly marked by small bronze plaques:- Nos. 13 and 9.

OBSERVATIONS (see Fig. 1)

During April 1988 the author made a careful study of the mounds and irregularities in the cemetery. This was made easy as April had been dry on Lundy, the grass was closely cropped and the bracken had not yet appeared. The mounds and irregularities were more obvious early and late in the day when the sun was nearer the horizon.

Under these circumstances, six distinct and parallel lines of mounds, running approximately North-South and consisting of mounds of a metre or more in length and lying approximately West-East, became clearly visible.

In the eastern corner of the cemetery is a square of four mounds which might well be the site of the four unnamed sailors from the 'Hannah More' who were interred in January 1866. To the west of this is a North-South line of no less than fourteen mounds extending from the northeast of the cemetery almost as far south as the Cist Grave complex, No. 22. Three metres to the west of this line is another line with six mounds separated by a gap from a further three to the south. The next line has three mounds at the northern end and a further five to the southeast of the Harman graves. There are two more mounds to the north of the ruined Chapel and a further eight in the area between the south of the Chapel and the site of the recently erected four inscribed stones.

DISCUSSION

Although the island population has varied and human graves have been found at other sites on the island, notably at the Bulls' Paradise complex where the 'Giants Graves' were revealed, but also near Millcombe Gates, the Beacon Hill Cemetery must have been used for the burial of more than the two dozen or so souls who lie in the marked or known graves.

The cemetery would never have been subject to the cultivation and ploughing that has taken place in the surrounding fields, but in any case the irregularities described above are too regular and too aligned to be anything other than graves (see Figure 1). However when they were dug, or who lies beneath, will probably remain one of the mysteries of Lundy.

KEY TO BURIALS

1. "In loving memory of Amelia Ann Heaven, who fell asleep joying in the peace of God. 26th Oct. 1905. Aged 72 years.
2. "In loving memory of William Hudson Heaven, owner and Lord of the manor of this island. Born 20th April 1799. Entered into rest 4th March 1883." On the back of this headstone a copper plate reads:- "Walter Charles Hudson Heaven, born 17th November 1865, died 16th October 1929. Elder grandson of W.H.H. owner of Lundy 1916-1918" (When this grave was dug in 1883 "we came across the remains of a coffin with a skeleton in it about eighteen inches below the surface" Rev. H.G.H. article in 'Western Mail' 9.8.1906).
3. "In loving memory of Hudson Grossett Heaven, eldest son of Wm Hudson Heaven, and brother of Amelia A. Heaven, Lord of the Manor of Lundy, 1883-1916. Curate in charge 1864-1886, Vicar 1886-1911. Called home February 26th 1916 in his 90th year."
4. "James Heaven Barrow, Curate of West Kington, Wiltshire, died on this island April 22nd 1861, Aged 25."
5. "Edward Stephen Heaven. Born 25th February 1837, died 23rd June 1883."
6. The mound a few feet north of Miss A.A.Heaven's grave is the unmarked grave of Mrs Ward, wife of the gardener, who died on Lundy in April 1911.
7. "Erected by Thomas Spearman in memory of his father, William Spearman who died Dec. 22nd 1865. Aged 52 years."
8. Harry Styles Whitchurch (infant) 30.10.1882. (d.26.10.82)
- 9- "Edith Irene Gade. Born Sept 11th 1895. Died Aug. 17th 1973. Known as 'Cheerful'. She lived for 41 years on Lundy."
10. "In memory of James Young. Land Surveyor & Valuator of Perth N.B. who died here 5th Feb 1865. Aged 63 years."
11. "Erected by John Kyle of Glasgow in memory of Alexander his brother, who died 6th September 1864 aged 17 years. Alexander his son, who died 30th March 1965, aged 14 months."
12. "Here lieth the remains of Mr Joseph A. Kennedy aged 25 years who departed this life on 25th October 1866. May his soul rest in peace. Amen."
13. "In memory of Felix W. Gade. M.C. Known as 'Giant'. Agent on Lundy 1926-1971. Died on Lundy 28th October 1978. Aged 89 years."
14. Pheobe Poinard died 22 March 1888. (buried 26.3.88)
15. "This stone is erected by Captain John Lang of Appledore in affectionate remembrance of his uncle Samuel Jarman who fell over the cliff on Lundy Island Dec. 24th 1869 aged 59 years."
16. "In loving memory of Helen Elizabeth, the beloved wife of Samuel Mayor Hast, who died on Lundy Island 31st August 1892 aged 44 years.
I have no pain dear husband now,
I've gone to rest on high,
Dear Children, do not mourn for me
I pray you cease to cry."
17. Mr Brimacombe d.15 Jan 1895.

