

THE 1921 CENSUS DATA FOR LUNDY

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ABSTRACT

The 1921 census showed there were 37 people living on Lundy on census night, with a further 11 people on a steam trawler in the bay. Apart from showing the recorded data on those people, the article gives the results of further research into who those people were and why they were on the island, plus an interesting report on the status of Lundy which was raised as the census results were published.

Keywords: *1921 Census, Charles Herbert May, Annie Sage, Malcolm Mungavin, Augustus Langham Christie, Martin Coles Harman, legal status of Lundy*

Alan Rowland wrote an article when the 1911 census data was released in 2010 (LFS Newsletter 41 pp35-48). The 1921 census data was released in 2022 following digitisation by FindMyPast.co.uk, and members may be interested to see who was on the island on census night. The use of subscriptions to the genealogical website and the British Newspapers digitised archive, together with Felix Gade's comprehensive and well indexed 1978 memoir of his half century on Lundy, enabled the fleshing out of the lives of many of the people named in the dry pages of the census.

Census Night in 1921 should have been Sunday 24th April, but was delayed to Sunday 19th June due to widespread industrial unrest following the decision on 15th April 1921 (known as Black Friday) by the Rail and the Transport unions not to support the Miners in their strike action.

The official 1921 census population of Lundy was recorded as 48 people, as listed in the table below. However, only 37 were on the island, with the census authorities including 11 fishermen from the Motor Trawler 'Conway Castle' out of South Dock, Swansea. The master gave her exact position as 'Lundy' at midnight on census night. It seems most likely this was a specific reference to the vessel sheltering in the landing bay, as the sea area we now know as 'Lundy' was not adopted until 1949, and the first radio shipping forecast in 1924 used the much larger sea area term 'Severn', which incorporated the current sea areas Lundy, Fastnet, and the southern part of Shannon.

The enumerator's summary book, listing non-residential properties, empty residential properties, as well as the occupied property in which each household was to be found, is not available for this census. Each of the household returns has the same postal address of simply 'Lundy Island, North Devon' without specifying the property. Some are obvious from who was on the returns, eg. Coastguard Cottages and the two lighthouses. Annie Sage was in charge of the Manor Farm Hotel, so she would be on the return she received for that property. There was a second form delivered to Annie Sage, suggesting she was also in charge of another property. It is likely this was a self-contained part of Manor

Farm. Fred Allday had moved from Quarter Wall Cottages (which were abandoned in 1921) to Cliff Cottage (Hammers) by census night. From the number of rooms recorded on the forms for each property, plus the properties known to be in use in the 1911 census, an educated guess has been made as to where each of the remaining households stayed. Should the enumerator's summary book become available, the properties allocated for some of the households may change.

The Heavens had left Lundy in 1916, and in 1917 the island was purchased by Augustus Langham Christie. He lived in Tapeley Park, about two miles northeast of Bideford. Christie never visited the island, so at the time of the 1921 census The Villa (Millcombe House) was empty. In 1920, the island was leased to Charles Herbert May. Not only was there a new owner and a new tenant since the previous census, but everyone on Lundy in the 1911 census had left by 1921, apart from the postmaster Frederick Allday and his wife Hannah. They came to Lundy in 1896 with their daughter Mildred. Following Mildred's marriage in 1916 to William Thomas, a Trinity House man, she had left the island. The Lundy Post Office closed in 1926, after which Frederick and Hannah departed. Frederick died in 1935 at the age of 77 and was buried at St John the Baptist Church in Eltham, south east London. At that time, he and Hannah were living with Mildred and William in Eltham. Hannah died in 1947 when she was still with her daughter and son-in-law.

