

THE 1939 NATIONAL REGISTER DATA FOR LUNDY

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ABSTRACT:

The 1939 National Register was set up at the outbreak of World War Two to record the civilian population. This article sets out the data recorded for those 21 civilians on Lundy at the start of the war, together with the results of further research on some of those people.

Keywords: *1939 National Register, Felix William Gade, Henry Herbert Kortright, Jack Crews.*

As war was approaching, the government realised there was a need for more accurate information on the civilian population. The last census of 1931 was now eight years out of date, and the next one was not due until 1941. The National Registration Act 1939 was passed by Parliament as an emergency wartime measure on 5th September 1939 and gave rise to the 1939 National Register. This can be regarded as a mini census of the civilian population for autumn 1939, but, unlike a census, it was to be constantly maintained throughout the war and well after. The basic information it contained was similar to that on a normal census but, as a living register, it contained the full date of birth. Under the act, each parish was to compile a register of every civilian within it. The primary purpose of this register was for the system of wartime Identity Cards, which began to be issued from 29th September 1939 and did not end until 1952. When the National Health Service was founded in 1948 the register was taken over for that purpose and, until the NHS system was computerised in 1991, was manually updated to record a woman's change of name on marriage, and the date of death of a person on the register. These additional features make the register an invaluable source for genealogists, not least as this will be the most recent UK population data to be released for a long time. All the documents for the 1931 census were destroyed in a fire in December 1942, and there was no census taken in 1941. The next census of 1951 will not be available to view for almost 30 years, being scheduled for release in 2052.

Before the 1939 register could be released, thought had to be given about protecting the privacy of those who may still be alive. A census is not normally released until 100 years after it was taken, for just this reason. A decision was made that information on persons who would be less than 100, and are not known to have died, were to remain closed until 100 years have elapsed from their year of birth. As the release would involve providing images of the original register pages for viewing online, the line for any such person is blacked out and noted 'This record is officially closed'.

The 1939 register for Lundy has a front cover printed with the title 'National Registration Transcript Book'. The Rural District is filled in as 'Bideford', Registration District, and sub-district no. as '286 (1)', and Enumeration District Letter Code as 'WHEJ'. There are two manuscript notes on the front cover 'Total Number of Persons 21' in black ink, and '1 pages'

(sic) in blue ink. The cover has been signed by F. W. Gade as Enumerator and dated 13th October 1939. With subsequent additions, Lundy's register resulted in two pages with each page containing 44 lines, one for each individual. On page one, the first 21 lines have only two that are blacked out. The next 14 lines are blacked out, then one open entry for John (Jack) Crews, which was not written in Felix Gade's distinctive hand, confirming others were maintaining the register. The final eight lines on the first page are blacked out. On the second page, only the entry on the first line is open, being for two year old Mary A Livie-Noble, and this is written in yet a third hand. The remaining 43 lines on page 2 are blacked out.

It was surprising to see 67 of the 88 lines blacked out. In the West Country, such large blacked out sections are often for groups of young evacuees billeted locally, but none were ever placed on Lundy, not least due to the lack of resources to feed and school young children. The 1939 Register was not to include service personnel in military, naval and air force establishments, as they would already be included in official records, and I think the most likely explanation for the fourteen blacked out lines immediately below those first 21 is that Felix Gade erroneously included Coastguard staff (*Admiralty*) on the register. For the 1931 national census, Felix Gade was the senior person on the island, and he would obviously have been required to include the Coastguard staff. No doubt he treated the 1939 Register in the same manner. Felix Gade mentions a detachment of an officer and six naval ratings arriving in January 1940 to man a watching station, so possibly the other blacked out entries may represent the comings and goings of them and other forces during the war. Any military personnel in 1939 would be over 100 today, so it is not clear why this erroneous inclusion has been treated in this manner. No doubt this was not an uncommon error throughout the whole process of compiling the national register, and presumably some official decision was taken to effectively remove all similar errors.

