

## Heritage Centre Revival and 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebrations

On the evening of 10 October, the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the opening of the Heritage Centre, we formally celebrated the its refurbishment, new IT equipment and the new website recently completed with the help of the Heritage Lottery Fund. The event was attended by volunteers, press and local dignitaries.



## Museum Development Group – Help Needed!

The Museum Development Group was formed in 2015 to undertake wholesale re-development of the Museum. That project is nearing completion and has involved many hours of work and effort by a dedicated group of Society members, some of whom have been formal committee members, formulating policy and practice.

We are now looking for new people either to join the committee or to provide it with assistance, especially anyone with deliverable skills that might help in taking the museum forward in future years. In particular, we need individuals with IT and web skills, as well as others with basic ‘hands-on’ DIY aptitudes. The Museum has two model railways which were built 30 years ago and both are now in need of the attentions of an experienced model railway expert.

If you think you might be able to help, please contact our Museum Development Leader, Michael Freeman at [michaelj.freeman@btinternet.com](mailto:michaelj.freeman@btinternet.com).

– Richard Downing

## Heritage Open Days

The Heritage Museum was open with free admission on the afternoon of Sunday 10 September as part of Heritage Open Days, England's largest festival of history and culture, which brings together over 2,500 organisations, 5,000 events and 40,000 volunteers. We had 64 visitors, a mixture of locals and visitors to the Island. They were all very complimentary about the displays and information on the boards.

– Margaret Davidson

## Winter Opening Hours

Between November and April the Heritage Centre and Museum are open on Saturday mornings from 10:00 am to 12:30 pm only.

Although we have volunteers to cover the rest of this year, we do need more help for some dates in 2018. And of course we always need more Stewards in the summer, when we like to have two people on duty to help each other out and to help with answering visitors’ questions. If you are interested in helping please get in touch.

**New Website:**



**[www.ventnorheritage.org.uk](http://www.ventnorheritage.org.uk)**

## Upcoming Public Talk: The Orphaned Heiress in Bonchurch

On Wednesday 1 November and Thursday 2 November at 7:30 pm author and historian Donna M. Lucey from Charlottesville, Virginia will speak at the Ventnor Arts Club on the eventful and colourful life of Elizabeth Chanler, American heiress to the Astor fortune. Elizabeth was orphaned while attending Miss Elizabeth Sewell's school in Bonchurch. Donna will focus on Elizabeth's Bonchurch years, when among other things the heiress witnessed the sinking of HMS *Eurydice*.

Arts Club members £10/Guests £12. Tickets available at [www.ventnorartsclub.com](http://www.ventnorartsclub.com) or 01893 857 060.

## 'Open Chair' Invitation

Society volunteers have an ongoing invitation to attend Trustee meetings to see how the Society is run. The Trustees want their work to be as open and transparent as possible, and value the input and understanding of all volunteers.

Meeting agendas will be available on the website shortly before each meeting. Attendees will be able to comment on items on the agenda and ask questions, but won't be able to vote.

Meetings are held in the office/archive in the Heritage Centre, so space is limited to one or two observers – please book in advance by contacting Lesley Telford or Leigh Geddes. (Volunteers will have been sent their contact details by e-mail.)

Meeting dates for the next few months are listed on the website; the next meeting is Wednesday 22 November at 7:00 pm.

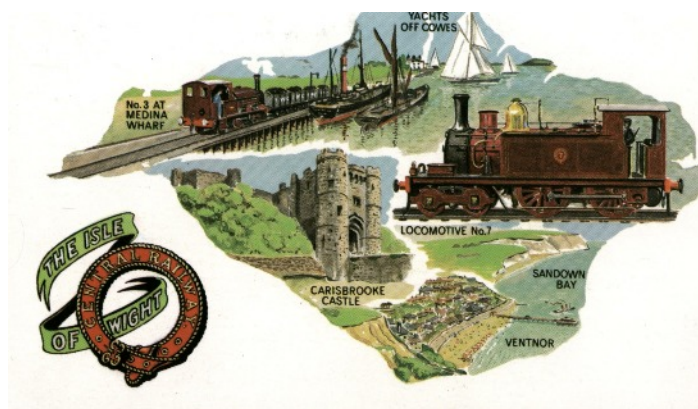
## Upcoming Guided Heritage Walks

On Thursday 9 November we are providing one of two Heritage Walks offered by 'Wild About Wight', part of the Down to the Coast programme. The walk, led by Richard Downing, starts at the Heritage Centre at 10:30 am, will last approximately 1.5 hours and cover about 2 miles with some inclines, and finishes back at the Heritage Centre. The Museum will be open with free entry for any interested participants.

In case of inclement weather, the event will be replaced by a talk inside the Museum.

The second walk will take place in Ryde on Tuesday 21 November, starting (11:00 am) and finishing at the Ryde District Heritage Centre, which will also be open for interested participants.

Both walks are free, but places are limited and booking is essential. Contact [suzie@vectishousing.co.uk](mailto:suzie@vectishousing.co.uk) or call 07399 562928.



