

# VENTNOR AND DISTRICT LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER 35

JANUARY 2018

## Sad News

We are very sorry to pass on the news that at the end of last year we lost two longstanding friends of the Society.

Daphne Carter, who died on 22 November 2017, took hundreds of photographs recording Ventnor in the 1980s and 1990s. She was an active member of the Society in its early days. We are now working with Friends of Ventnor Library to help them to scan her collection of photographs to preserve them for the future and make them available for research and to be enjoyed by local people, as she intended.

Audrey Chiverton, who contributed much to the Society over the years, died on 22 December 2017. She was born and grew up in Whitwell, and lived there until her death. We used her memories of her childhood as the basis for an exhibition about the village in the last century which is still on display. Audrey worked as a steward in the Museum and until last year was usually at the desk on a Friday afternoon to greet visitors.

– Lesley Telford

Right: Audrey Chiverton (left) with her sister and parents, about to set off on one of their 'Sunday walks' in around 1930.

Below: Daphne Carter preparing an exhibition of some of her pictures for the museum.



## Membership News

Hello and welcome to 2018. Membership subs are now due, £10.00 per person. You can renew your membership in person at the Museum on Saturday mornings or at the monthly speaker meetings at the Masonic Hall. If you can't make either then please post your subscription to me at the Museum address.

I would like to give a warm welcome to new Society members Ann and Mick Pye of Ventnor.

So far 46 members have joined or renewed.

– Wendy Marshall, Membership Secretary

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



**V**entnor  
Heritage Centre

**W**  
VENTNOR ARTS CLUB

**Ventnor Arts Club and Ventnor Heritage Centre present  
a series of free Monday evening talks in the Arts Club**

*Dates as shown below. Places are limited, so please email or call  
to reserve your seat : [info@ventnorartsclub.com](mailto:info@ventnorartsclub.com) / Tel: 857060*

**Monday 12th Feb:** *Ventnor Past and Present* - Andy Butler on  
how our town has developed and changed over two hundred years

**Monday 19th Feb:** *Mayfair-by-the-Sea, or Ventnor as you never saw it*  
Michael Freeman on the town in Victorian and Edwardian times

**Monday 26th Feb:** *The Island's South Coast - Origins and Historical  
Change* - Dr Alan Clark on the geology of the coastline we know today

**Monday 5th March:** *Dublin to Bonchurch via the Blue Lagoon*  
Lesley Telford on the life and times of Henry de Vere Stacpoole.

**Monday 19th March:** Robin McInnes gives the final talk in the series -  
*Using Historical Imagery to Support Coastal Management.*

**All talks start at 7.30 pm; doors and bar open from 6.30 pm**



**Copy Date for Next Issue:  
Friday 20 April 2018**

## Society Talk: Hitler's List

On Friday 27 October local historian and writer Mike J. Trow spoke on the list of 2,694 people living in Britain targeted by the German security services in the event of a successful invasion in 1940. Three residents of the Isle of Wight were included.

In June 1940, Walter Schellenberg, chief of the security and intelligence branch of the SS, drew up a handbook for the Gestapo including a description of Britain and its political organisation, educational system, armed forces, media, religion and police. It was described in 1945, when it was discovered and published, as 'incredibly well researched'. Schellenberg also drew up the 'Special Search List GB', also known as the 'Black Book' or 'Hitler's List'. Some 20,000 copies were printed for use by the occupation forces, of which only two copies survive. It was found in Berlin at the end of the war, but was not published until 1969.

The list included 2,463 men and 231 women (854 native British and 1,840 foreigners, mostly German exiles). The types of people on the list – academics, scientists, writers and journalists, businessmen, politicians, celebrities – give some indication about the Germans' concerns. A similar list drawn up for Poland before the 1939 invasion included over 6,000 names, almost all of whom were killed before the end of the war. However, a list for Denmark was also drawn up, but those on this list were mostly left alone.

The list included a lot of detail about each individual, but also included a number of inaccuracies. Some people were on the list multiple times, with different names or aliases; some dead people were on the list; in some cases it is unclear why the person was included at all. Each entry was annotated with the branch (Amt) of the security services, for example the Gestapo, and the department within that branch to which the person would be remanded.