The full list of persons recorded on Lundy in the register at the beginning of the war is shown in the table. From there, we see Felix Gade was the Estate Manager and Farmer, living in Manor Farm Hotel. A note alongside his entry states 'Capt. General Reserve of Officers 191a'. The estate staff were living in the two Signal Cottages, with Albert Morris as horseman, William Little as cowman, Leslie Tucker as the estate carpenter, and John (Jack) Crews as gardener. Nothing could be found about the other workers, but the index to Felix Gade's 'My Life on Lundy' has Jack Crews listed 27 times, so he was clearly a reliable and good worker. Jack Crews was originally a fisherman from Padstow and came to Lundy in 1929. In 1932 he married Dorothy who was then a waitress in the hotel, and they had a daughter Joan. They had to leave the island in 1939



Jack Crews 1933

when Joan reached school age. Dorothy is listed on the register, but her occupation is shown as 'Domestic Duties Unpaid', which was the phrase used for all married women not in paid employment. Presumably she had been waitressing during the 1939 season, although once war broke out few visitors came, so her services as a waitress would no longer be required. Their daughter Joan is not on the register, so must already have left the island, perhaps to stay with grandparents or friends to start her schooling in September. Jack is listed twice in the register, which likely means he left temporarily too, perhaps to arrange matters before they both departed later that year. Felix Gade stated that Jack could turn his

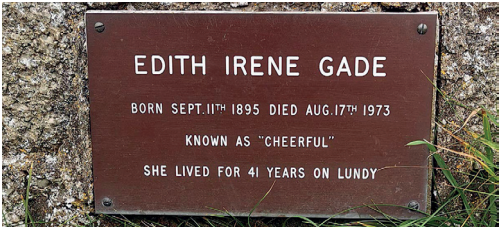
hand to many things, particularly when he returned to Lundy in 1947 after picking up slating and plastering skills. He was also a capable butcher. Jack died in 1979.

In the hotel, Mrs Gade was the manageress (and also the cook), with Frank Curtis as Porter. Directly below Mrs Gade in the register is a blacked out entry, and that can only be for her daughter Mary Gade, who was 6 when war broke out. There were two other people in the hotel. George Turner BA is listed as a tutor and was presumably there for Mary Gade's tuition. The other is Henry Herbert Kortright, who had been a resident magistrate in Sarawak. He retired to the UK and spent seven months on Lundy, where he was a popular and likeable man. He was 54 when he left the island at the end of December 1939 to enlist. He was drafted into a Pioneer Battalion but resigned his commission in 1940. He returned to Lundy in 1943 and stayed with Felix Gade in Millcombe House. He died in spring 1961.

In Garden Bungalow (Brambles) was Mary Hall Livie-Noble. The blacked out entry below her must be for her two year old daughter Mary Ann, who is the only open entry on page two of the register. Her husband, Frederick, was a consultant psychologist and in the 1939 register he was living at Barnes in London. Possibly Mary and their daughter had been sent away to the west country to avoid the anticipated bombing. Also staying in Garden Bungalow was Evelyn Courier. Little could be found out about her. In 1911 she was an embroidery student in West Bromwich, and in 1927 she was living in Birmingham. In the 1939 register her husband was in Sutton Coldfield. She may have been a friend of Mrs Livie-Noble and also escaping the likely bombing, or perhaps she was a nurse for young Mary Ann.

In the South Light the principal keeper was Harry Sibert, with assistants Cecil Tresize and Thomas Cuthbertson, and in the North Light was Reginald Cooper as principal keeper, with Charles Waghorn and Harold Woodruff assisting.