## Society Talk: '50 Years of Railway Preservation on the Isle of Wight'

On 29 September Roger Silsbury spoke on the efforts of the Wight Locomotive Society and Isle of Wight Steam Railway to preserve the Island's railway heritage after the end of steam in 1966. Initially the Wight Locomotive Society was able to save one locomotive, six carriages and a number of goods wagons from the scrap merchants, and preserve 1-5/8 miles of track between Haven Street and Wooton. They had to take all the rolling stock from Newport to Haven Street in four trains over 14 hours – with only five days' notice.

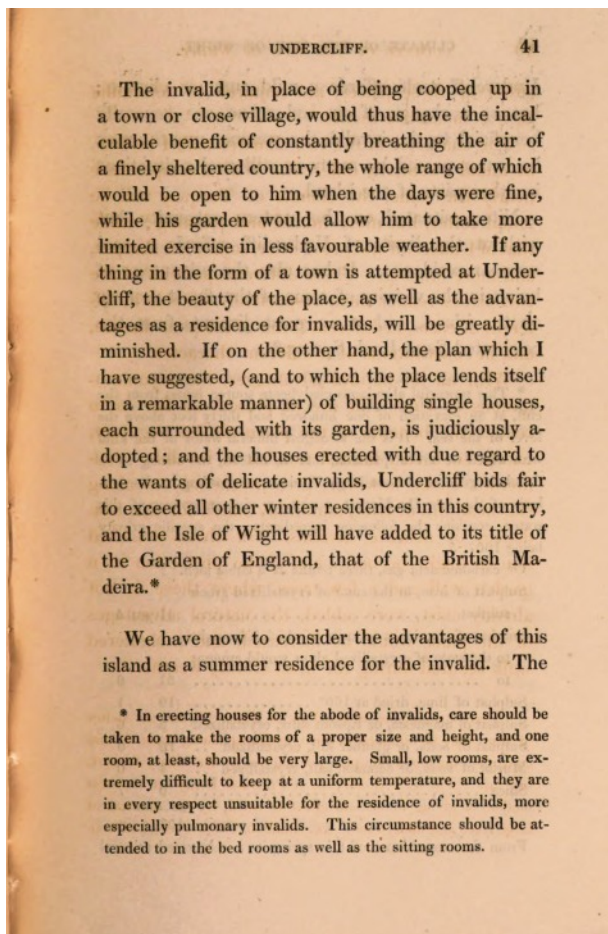
The first preserved steam train ran from Haven Street part way to Wooton on Easter Sunday 1971; 1,000 people turned out to watch. The WLS renovated the 1926 station building at Haven Street and the 1961 shelter at Ashley, and built a new, re-sited station at Wooton (opened 1986). The Wooton station re-used the old Ryde Pier Head ticket office.

In the late 1980s it was decided to extend the track to Smallbrook Junction to connect to the Ryde–Shanklin line. Three miles of railway had to be built from scratch, at a cost of £100 per yard, and a new station had to be built at Smallbrook. The new line was opened in 1991.

In 1981 a workshop was opened at Haven Street. In 2004 the Queen visited Haven Street to open a new carriage and wagon workshop paid for by a grant of nearly £5 million from the Heritage Lottery Fund. The WLS provided about £125,000 and volunteer labour. A further HLF grant in 2012 funded the "Train Story" building. Roger covered the rescue and preservation of particular locomotives and stock in some detail.

The Isle of Wight Steam Railway now has an annual turnover of nearly £2 million. Future plans include improved and expanded visitor facilities, more restoration work, consolidation of the existing railway and perhaps extension of the steam line from Smallbrook Junction to Ryde St Johns using one of the existing tracks. The new franchisees of the Island Line are willing to allow this in principle, and discussions are ongoing.

– Jeffrey Mazo



Page from James Clark's *Influence of Climate in the Prevention and Cure of Chronic Diseases*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (1830)

## Beer Walk and Booklets

As part of the Isle of Wight Beer and Buses Weekend on 14–15 October, the V&DLHS, the Brewery History Society and the Isle of Wight branch of CAMRA prepared a walk taking in many of Ventnor's current and former pubs, breweries and other historic buildings.

A free six-page colour-illustrated booklet designed to accompany the walk is available in the Heritage Centre. The walk was compiled by Richard Downing from the V&DLHS, John Nicholson of CAMRA and Jeff Sechiari of the BHS.

The booklet can also be downloaded from the Beer and Buses website at [iwbeerandbuses.co.uk/Historicwalks/Ventnorbeerwalk.pdf](http://iwbeerandbuses.co.uk/Historicwalks/Ventnorbeerwalk.pdf).

Richard Downing has also produced a new A4 booklet, *Ventnor's Breweries*, to accompany the display that has been up in the Museum this summer. Copies are available at the Heritage Centre for £3.00.

**Copy Date for Next Issue:  
Friday 19 January 2018**

## Society Talk: 'Ventnor Saved My Life'

On 28 July Richard Downing spoke about how three physicians were primarily responsible for Ventnor's fame and development as a health resort. Richard placed this development firmly in the context of nineteenth-century trends in medicine and public health.