The three Island residents on the list were Aneta Demmer, a 24-year-old Dutch journalist living on Mitchell Avenue in Ventnor; Aline Sybil Atherton-Smith, a 65-year-old Quaker and peace activist from Ryde who had worked on social housing in Austria before the war; and Christopher Rhodes (26) of Alverstone. Rhodes was the son of a Baronet and a graduate of Eton and Oxford. According to Trow, Rhodes was probably a member of the 'Z system', an espionage organisation set up in parallel to MI6.

– Jeffrey Mazo

## New Display at La Falaise

Six new historical display panels form part of the Ventnor Enhancement Fund's refurbishment of the shelter at the La Falaise car park, above the Spyglass. The Society, through Michael Freeman, provided research and photographs for the displays.

They cover topics such as Olivia Parkes's (Britannia's) Hut, the Esplanade, the Ventnor sign, and the development of La Falaise and the Western Cliffs.

## Upcoming Society Meetings and Speakers

<b>23 February</b>	Nick Minns – 'The History of Postcards'
<b>13 April</b>	Annual General Meeting
<b>27 April</b>	Bob Longton – 'A Victorian Tour of the Isle of Wight'
<b>25 May</b>	Colin Beavis – 'Lowtherville 1878–2018'
<b>29 June</b>	Kenneth Hicks – 'An Island Legacy'
<b>27 July</b>	Jonathan Collins – 'A Victorian Boarding House and Renovation'
<b>August</b>	No Meeting
<b>28 September</b>	Andy Butler – 'Further Extracts from a Naturalist's Journal'
<b>26 October</b>	Leon Pullinger – 'Isle of Wight Chapels'
<b>30 November</b>	Mark Earp – 'Curiosities of the Isle of Wight No. 2, Fact, Fiction or Fantasy'
<b>December</b>	No meeting

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







Landslips at Gore Cliff near Blackgang, as of 2004. Photograph: Crispin Purdye via Wikimedia Commons.

## Society Talk: The Island's South Coast – Its Origins and Historical Changes

On 26 January 2018 Dr Alan Clark spoke on the geological changes along the Island's south coast from the height of the last Ice Age around 25,000 years ago up to the present day. He focused on the last two centuries, discussing these changes in the context of human settlement and development, working systematically from Blackgang east along the coast to Monks Bay.

Until about 7,000 years ago the Island was part of the mainland, with the 'Solent River' draining most of southern Britain. As the sea level rose the river gradually became an estuary, and a chalk ridge between Old Harry Rocks on the mainland and the Needles was gradually eroded by the river to the north and the sea to the south.

The Undercliff between Blackgang and Bonchurch is entirely comprised of debris from a landslip at the end of the last Ice Age and extending several kilometres off shore.

It has been estimated that without artificial protection parts of the coastline could retreat up to about 160m over the next hundred years. This is due to a combination of soft rock, coastal erosion, over-steep slopes, high rainfall, high groundwater, sea-level rise and increased storminess due to global warming. Most of the land movement in the last century has come in years of particularly high rainfall.

Dr Clark showed 'before and after' pictures of historical localised landslips all along the coast, along with former and current coastal protection measures designed to stop erosion, which would have consequences for stability for the whole depth of the Undercliff. He also described the engineering schemes in place to drain the excessive groundwater in areas at particularly high risk, such as the system of around 150 boreholes and siphons installed at Castlehaven in 2005.

– Jeffrey Mazo

## Society Talk: Researching Sailors and Royal Marines of the Great War

Following on from his successful talk on 24 February on researching British Army soldiers of the Great War (see April 2017 newsletter), on Friday 24 November military and naval historian Jonathan Collins spoke on researching sailors and Royal Marines. In addition to online sites such as Ancestry.co.uk and FindMyPast, and the *London Gazette* which he discussed in February, useful sources include Naval-History.Net. The Admiralty Records – ADM – in the National Archives are particularly invaluable. For the First World War, the registers of seamen's services in series ADM 188 cover 1873–1924.



In 1914 there were 143,000 officers and men in the Royal Navy, making it the largest in the world. Sources for naval personnel can be better than for the army; not only do they often contain more information than army records, all the naval records survived the Second World War while many of the army records were destroyed in the bombing. Jonathan showed examples of RN and RM records and how to interpret them.