One question not asked on previous censuses was to state the name of your employer, and there were eight persons who recorded they worked for Mr C. H. May: Annie Sage, Ronald Tuck, Samuel Stookes, Frederick Dawse, William Trenury, John Parminter, Charles Parminter, and William Lang. Alice Hill was on the return with Annie Sage, where she described herself as a servant working on Lundy but did not actually record that she worked for Mr May. Annie Sage was running the hotel as housekeeper, with Frederick Dawse as waiter and Alice Hill as general servant. William Lang was Mr May's gardener. With a non-resident tenant, Mr May employed Ronald Tuck as his farm manager, with Samuel Stookes, John Parminter and Charles Parminter (presumably John's older brother) as the farm labourers. Felix Gade tells us that Samuel Stookes was brought up in a Dr Barnardo's home and was a good lad who loved all the animals, even naming the milking cows and singing to them while they were being milked. Samuel met and married Nellie Alford on the island and set up their home on Lundy before leaving at the end of 1932.

It is clear that Mr May was carrying out some improvements. Staying in Manor Farm was Archibald Sprague, a blind maker, working for S S Abbott (Furnishers) in Barnstaple. This would be Seymour Stanley Abbott who acquired J S Rice's blind making business in 1911 and traded from 40 High Street in Barnstaple. Also in Manor Farm were Henry Morrish, a mason, with Percy Lock, as his labourer, who he recorded as his son. With a different surname, perhaps he was his son-in-law. However, Henry only had a daughter, Ethel, who married Archibald Sprague's son, Frances. We may never know why Henry put son. Technically, as the return was for Annie Sage to complete, it was their relationship to her that should have entered, which was visitors. Henry and Percy were working for J Morrish (Builders). John Morrish was Henry's brother, who was a mason in Bishops Tawton, just south of Barnstaple.

As the census was delayed until mid-June, there would have been visitors staying on

the island. The only two people who declared themselves visitors were Nellie Windiate (19) and, presumably her mother, Mary Windiate (50) from Crookham, Hants, who were staying in the Manor Farm Hotel. Nellie gave her employer as the Salvation Army.

Another possible visitor was Mary Alice Smith (57), a widow born in Yorkshire. Her husband had been an engineer, and in 1913 they were living at Stoley Barton, about three and a quarter miles NNE of Barnstaple, quite close to Mr May's home in Shirwell. In the Hartland News and Chronicle of 14th December 1920 is a report of Lundy's Harvest Festival in which there is a reference to a 'Mrs Smith, of the Villa', who may be the same lady and perhaps a friend of Mr May. The census return refers to her accommodation as having just two rooms which a subsequent person had amended to five rooms, so that would rule out her staying in the villa on census night.

There was a family of four, probably staying in The Bungalow (now replaced by Bramble Villa), and that was Malcolm Mungavin (30), born in Roorkee, India, and his wife Edith (29) born in Guiseley, Yorkshire, with their two children, Michael (8), born in Paris, and David (3) born in Littleham, near Exmouth. Research shows the family had been on Lundy for a while, as the Hartland and West Country Chronicle of 26th October 1920 reports on an island concert on 2nd September 1920 which mentions a Mr & Mrs 'Montgowin' and their son, with a recitation given by Master 'Macgowin', undoubtedly simple mistranscriptions from a handwritten note of the concert. In the census he describes himself as an agricultural student working on Lundy. He left blank the section on employment status, but perhaps he might have been helping Mr May. There is no evidence he pursued agriculture as a career. In 1909 he was a medical student at Cambridge but never qualified. In World War One he was a sergeant in the Royal Field Artillery and later a second lieutenant in the Royal Garrison Artillery. In 1939, the family was living in Buntingford, Hertfordshire where he described himself as an Insurance Broker. His eldest son, Michael, was then a medical student, qualifying as a doctor in 1940. His younger son, David, had become a journalist.

In 2024, Malcolm Mungavin's granddaughter, Denise Collins, contacted the warden asking if there was any information on her grandfather, who she thought was the warden at that time. Whilst there was no warden then, this contact enabled some family information to be obtained. The Mungavins were very much part of the Victorian Raj in India, where there had been generations of doctors in the family. Malcolm was regarded as the black sheep of the family for failing to carry on this tradition by dropping out of medical school. During his wartime service with the Royal Artillery, he was mentioned in dispatches for capturing a number of German soldiers single handedly by implying to them that he was followed by several other members of his unit, and they should surrender.