In 1830 Dr James Clark, later physician to Queen Victoria and Prince Albert, published the second edition of his 1829 *The Influence of Climate in the Prevention and Cure of Chronic Diseases*, in which he identified the Undercliff as one of the best places in Britain to establish a winter resort for consumptives. This led to the rapid growth of the town, from a population of less than 100 to 350 in 1838, over 900 in 1841 and 2,589 by 1851.

In 1866 Sir Arthur Hill Hassall, an expert on water pollution and food adulteration, came to Ventnor as a patient; in 1869 he opened what became the Royal National Hospital for Diseases of the Chest. Its success is shown by figures such as those for 1901, in which 86% patients were listed as improved and 13% as the same (1% died). By 1938 over 38,000 patients had been treated. The hospital closed in 1964.

Dr James Mann Williamson, author of *Ventnor and the Undercliff in Chronic Pulmonary Diseases* (1887), treated both Karl Marx and Winston Churchill. Marx came to Ventnor in Winter 1882/83 and the following winter was referred to Dr Williamson.

Richard concluded introducing Chas Baker, from whom he had taken his title. They met on one of Richard's guided walks. Chas had been at St Catherine's School on Grove Road in the 1950s, when it was dedicated to children with chronic pulmonary diseases. He told Richard that "Ventnor saved my life".

– Jeffrey Mazo

## V&DLHS Volunteer Opportunities

In addition to our chronic need for Stewards and other museum roles, we are currently looking for volunteers to cover two particular roles: we need someone to organise our monthly meetings and speakers, and we need someone to help coordinate the work of our volunteers. Both jobs can be done at times that suit the persons who take them on. If you think you might be interested, let us know.

For more details search for "volunteering" on our website.

## Upcoming Society Meetings and Speakers

**24 November** Jonathan Collins – 'Researching Sailors and Royal Marines of the First World War'

**December** No meeting

All meetings to be held at 7:30pm in the Masonic Hall, Grove Road, Ventnor

## Notes and Queries

A column devoted to the asking and answering of members' questions about local historical facts and issues.

**Q:** This panorama of Ventnor, from one of Fay Brown's photo albums, may be one of the earliest photographs of the town. Taken from an unusual vantage point, the southwest corner of Longdown near South and West Streets, it looks down Albert Street on the right and Dudley Road is out of shot to the left (or does not yet exist?). Identifiable buildings include the Albert Street School, St Catherine's Church and St Augustine Villa.

The photo was almost certainly taken before 1871, but may be much earlier. Can anyone identify some of the other buildings in the picture, especially those in the foreground? Any clues to the date? And does anyone know where and when the picture was originally printed?

Fay's picture is a copy of a printed photo, so this is a laser-printed copy of a scan of a copy of a printed photo, and it has also been reduced – the quality has suffered somewhat! Fay's original can be viewed in the Heritage Centre [FBPA 27/9].

– Jeffrey Mazo



Send your queries and replies to [jeffreymazo@hotmail.com](mailto:jeffreymazo@hotmail.com) or by post to the Society address (below).

## Recent articles from the Society published in the *South Wight Chronicle*

If you have a subject that you think would make an interesting story, please do let us know. The articles published since the last newsletter include:

- 'A Wartime Despatch Case', Michael Freeman, *SWC*, no. 1334, 3/8/17, p. 8.
- 'Ventnor by Gaslight', Lesley Telford, *SWC*, no. 1335, 10/8/17, p. 8.
- 'Albert "Emperor" Nicholas of St Catherine Street', Lesley Telford, *SWC*, no. 1336, 17/8/17, p. 8.
- 'Ventnor's Breweries – Part 1', Richard Downing, *SWC*, no. 1337, 24/8/17, p. 8.
- 'Ventnor's Breweries – Part 2', Richard Downing, *SWC*, no. 1338, 31/8/17, p. 8.
- 'Helpless off the Wight', Michael Freeman, *SWC*, no. 1339, 7/9/17, p. 8.
- '"Village Ventnor" – the Mid Nineteenth Century', Michael Freeman, *SWC*, no. 1340, 14/9/17, p. 8.
- 'From Moorhills Farm to the Winter Gardens', Lesley Telford, *SWC*, no. 1341, 21/9/17, p. 8.
- 'Ventnor Roller Skating Club – "It was Magic at Night"', Lesley Telford, *SWC*, no. 1342, 28/9/17, pp. 11–12.
- 'It was 30 Years Ago Today', Lesley Telford, *SWC*, no. 1343, 5/10/17, p. 8.
- 'Days to Remember', Michael Freeman, *SWC*, no. 1344, 12/10/17, p. 8.
- 'Basil Drake: Ventnor's Projectionist', Lesley Telford, *SWC*, no. 1345, 19/10/17, p. 8.
- 'Marooned in Bonchurch', Donna M. Lucey, *SWC*, no. 1346, 26/10/17, p. 12.

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