– Jeffrey Mazo



### HERITAGE LOTTERY FUND OUTREACH PROGRAMME 2018 TALKS AROUND THE COMMUNITY

DATE & TIME	VENUE	TITLE
14 <sup>th</sup> February 2.30 pm	St John's Church Hall Wroxall	An Old Photo Album <i>by Colin Beavis</i>
19 <sup>th</sup> February 7.00 pm	The Parish Room, St Wilfrid's Church	Family History Research: the Perils and Pitfalls <i>by Judy Ballanger</i>
4 <sup>th</sup> March 2.30 pm	St Lawrence Village Hall	Ventnor Saved My Life <i>by Richard Downing</i>
14 <sup>th</sup> March 7.30 pm	St Margaret's Hall Lowtherville	An Old Photo Album <i>by Colin Beavis</i>

Please check our new website for more information  
about these and future talks  
[ventnorheritage.org.uk](http://ventnorheritage.org.uk)

## Notes and Queries

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

**Note:** Society member David White grew up in Ventnor in the 1940s, and has sent us this memory of those days, when his father worked at Ventnor Station. The 'single line token' he refers to was used on sections of single-line track. It was handed to a driver by a signalman as his authority to enter the section safe in the knowledge that there was no other train using it. The token had to be handed in to the signal box at the end of the section, ready to be given out again to the next train entering that piece of track.

"One day in 1949 I was sitting in the station signal box after school talking to the signalman, waiting for dad to finish work in the booking office. The signalman was not feeling too well and had to keep rushing to the toilet. The bell went, and he had set the points – but unfortunately he had to rush down the steps to the outside toilet moments before the train burst out of the tunnel – the fireman was holding out the token, but there was no one there to take it."

"The signalman came rushing back upstairs but by then it was too late. I told him I would get the token for him, and ran along the ground from the signal box and up on to the platform. By the time I got there the locomotive was uncoupling ready to run round its train. I explained to the fireman why the token was not collected but he would not give it to me as I was only a schoolboy. Luckily the driver told the fireman 'it's ok, I know him as his dad works here', so he handed the token over to me and I set off back to the signal box with it, running all the way. I tripped over the points cable and badly gashed my knee, but arrived quite out of breath but in time for the token to be inserted."



The fireman of locomotive W22 *Brading* prepares to hand over the token to the signalman at Ventnor. R.A. Silsbury collection.

**Query:** Many old cottages and barns from the 1700s or before have one wall right up against the road, sometimes at an angle. Good examples are the Chocolate Cottage in Godshill with its side wall part of the road, and the cowshed and barn (now a house) in Rew Lane, Upper Ventnor. Usually these cottages have plenty of extra ground or garden. Most villages seem to have one or more. Could it be to stake out their boundary, perhaps related to the pre-enclosure act laws?

– Penny Weedon

Send your notes, 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 "Boy's Own" Story from the 1920s and 1930s', Michael Freeman, *SWC*, no. 1347 2/11/17, p. 8.

"The Old Bakery" – Older than You Think', Jeffrey Mazo, *SWC*, no. 1348, 9/11/17, p. 12.

'Liner Watching', Michael Freeman, *SWC*, no. 1349, 16/11/17, p. 8.

'Smith's Cremolia', Jeffrey Mazo, *SWC*, no. 1350, 23/11/17, p. 12.

'Vanished Ventnor – Rayner's Hotel', Lesley Telford, *SWC*, no. 1351, 30/11/17, p. 8.

'Lucknow Villa, Zig Zag Road', Michael Freeman, *SWC*, no. 1352, 7/12/17, p. 12.

'St Lawrence Hall', Lesley Telford, *SWC*, no. 1353, 14/12/17, p. 8.

'Let it Snow! Let it Snow! Let it Snow', Lesley Telford, *SWC*, no. 1354, 21/12/17, p. 12.

'James Knight, Wine, Spirits and Song', Lesley Telford, *SWC*, no. 1355, 11/1/18, p. 8.

'Knight's Library', Lesley Telford, *SWC*, no. 1356, 18/1/18, p. 8.

'Ventnor Unbuilt', Michael Freeman, *SWC*, no. 1357, 25/1/18, p. 8.

'Karl Marx and Ventnor Doctor James Mann Williamson (1)', Richard Downing, *SWC*, no. 1358, 1/2/18, p. 8.