Denise was not sure why the family were on Lundy in 1921, but her grandfather was a rebel who kicked against the traces of anything that he felt restricted him. Perhaps he saw a few years on Lundy as an escape from all he had been through in



Malcolm Mungavin
c1930

wartime. Denise's father, Michael, and her Uncle David spoke in glowing and happy terms of their time on Lundy, which they regarded as the happiest days of their childhood. As young children, they recall building makeshift rafts with their father to sail in the landing bay, and later acknowledged they were very lucky not to drown. Michael and David were educated privately in Mill Hill School and later went up to Cambridge. After qualifying as a doctor, Michael had a career in medicine, mainly with the pharmaceutical industry, and spent five years in India researching and conducting clinical trials for a drug which went on to be the cure for leprosy. In the latter half of the 1930s, Malcolm became the manager of the UK office of the Canadian company, Crown Life Insurance. Her grandmother later split up with Malcolm and moved to America with David. In his final years, he lived with Michael and his family in Macclesfield, where Denise and her siblings thought him rather stern. He died in 1967.



C. Herbert May's grave at Instow churchyard

Charles Herbert May: He was born at Tiverton in August 1882 to Walter John May and his wife Alma. They lived at the 400 acre Holmead Farm, four and half miles north west of Tiverton. By 1901, when he was 18, the family had moved to Dunwear Farm on the south east edge of Bridgwater. In 1911 he was still at Dunwear Farm, where he gave his profession as Farmer and Livestock Agent. He became lessee of Lundy in March 1920. A few months later, he married his wife Clara in summer 1920.

In 1921 they were living in The Cottage, Shirwell, about three and a half miles north east of Barnstaple, with Clara's parents. His father died in May 1921 at Longstone House, Pilton, a suburb of Barnstaple, leaving him an estate valued at £1,396.1s.11d (about £57,700 today). In 1925, when Martin Coles Harman acquired Lundy, he gave up the lease. Subsequently, Felix Gade reported that Mr May gave him a lot of help and advice on farming Lundy, and at one time Felix Gade was renting a house on the mainland from him. On 27th April 1936 he died suddenly of a cerebral embolism at his home in Ashleigh House, Barnstaple. His estate was valued at £39,314.7s.1d (about £2.3 million today). His obituary in the Western Times of 1st May 1936 refers to Instow church 'crowded with mourners' and described him as 'one of the largest cattle dealers and farmers in the Barnstaple district'. He was also vice-president of the Livestock Trades Association of Great Britain and had the grazing rights to Hyde Park for some time. He is buried at the Church of St John the Baptist, Instow, just above the War Memorial.

Annie (Nancy) Sage: She was born on 6th January 1873 at Kersbrook Farm, a 116 acre farm in East Budleigh, Devon. Although her birth name was Annie Sage, she was always known as Nancy Sage, a diminutive form of her name. Her mother died when she was eight and her father died in 1890, so in the 1891 census she was helping her stepmother on the farm. The

1901 census showed her first links to the May family, as she was then working as the general indoor servant at Dunwear Farm for Walter John May. That would have been when she first met his teenage son C Herbert May. She was still living at Dunwear Farm in 1911 where she was the housekeeper. No doubt when Mr May became lessee of Lundy in March 1920, his long association with Miss Sage, and knowledge of her capabilities, thought her perfect to manage the Manor Farm Hotel. She probably arrived to get the hotel ready for the 1920 season shortly after Mr May leased Lundy. She was certainly on the island in late summer that year, as she was responsible for the refreshments at the concert held at the hotel on 2nd September 1920, with Mr May being present. She was clearly very good to the other islanders, as the Hartland and West Country Chronicle of 31st January 1922 reports she laid on a sumptuous feast on Boxing Day for the whole island, and only those on duty in the lighthouses or coastguard stations were unable to attend (no doubt they got something taken up to them from the hotel). In the speech of thanks, a Mr Montgomery mentioned the wonderful qualities she displayed on all and every occasion, and her strenuous work during the season when, with a house full of visitors and an acute water shortage, she carried out her work smilingly and with a stout heart.

