

Annual General Meeting 2018

The Society's Annual General Meeting took place in the Masonic Hall on Grove Road on Friday 31 March. The Chair, Leigh Geddes, reported on the Society's activities over the past year.

The Society had a successful year. A lot of work had been put in to the museum, with a wide variety of displays and exhibitions. The new cabinets and lighting meant that small objects from the collection could be displayed properly. The artisan's kitchen diorama had attracted a lot of interest, and publication of a recipe book with contributions from Society members is under consideration.

The Society took part in the Ventnor Carnival, including free entry during Carnival Week, a slide show and, as part of the Fringe, collaborated with the Ventnor Guitar Group on "Playing with History", an evening of music and film at Trinity Church.

The monthly meetings remained popular, often attracting 50–60 people and on one occasion it was standing room only. For the first time there was also a Winter Programme of free talks. These repeats of the monthly talks reached new audiences in venues such as the Ventnor Arts Club, the Bonchurch and St Lawrence Community Associations, and the Women's Institute in Wroxall.

Work continued towards becoming an Arts Council accredited museum. This should allow sharing of exhibits with other museums on the Island and elsewhere, and make fundraising easier.

A new window display had been created for the museum, and three new publications were produced over the year, on *Carnival*, *Ventnor Breweries*, and *'It Used to Be Like This'*.

To allow as much transparency as possible, the Trustees have established 'open chairs' at all meetings, and members are invited to attend and observe. Information and agendas are posted to the website in advance. Space is, however, limited.

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Museum Window Display

The museum's latest window display features the Victorian desk from Stiby and Elderfield at London House, 40–42 High Street, which came to the Heritage Centre when the firm shut down in 1992. The desk probably came from H.G. Field, Gents' Outfitters and Tailors, which preceded Stiby and Elderfield at the location between 1843 and 1920. The property is now occupied by The Kitchen and The Tea Rooms.

New Trustee and Volunteer Coordinator: Linda Chester

Linda Chester, who was co-opted as a Trustee last year and formally elected at the AGM in April, has taken on the new role of Volunteer Coordinator.

Linda came to Ventnor in the early 1990s, setting up a Repair and Alteration Service at 31 High Street (now the Flower Shop). She later moved to 6 Pier Street (now Luchelles), setting up Poppy's Local Crafts and still offering repairs and alterations. She expanded to open Bizzy Lizzy's at 25 Pier Street (now Lesley's Nutshell) and a haberdashery and wool business at 27 Pier Street (which she later sold, when it became Rainbows). In 2013 she downsized and concentrated on the repair and alteration service, from 1 Spring Hill (now The Salon hairdressers).

After retiring last year, Linda found she was missing the day-to-day interaction with the people of Ventnor and offered to become a volunteer at the Museum. She has always had an interest in local history, with a special interest in how the town centre has evolved and why.

In her new role as Volunteer Coordinator Linda is responsible for interviewing new volunteers and organising induction training, briefings and the rota for the museum stewards.



Right: Linda Chester with the new mannikin for the H.G. Field Outfitters window display.



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Plans and Projects

A book featuring some of the best of the Society's photograph collection is in the pipeline.

An oral history project is at an early stage. The plan is to gather stories, particularly from people whose memories go back a long way, and preserve them so that as many people as possible can enjoy them.

A collection of photographs and sound recordings bequeathed to the Library Service by Daphne Carter, with the stated wish that the Friends of Ventnor Library and Ventnor Heritage Centre should be able to use them, are being classified and digitised, and interesting projects will arise from this huge and varied collection.

A forward plan for the next three years is being put together, and members were requested to complete a form giving their thoughts on what direction the Society should be taking.

Treasurer's Report

The Treasurer, Yvonne Hardy, reported a surplus of £3,394.51 for the year ending 31 December 2017. This was the first surplus for twelve years. The Heritage Lottery Fund and Co-op grant had brought in nearly £30,000; the final 10% of the HLF funds have been withheld until all the activities set out in the application are completed.

The HLF grant paid for new IT equipment, lighting, display cabinets, UV window screens, dehumidifiers, carpentry work, advertising and graphic design, a launch event, and database and website development. Under the terms of the grant, the website must be maintained for at least five years; this will cost £450 per annum for maintenance.

The last several years had involved expenses for the upgrading of the Heritage Centre, paid for in part by bequests and donations; with the completion of the HLF project, such expenses should be much lower in future.

