

OBITUARY



MYRTLE TERNSTRÖM 1930–2017

Myrtle, who was born in London in 1930, first visited Lundy in 1951, the year she married Tony Langham. She used to tell how Felix Gade looked her up and down and said, “You’ll do”, which she took – correctly – as a compliment. Many years later she was to spend much time with Mr Gade taking down his memoirs and then editing them with Tony Walker; the result was Felix Gade’s autobiography *My Life on Lundy* which is still sought after. Myrtle joined the LFS in 1952.

From this beginning, Myrtle (and Tony) enjoyed holidaying on Lundy whenever they could; they took a short lease on the signal hut adjacent to the castle (now Castle Cottage), and soon began researching the history of the island. This led to the publication of their first book, *Lundy – Bristol Channel* (1960) which was privately printed and which formed the basis for their next one, *Lundy* in the David & Charles Islands series (1970).

Myrtle’s primary interest was history, and she enjoyed spending time with Eileen Heaven hearing about Lundy during the Heavens’ period of ownership. She then spent two years transcribing Heaven family letters; her findings produced two more books, *A Lundy Album* (1980) and *Frivolling & Scurriffunging: A Lundy Gathering* (2004, Myrtle’s favourite book).

Seeking a fuller understanding of Lundy’s unique social and economic history, Myrtle undertook a PhD comparing Lundy’s history with that of North Devon over several centuries. Her determination to find out all the relevant information that could be had is evidenced by the fact that she taught herself Medieval Latin so that she could read and understand primary source materials. She was always grateful to those who shared information with her and was equally encouraging to those who wrote to her asking for information. Her PhD thesis, along with all her Lundy papers, is lodged at the North Devon Record Office in Barnstaple.

Over a period of some 40 years, Myrtle continued to write books on various aspects of Lundy's history, covering aspects such as the Heaven and Harman families and other owners of Lundy; the Nightingale Scandal; the Old Light; and the Castle. She also wrote academic papers on topics such as the granite industry and the lives and (sometimes questionable) antics of those historic characters associated with the island over the years.

Myrtle was elected a Vice President of the LFS in 1998 and served on its committee. She sought always to promote the development of the Society, both in its research and in increasing general awareness of, and interest in, Lundy. Myrtle was instrumental in arranging The Lundy Symposium, held at the University of Exeter in 2006 to mark the Society's 60th anniversary. She was awarded a British Empire Medal for services to the Lundy Field Society in 2012.

Finally, despite trying to cope with the onset of Alzheimer's disease, she was able to make a significant contribution to the LFS book *The Harman Family's Lundy*, a project that gave her much personal pleasure as it was published to coincide with a significant birthday of her friend of 50 years, Diana Keast (daughter of Martin Coles Harman and joint owner of Lundy).

Myrtle will be remembered for her enduring affection for Lundy, her support for the LFS, and her many years of scholarship. She took pleasure in writing and receiving letters, and latterly e-mails, and was always excited to learn of further research being conducted.

ALEX SANDERS & JENNY CLARK

(Myrtle was author, co-author or editor of 12 books, published 12 articles in the Annual Report of the LFS, six articles in the *Transactions of the Devonshire Association*, a chapter in *Lundy Studies* and a paper in the Journal of the LFS. Full references will be included on the LFS website.)

Photo of Myrtle by André Coutanche.