Nancy Sage was a resolute woman, not easily perturbed, even when she had to cater for a 150 guest lobster luncheon at the opening of the new golf course in July 1927. Felix Gade mentions Mr Harman was anxious to extend the hotel business and welcomed the new golf course as a potential source of customers. It was likely a blow to him when



Nancy Sage (left) with her friend Phyllis Blackburn c1926

Miss Sage left the island in October 1927 at the end of the season. Felix Gade was busy running the farm, so in the 1928 season Mr Harman decided not to open the hotel to paying guests, just keeping it as accommodation for his own friends. Nancy was a devout woman and was a churchwarden during her time on the island. The Hartland and West Country Chronicle of 12th November 1927 reported on the harvest festival on 12th October, shortly before she left. The Reverend Muller described her as the 'Soul of Lundy'. Mr Harman's staff and employees got together and bought her a gold wristlet watch as a leaving present. In 1939, when Miss Sage was 66, she was living at Ford House, Drewsteignton. The other occupants were three children's nurses and seven children, so she was no doubt helping run the house. She died on 28th February 1942, at her home in Greenway Lane, Budleigh Salterton. The informant of the death was her nephew, who was present when she died. He gave her occupation as a domestic housekeeper and the cause of death was coronary thrombosis and arteriosclerosis.

Augustus Langham Christie: He was the owner of Lundy at the time of the 1921 census, having bought it from Walter Charles Hudson Heaven in September 1917. No trace of him could be found in the 1921 census, so perhaps he was abroad on census night. It was Christie who paid to build the stone landing stage in 1920. Apparently, he



Augustus Langham Christie's sarcophagus
at Westleigh Churchyard

purchased the island because he could not bear to see from his house any land he did not own. Despite this, he sold Lundy in October 1925 for £16,000 (about £822,000 today). The previous year Christie had been declared insane after attacking his wife and in 1925 wrote a new will cutting out his wife and son. When he died in 1930, he left an estate valued at £312,857 17s 11d (about £17.3 million today). Not surprisingly, his wife challenged the 1925 will and produced an earlier 1901 will leaving everything to her. The sensational court case gripped

North Devon in 1931, and the North Devon Journal of 26th March 1931 reported on its conclusion. It was finally decided that Christie did not have the mental capacity to make a valid will in 1925, so the earlier one stood. He is buried at St Peter's Church, Westleigh in the northeast corner of the churchyard with his wife and son.

Martin Coles Harman: In the 1921 census, the soon to become owner of Lundy, Martin Coles Harman (35), was living in his 13 room house at Dean's Place, Chaldon in Surrey, with his wife Amy Ruth (36) and his sons John (6) and Albion (4) and daughter Ruth (2) plus a child's nurse and a general servant. His younger brothers Andrew (22) and Lewis (21) were visiting on census night. His occupation was given as a merchant banker with Lazard Brothers & Co. Ltd.

The Legal Status of Lundy: It took several years of manual inspection of all the individual UK census returns to give local population numbers, and it was not until July 1925 when the handwritten 1921 census summary for the Bideford Region was compiled. Lundy is included within the Hartland sub-district, being described as 'Ex. Par.' for extra parochial. There is a large asterisk alongside referring to this footnote - 'Lundy Island is for convenience included, in census returns, with Bideford RD'. The particular reference to 'in census returns' suggests that whoever made that note wished it to be clear no wider assertions on its status were being made.