Departures and New Volunteers

Mike and Sandra Woods, who have worked as stewards on the front desk for many years, welcoming visitors, answering their questions, decided to leave in 2017. The Society will give them both Honorary Membership as thanks for their years as the backbone of the team. Susan Collins, who was a volunteer and also a Trustee, is also leaving to follow other interests. Richard Downing resigned as a trustee during the year but continues as a valuable volunteer.

Two new stewards, Linda Chester and Judy Anderson, have joined the team and Tess Jessop is also returning as a steward. Melvin Hurst will be taking over from Susan Collins as meetings organiser and is also leading the Society's oral history efforts. Linda Chester has also agreed to be Volunteer Coordinator. Lesley Matravers has joined as a volunteer and has set up and is running the new Ventnor Heritage Centre Facebook Group (current membership 285).

With the departure of two Trustees and the co-option of Linda Chester as a new Trustee, there is a vacancy. Those interested should get in touch or come along to a Trustee's meeting to find out more.

The officers and Trustees standing for re-election were confirmed unopposed: Leigh Geddes, Hon. Chairman; Yvonne Hardy, Hon. Treasurer; Lesley Telford, Hon. Secretary; Linda Chester (Volunteer Coordinator; co-opted as trustee during 2017); Margaret Davidson (Joint Publicity); Janet Griffin (Deputy Chair); Jason Mack; Wendy Marshall (Membership) and Anne Mundell (Joint Publicity).

Society Talk: The History of the Postcard

On Friday 23 February Nick Minns from the Carisbrooke Castle Museum spoke on 'The History of the Postcard'. He focused on postcards from the 'Golden Age' (1900–1914). He illustrated the talk with cards from the museum as well as from his personal collection.

Nick discussed the types and development of the illustrations on British cards after 1900, using examples showing Island scenes or, on some cases, sent or received by famous Islanders. Early cards were produced from scenes painted by professional artists employed by the card manufacturers. Art Nouveau and Art Deco cards became popular, as did cards with photographs of special occasions, produced overnight for sale to the participants.

Upcoming Society Meetings and Speakers

25 May	Colin Beavis – 'Lowtherville 1878–2018'
29 June	Kenneth Hicks – 'An Island Legacy'
27 July	Jonathan Collins – 'A Victorian Boarding House and Renovation'
August	No Meeting
28 September	Andy Butler – 'Further Extracts from a Naturalist's Journal'
26 October	Leon Pullinger – 'Isle of Wight Chapels'
30 November	Mark Earp – 'Curiosities of the Isle of Wight No. 2, Fact, Fiction or Fantasy'
December	No meeting

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

New Kitchen for Volunteers

The new kitchen in the Heritage Centre has now been completed. We now have running hot water, microwave and a small fridge.

The Co-op Community Project raised £2,114 and the Society put in an additional £1,500 to cover costs. The result is a pleasant area for our volunteers to make their refreshment and sit and have a snack or lunch.

Model Railway Upgrade

We have begun a project to upgrade the scenery of the two model railways in the museum with the help of Ventnor Sheds. New perspex has already been fitted, after permission was obtained from the Heritage Lottery Fund to include this as part of our project. The hope is that this will give a new lease of life to the models for another few decades.

Spring Hill Garden Renovation

Some visitors to the museum have asked what is going on in Spring Hill Garden, across the street, so here's a quick update: the Garden has been fenced during renovation and improvement of this public space by Ventnor Town Council. The work is vital and should be finished by the end of May.

Spring Hill Garden has been a public space since the 1970s, when the expansion of the Central Car Park led to demolition of a number of buildings along the east side of Spring Hill. The area held a mews, stables, carriage shed, corn store and cottages in the 1800s; from 1900, it was the Carisbrooke Dining and Tea Rooms, later converted into flats. In the 1950s it was developed into shops, including a dairy, fish bar, grocers, jewellers and a cafe. The garden was created and named in 1997, and renovated between 2004 and 2006.

To find out more, please call Leigh Geddes anytime on 857360. A plan of the new planting is available at <http://www.ventnortowncouncil.org.uk/news2.php?record=101414>.

E-book: The Undercliff of the Isle of Wight: Past and Present

The most comprehensive survey of the history of Ventnor and the Undercliff is John L. Whitehead's *The Undercliff of the Isle of Wight: Past and Present*, published in 1911. Although somewhat out-of-date, this 400-page book is a vital starting point for any serious historical study of the area.

**Copy Date for Next Issue:
Wednesday 25 July 2018**



The Heritage Centre kitchen, before and after.

The book has been difficult to obtain; there is one battered copy in the Ventnor branch library, and a copy in the County Record Office in Newport. The Heritage Centre does not have a copy in its collection. Second-hand copies go for £100–£165 from online sellers.