Felix William Gade: He was born on 10th July 1890 in Fulham to Felix Theodore and Winifred Annie Gade. In 1901 they were living in Caterham, where his father was described as an Importer and Merchant. In the 1911 census he was living in Hampton Court with his mother and sister Isabelle, where he gave his occupation as 'motor expert' working for a Motor Car Manufacturer. On 3rd February 1912 Isabelle married Sargent Terry Harman, the older brother of Felix's boyhood friend, Martin Coles Harman. During World War One he joined the 8th Royal Fusiliers, rising to the rank of Captain, where he won the Military Cross. On census night 1921, Felix was staying in a Cheltenham Hotel. His occupation is now an automobile salesman working for a motor car manufacturer in Manchester. This was undoubtedly Ford, who opened their Trafford Park factory just before World War One. In 1926 he became the resident agent of Lundy. It was on 11th November 1926 when Felix first landed on Lundy, after a five day wait at Instow for the gales to subside before Fred Dark could make the crossing in the *Lerina*. In 1928 he married Edith Irene Clark, known as Rene or 'Cheerful'. Felix was a very tall man and known as 'Giant'. In December 1944 he had a severe bout of sciatica, and it became clear that a break from the hard manual work on Lundy was needed if it was to improve. On 1st July 1945 he and Rene left Lundy to manage the Hartland Quay Hotel for Major Stucley, who wanted to reopen the hotel now the war in Europe was over. They returned to Lundy on 2nd May 1949, where Felix steered Lundy through the rest of the Harman years into the Landmark



The Memorials on Lundy to Felix and Rene Gade

Trust era in 1969. On 30th September 1971, Felix had his last day as Land Agent. Rene’s health was failing, and she died on Lundy on 17th August 1973.⁵ Felix lived on Lundy for another 5 years, passing away on 28th October 1978, in his 89th year.

Acknowledgements: The image of Jack Crews is a crop from Dr A T J Dollar’s 1933 photo of a group of islanders in Felix Gade’s ‘My Life on Lundy’ (opposite page 64). Findmypast.co.uk is acknowledged as the source for the 1939 register data and all other genealogical data.

Lundy occupants as shown on the 1939 Register

Signal Station Cottages 1				
Forename	M/F	Date of Birth	Marital Status	Occupation
Albert E Morris	M	09 November 1909	M	Horseman (Farm)
Phyllis G Morris	F	23 November 1916	M	Domestic Duties Unpaid
Signal Station Cottages 2				
John Crews	M	24 April 1900	M	Gardener
Dorothy Crews	F	27 November 1910	M	Domestic Duties Unpaid
Leslie Tucker	M	11th January 1891	S	Estate Carpenter
William Little	M	11 November 1904	S	Cowman on Farm
Garden Bungalow (Brambles)				
Mary H Livie-Noble	F	09 February 1907	M	Domestic Duties Unpaid
Mary A Livie-Noble	F	18 April 1937	S	Under School Age
Evelyn W Courier	F	2nd January 1896	M	Domestic Duties Unpaid
Manor Farm Hotel				
Felix W Gade	M	10th July 1890	M	Estate Manager and Farmer
Edith I Gade	F	11 September 1901	M	Hotel Manageress
Mary EA Gade*	F	27 May 1933	S	School Age
George Turner BA	M	03 November 1900	S	Tutor
Henry H Kortright	M	7th April 1885	M	Sarawak Civil Service Retired
Frank Curtis	M	17th July 1894	M	Hotel Porter
Lundy South Lighthouse				
Harry A Sibert	M	3rd May 1880	W	Principal Lighthouse Keeper
Cecil T Trezise	M	18th June 1898	M	Assistant Lighthouse Keeper
Thomas T Cuthbertson	M	15 July 1902	M	Assistant Lighthouse Keeper
Lundy North Lighthouse				
Reginald G Cooper	M	8th September 1890	M	Principal Lighthouse Keeper
Charles F Waghorn	M	10th September 1892	M	Assistant Lighthouse Keeper
Harold D Woodruff	M	28th February 1896	M	Assistant Lighthouse Keeper

* Entry 'officially closed' on the actual register. Information completed from other sources

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Gade, Felix W., 1978: My life on Lundy. Reigate, M Langham. ISBN 0950617709