As the national figures were being compiled, no doubt many questions were raised by the Registrar General, but one specific query was made regarding Lundy. In the Western Morning News of 4th February 1925, Lundy made the local headlines when the Bideford Guardians discussed its legal status following a letter from Devon County Council who had received an enquiry from the Registrar General concerning whether any poor rates were being levied on the island. The Registrar General stated that Section 1 of the Extra Parochial Places Act 1857 made clear that every Extra Parochial place included in the 1851 census should be made a separate parish for civil purposes. Lundy was certainly included in the 1851 census, with 34 people recorded. This enquiry had everyone scratching their heads, with the Clerk to the County Council saying Lundy was 'more or less a law unto itself'. As far as he was aware (from hearsay only, he wished to make clear) no poor rates

or income tax were paid. The Clerk also said Parliament specifically made Lundy part of Devon for the Representation of the People Act, following his particular enquiry. The Lord Lieutenant of Devon thought his jurisdiction extended to Lundy but was not sure. Reverend Muller, the Vicar of Appledore, who conducted services in the church on Lundy, reported that at the last inquest on the island, in Reverend Hudson Grosset Heaven's time, the coroner was made to sit at his side to emphasise that the island was absolutely private property which acknowledged no outside jurisdiction. It had been made very clear to Reverend Muller that he was only allowed on the island 'as a matter of courtesy'. The chairman of Bideford Guardians referred to similar situations for islands off the Irish coast where tax-collectors had been driven off by women pouring boiling water on them. No doubt with that alarming image foremost in their minds, the guardians sensibly decided to just report what was known and leave it up to someone else to do something about it. Nothing appears to have happened subsequently, and the Registrar General may well have looked at the large amount of work needed to sort out this legal headache involving a handful of islanders and concluded that as local officials were unwilling to rock the boat, he was also happy to go with the status quo and dropped the matter.

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Lundy occupants as shown on the fourteen separate 1921 Census returns

| Manor Farm Hotel | | | | | |
|---------------------------------------|-----|---|-------------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------|
| Name (relationship) | Age | | Where Born | Occupation | Working For |
| | Y | M | | | |
| Annie Sage (Head) | 50 | 6 | East Budleigh, Devon | Housekeeper | Mr C H May |
| Ronald Athole Tuck (Servant) | 30 | 1 | Southsea, Hampshire | Farmer | Mr C H May |
| Nellie Windiate (Visitor) | 19 | 8 | Bristol, Gloucestershire | Assistant | Salvation Army |
| Mary Windiate (Visitor) | 50 | 4 | Crookham, Hampshire | Household Duties | Private |
| Alice Hill (Servant) | 50 | 5 | Dunwear, Bridgwater, Somerset | Household Duties | (Servant Mr C H May?) |
| Mildred Hill (Visitor) | 12 | 7 | Dunwear, Bridgwater, Somerset | | |
| Samuel Stookes (Servant) | 18 | 1 | Not Given | Farm Labourer | Mr C H May |
| Frederick Dawse (Servant) | 17 | 8 | Portsmouth, Hampshire | Waiter | Mr C H May |
| Manor Farm Hotel (part) | | | | | |
| Henry Morrish (Head) | 48 | 8 | Bishops Tawton, Devon | Mason | J Morrish, Builder |
| Percy Lock (Son) | 23 | 6 | Devon | Mason Labourer | J Morrish, Builder |
| Archibald Sprague (Head) | 46 | 3 | Bishops Tawton, Devon | Blind Maker | S S Abbott (Furnishers) |
| William Trenury (Servant) | 29 | 1 | Barnstaple, Devon | Fisherman | Mr C H May |
| John Parminter (Servant) | 20 | 6 | Witheridge, Devon | Farm Labourer | Mr C H May |
| Cliff Cottage (Hammers) | | | | | |
| Frederick W Allday (Head) | 63 | 4 | Lewisham, Kent | Sub-Postmaster, Retired RN | General Post Office |
| Hannah Elizabeth Allday (Wife) | 64 | | London | Home Duties | |