18. "Martin Coles Harman. Owner of Lundy. Second son of William and Florence Harman of Chaldon in Surrey. 30th August 1885. 5 December 1954" (Bronze Plaque).
 19. "Amy Ruth, Wife of Martin Coles Harman. Born 13th August 1884. Died 28th July 1931." (The inscription was originally carved on the granite stone but this has now been overplaced by this bronze plaque.)
 20. Albion Pennington Harman. 23rd June 1968.
 21. Four unnamed sailors from the 'Hannah More' (wrecked 11.1.1866).
 22. 'Dark Age' Cist grave complex (excavated 1969).
 23. Potiti
 24. Tigernus
 25. Tiani
 26. Reste Evta
- Three other recorded burials — sites unknown.
27. "Poor Taylor lad" fell over cliff. 9 July 1871 (Heaven diaries).
 28. Burial of 'Edwards'. 28.6.1883. (died 23.6.1883)
 29. "When digging another grave we struck a stone on which was the inscription 'Joyce Miller, died 1720'." (Rev. H.G.Heaven in Western Mail 9.8.1906).

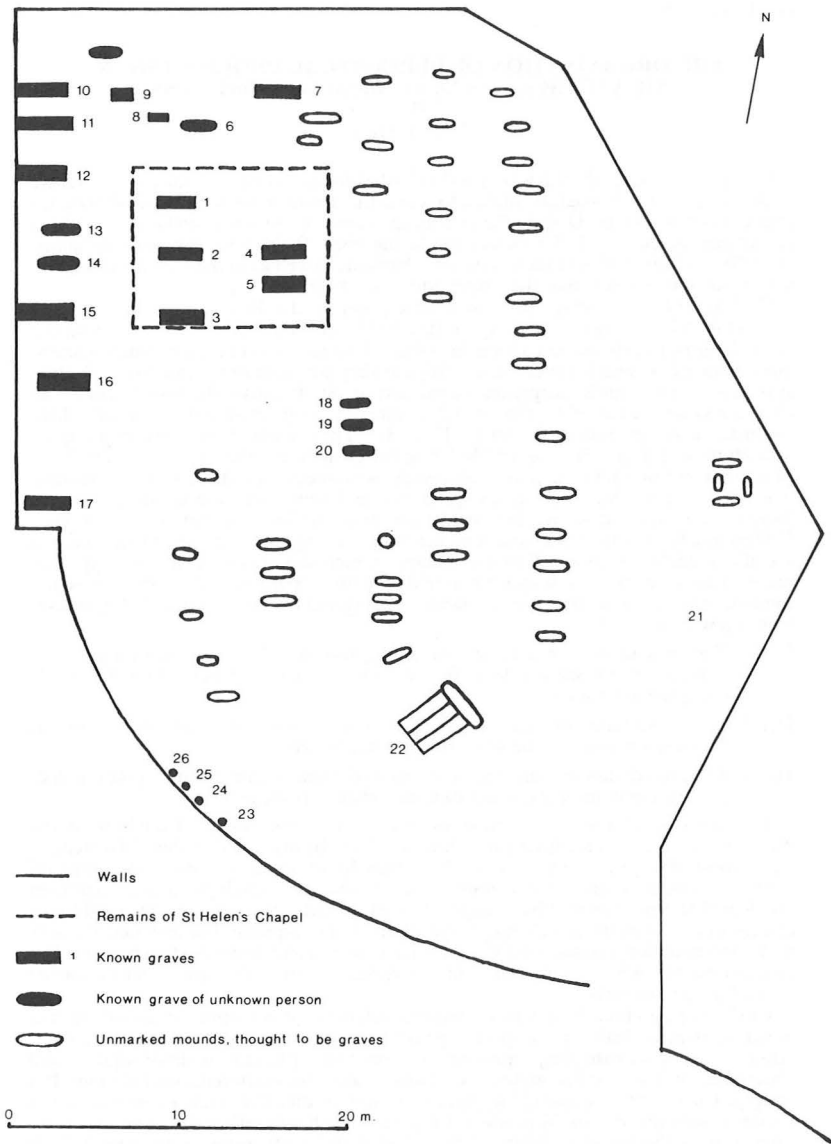


Fig. 1: Known and possible graves in the Beacon Hill Cemetery, Lundy.