



DIANA KEAST 1922–2021

Diana was born to Martin Coles and Amy Ruth Harman at Dean's Place, Chaldon in Surrey on 19th October 1922, the youngest of four children. Diana grew up on Lundy. Her father had bought the island in 1925 shortly after she had turned three, and this was the start of her 96-year relationship with Lundy. In July 1931, however, her mother tragically died. Her father was worried about Diana's health and decided to give her a year's break from school, sending her to Lundy, under the care of Mr & Mrs Gade. In the autumn of 1932, Diana was able to join her siblings at Bedales School. Diana met her future husband Kenneth Keast, a teacher at Bedales, in her last year at the school. She was due to attend St Martin's School of Art to study fashion and design, but as for so many other young people, the war intervened. Instead, she went to help set up a school at Wennington Hall in Wetherby, Yorkshire, after which she went on to study at Leicester College of Design. In August 1942 she married Ken and they set up home in rooms above the Harrow Inn in Steep, Hampshire.

Above: Diana with Derek Green on the Ugly in May 2010 (photo: Keith Ward).

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After the war she returned regularly to Lundy with Ken, and she would spend the whole summer there. Diana helped Mrs Gade with the catering for the visiting paddle steamer visitors, baking at Millcombe and carrying everything up the hill. She enlisted the help of many people, including family members, in her persuasive way. In the 1950s and 1960s some of the buildings were turned into self-catering accommodation. Diana and her sister Ruth were responsible for the furnishings. The late Felix Gade recalled, *"Diana is a woman of taste, who can make up her mind what she wants. I am positive that no-one could have fitted out the cottages more suitably, intelligently, or to better effect than Ruth and Diana did."*

Diana, Ruth and brother Albion inherited Lundy in 1954 and when Albion passed away in 1968, Lundy was put up for sale. Diana was sure that Lundy's deep peace and tranquillity should be preserved for posterity and whoever took over Lundy should love it as she and the family did. In Diana's own words, *"The sale to the National Trust had been concluded with profound relief and a sense of triumphant achievement by everyone involved."*

Ken became headmaster of Frensham Heights, later moving on to Marlborough College where he taught German, and Diana became involved with the drama and wardrobe departments. Very sadly she suffered a great loss when Ken died of cancer in 1971.

Lundy played a tremendous part in Diana's life. The island was the property, home and abiding passion of the Harman family and Diana was the last surviving private owner. After the sale, Diana maintained her relationship with Lundy, visiting regularly and she reinforced those connections through the Lundy Field Society. Diana became a Vice President in 2007 and we were pleased to elevate her to our President in 2015.

When Diana's 90th birthday was on the horizon, the LFS committee started to think about how to mark the occasion. Initially, we agreed to surprise Diana and present her with something on the big day. Keeping the secret would be easy; she was the only member of the committee not on e-mail! The idea for a book chronicling the Harman family's ownership of Lundy was adopted but it soon became apparent that it would be a much better book with Diana's input, so we told her about it. She threw herself into the project with her characteristic enthusiasm. Not only could she cite historical details which no-one else knew, she brought unpublished photographs and endless anecdotes to illustrate and illuminate Lundy life. After the book was published and launched at the 2013 LFS AGM, she bought many copies to give to family and friends, thereby helping the Society's cash-flow!

Diana had a wonderful way of saying things in a convincing or persuasive manner to the point you didn't realise you were being given a job to do. She set her expectations and you did not wish to disappoint her. Roger Chapple recalls an LFS event on Lundy when he was staying in Old House South with Diana and Myrtle Ternstrom. A drinks party was to be held for all those members on the island and Diana thought it would be a good idea to set everything outside on the grass in the square behind the Tavern. Roger and Ken Rodley were tasked with getting the dining table outside but discovered there is only one way for the table to be moved: the long way round – out through the double doors, over the semi-circular wall, around the corner, and over the wall to the allotted position on the grass. They gathered their breath, and after due deliberation Diana decided it was rather too windy to be outside and, not wishing to disappoint, Roger and Ken had to reverse the procedure and retrace their steps!

Diana leaves a wonderful legacy of so many happy memories and many of us are privileged to have shared time with her on Lundy and be touched by her presence.

Michael Williams