| | | | | | |
|--|-----|----|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------|
| Sea View (Barton) | | | | | |
| | Age | | | | |
| Name (relationship) | Y | M | Where Born | Occupation | Working For |
| Rose Parminter (Wife) | 23 | 11 | Torquay, Devon | Home Duties | |
| Sea View (Barton) | | | | | |
| William Henry Lang (Head) | 44 | 5 | Torquay, Devon | Gardener | Mr C H May |
| Sarah Georgina Margaret Lang (Wife) | 43 | 2 | Bath, Somerset | Household Duties | |
| Sea View (Barton) | | | | | |
| Mary Alice Smith (Head) | 57 | 6 | Bradford, Yorkshire | None | |
| The Bungalow (Brambles) | | | | | |
| Malcolm Mungavin (Head) | 30 | 2 | Roorkee, India | Agricultural Student | |
| Edith Mungavin (Wife) | 29 | 2 | Guiseley, Yorkshire | Home Duties | |
| Michael Mungavin (Son) | 8 | 1 | Paris, France | | |
| David Mungavin (Son) | 3 | 6 | Littleham, Devon | | |
| Coastguard Cottages | | | | | |
| Edward Splain (Head) | 46 | 6 | Dover, Kent | HM Coastguard Chief Officer | Admiralty |
| Mary Splain (Wife) | 37 | | Ireland | Home Duties | |
| | | | | | |
| Henry Brain (Head) | 40 | 1 | Shipston-on-Stour, Worcestershire | Coastguard | Admiralty |
| Emma Brain (Wife) | 40 | 3 | Portsmouth, Hampshire | Home Duties | |
| | | | | | |
| Elias Davies (Head) | 45 | 10 | Birkenhead, Cheshire | Coastguard | Admiralty |
| | | | | | |
| Henry Harvey (Head) | 46 | | Bath, Somerset | HM Coastguard Petty Officer | Admiralty |
| Rebecca Harvey (Wife) | 43 | | Bath, Somerset | Home Duties | |
| South Light | | | | | |
| Charles Thomas (Head) | 50 | 9 | Llanstadwell, Pembrokeshire, Wales | Lighthouse Keeper | Trinity House |
| Robert James Hall | 47 | 1 | Padstow, Cornwall | Lighthouse Keeper | Trinity House |
| Henry Quinton | 37 | 4 | Withernsea, Yorkshire | Lighthouse Keeper | Trinity House |
| North Light | | | | | |
| Sydney Charles Warder (Head) | 33 | 3 | Haisborough, Norfolk | Lighthouse Keeper | Trinity House |
| William James Hast | 31 | 4 | Bow, London | Lighthouse Keeper | Trinity House |
| Edmund Victor Reach | 24 | 3 | Cowes, Hampshire | Lighthouse Keeper | Trinity House |
| Motor Trawler Conway Castle | | | | | |
| Walter Mayhew (Crew) | 32 | 6 | Lowestoft, Suffolk | Captain | Cons. Steam Fishing Co |
| Johan de Vries (Crew) | 28 | 11 | South Shields, Durham | Mate | Cons. Steam Fishing Co |
| Chester Brown (Crew) | 40 | 5 | Mutford, Suffolk | Deckhand | Cons. Steam Fishing Co |
| John Holmes (Crew) | 40 | 6 | Antwerp, Belgium | Cook | Cons. Steam Fishing Co |
| Sidney Lewis (Crew) | 36 | | Swansea, Glamorganshire, Wales | Chief Engineer | Cons. Steam Fishing Co |
| George Williams (Crew) | 32 | | Haverfordwest, Pembrokeshire, Wales | Second Engineer | Cons. Steam Fishing Co |
| David Cawley (Crew) | 31 | 6 | Ballaghaderreen, Roscommon, Ireland | Fireman | Cons. Steam Fishing Co |
| Aneurin Owen (Crew) | 28 | 7 | Llanelly, Carmarthenshire, Wales | Fireman | Cons. Steam Fishing Co |
| Carl Johan Pettersen (Crew) | 54 | 5 | Tonsberg, Norway | Fireman | Cons. Steam Fishing Co |
| William H Ware (Crew) | 39 | 4 | Tenby, Pembrokeshire, Wales | Bosun | Cons. Steam Fishing Co |
| Albert Mayhew (Crew) | 28 | 7 | Lowestoft, Suffolk | Deckhand | Cons. Steam Fishing Co |

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