The good news is that it is now available in digital form, at no cost, from the Internet Archive. Interestingly, the scanned copy belongs to the Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture in Calcutta, a Hindu mission registered in 1909 and still in existence. The mission library obtained its copy in 1911 when it was published.

To download a copy in various formats, go to <https://archive.org/details/in.ernet.dli.2015.502008>. (That's "in.ernet", not "internet"!)

Upcoming Exhibition

From Saturday 5 May to Saturday 12 May the Isle of Wight AONB, supported by Down to the Coast and the Heritage Lottery Fund, is putting on an exhibition entitled "Paradise Lost? The Lost Architectural Heritage of the East Wight" at the Ventnor Botanic Garden. The exhibition is open 10:00–16:00 daily. Enquiries 01983 854865.

175 Years Ago: Sunday Trading

“William Rayner, keeper of a beer shop at Ventnor, was charged by R.P.C. Joel Bath, with keeping his house open during divine service, and fined 10s and 6s costs. John Bull, also keeper of a beer shop at the same place, was fined the same amount for a similar offence” (*Hampshire Advertiser*, 24 June 1843). Both Rayner and Bull were young men in their twenties, newly come to Ventnor. Bull was later brewer or publican at the Kent Tavern at 102–104 High Street, the Wellington Brewery at 88–90 High Street, and Pier Inn (now Mill Bay). He had a chequered career, declaring bankruptcy in 1857 and 1862. Rayner became a police constable, beadle and rate collector for the Ventnor Commissioners, and town crier.

125 Years Ago: Let Them Go Unwashed

“[At the Ventnor Local Board meeting] a letter was read from Mr A.J. Potts, stating that a year ago he wrote asking the Board to provide a bathing place on the shore for the children of the ratepayers... He believed that the house erected by the Swimming Club could now be obtained, and with proper safeguards could be opened for the younger inhabitants at the price of one half-penny each, as at Ryde... Mr Bull said the decision before arrived at was that Mr Potts, having a large quantity of water running to waste on his own property, should utilise it for washing the children of the town, if he so desired. The Board resolved that it was not a matter they could take up, and a suggestion was thrown out embodying Mr Bull’s idea of allowing those who desired to wash the children of the town to do it themselves.” (*Isle of Wight County Press*, 10 June 1893)

75 Years Ago: Jersey Royals?

“The King and Queen have accepted a sample of early potatoes grown by Ventnor Urban District Council. With a view to inducing private enterprise to carry on the growing of early potatoes in the Isle of Wight along Channel Island lines, the Council have embarked on the experiment and the yield has been most satisfying.” (*Birmingham Mail*, 1 June 1943)

Original sources made available by the British Newspaper Archive (www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk) and the British Library Board

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:

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| ‘Karl Marx and Ventnor Doctor James Mann Williamson (2)’, Richard Downing, <i>SWC</i> , no. 1359, 8/2/18, p. 8. | ‘Vote to Keep the Concy Out’, Lesley Telford, <i>SWC</i> , no. 1365, 22/3/18, p. 12. |
| ‘1882 – Lydia Becker Visits Ventnor’, Lesley Telford, <i>SWC</i> , no. 1360, 15/2/18, p. 8. | ‘Easter Monday 1919: Playing to the Crowd’, Lesley Telford, <i>SWC</i> , no. 1366, 29/3/18, p. 8. |
| ‘Advertiser Buildings’, Lesley Telford, <i>SWC</i> , no. 1361, 22/2/18, p. 8. | ‘Spring Hill: A Journey Back in Time – Part One’, Michael Freeman, <i>SWC</i> , no. 1367, 5/4/18, p. 8. |
| ‘Living Over the Bank’, Lesley Telford, <i>SWC</i> , no. 1362, 1/3/18, p. 8. | Spring Hill: A Journey Back in Time – Part Two’, Michael Freeman, <i>SWC</i> , no. 1368, 12/4/18, p. 8. |
| ‘Snowstorm December 1908’, Michael Freeman, <i>SWC</i> , no. 1363, 8/3/18, p. 8. | ‘Spring Hill: A Journey Back in Time – Part Three’, Michael Freeman, <i>SWC</i> , no. 1369, 19/4/18, p. 8. |
| ‘Philip and Nell Bagell 1: Running the Shop Together’, Lesley Telford, <i>SWC</i> , no. 1364, 15/3/18, p. 8. | ‘Ventnor Now and Then – Church Street’, Lesley Telford, <i>SWC</i> , no. 1370, 26/4/18, p. 8. |