



A Victorian Family Christmas

This year Ventnor Heritage Centre will be taking part in the fun of Ventnorville, the town's Winter Jolly, over the weekend of 1–2 December.

Our volunteers, with the help of our friends from Vectis Victorians (a Living History Group), are planning a “*Victorian Family Christmas Experience*” with something for all ages.

Volunteers are preparing a special-edition Christmas card for sale, a beautiful Christmas hamper of Island produce will be raffled, there will be a bran tub and other traditional games and activities, as well as musical entertainment. The Museum will be transformed for the occasion with traditional decorations.

Everyone is invited to come along and join in the fun, take a glass of Wassail with us and savour the atmosphere of Christmas Past.

For more information on Ventnorville and the exciting things that are happening in the rest of the town go to the Love Ventnor website (<https://www.loveventnor.co.uk/>).

Linda Chester, Volunteer Coordinator.



New Society Publication: *The French Attack on Portsmouth and the Isle of Wight 1545* by C.T. Witherby

In the summer of 1545, King Henry VIII, already at war with France, heard that the French might soon attack him in England. Portsmouth was a target, along with the Isle of Wight, and the English fleet was hard pressed, with only four Royal Navy ships available, including the *Mary Rose*. French troops landed at Seaview, Whitecliff Bay, Sandown and Monks Bay. At sea, despite the sinking of the *Mary Rose* and defeat of the even larger *Henry Grace a Dieu*,

the French were forced to withdraw, taking their landing forces with them.

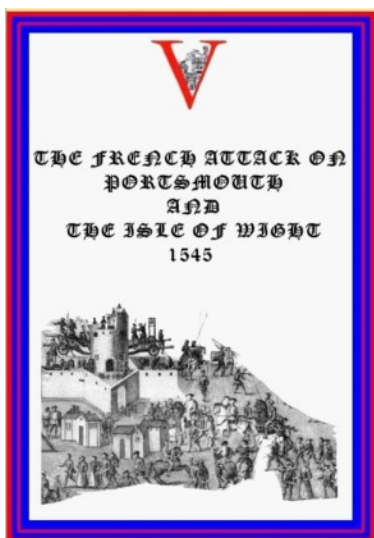
A booklet on the battle researched and written by C.T. Witherby was never published in his lifetime. Vi Vokes, who is preparing the booklet for publication, introduces it as follows: “In the course of research in the archives of the Ventnor Heritage Centre, items other than those being

researched often come to light. The typescript for this book ... is one such.” C.T. Witherby was an active member of the Society from the very beginning and a volunteer steward in the Museum. He was the author of *The French Attack on Bonchurch 1545*. His notes and text for the new publication were incomplete at the time of his death in 1998, but were deposited in the archive. Vi has taken on the task of assembling and editing the material into final publishable form.

She continues:

Since the raising of the *Mary Rose* a great deal has been written and published about her. This booklet, however, is about just one of the attacks on the Isle of Wight. Hopefully, for visitors to the Island it will provide something of interest between the Romans and buckets and spades; and for those who live here the thoughts of what happened in their backyards. This little Island does seem to get in the way of would-be invaders.

The publication will be available from the Ventnor Heritage Centre in late November 2018, price £3.00.



Some Departures

Long-term Society officers Yvonne Hardy and Lesley Telford have decided to step down from their roles at the next Annual General Meeting in 2019. Yvonne has been Treasurer since 2006 and Lesley has been Secretary since 2014.

Both intend to stand for re-election as Trustees at the AGM. Lesley wants to spend more time on research and writing, and Yvonne will focus on digitising the collection and looking after the museum.

Upcoming Society Meetings and Speakers

2018

30 November Mark Earp – ‘Curiosities of the Isle of Wight No. 2, Fact, Fiction or Fantasy’

December No meeting

2019

25 January Robin McInnes – ‘The Most Painted Place: Bonchurch and the Isle of Wight School of Artists’

22 February Susan Weeks – ‘At Home With the Spartali Family’

26 April Brian Greening – ‘Island Life 100 Years Ago’

31 May Delian Backhouse-Fry – ‘The Archaeology of the Undercliff’

28 June John Medland – ‘The Island in the Domesday Book’

26 July Donna Needham – ‘Around the Island in 115(ish) Churches’

27 September Richard Downing – ‘Ventnor Breweries’

25 October Andy Butler – Title to be Announced.

29 November Mark Earp – ‘Queen Victoria on the IOW. Tales of the Expected and Unexpected’

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



Society Talk: Navarino Villa: A House History and Renovation

On 27 July Jonathan Collins spoke on the history of Navarino Villa on St Boniface Road, a Victorian boarding house he and his wife Susan purchased in 2012. Jonathan is well known to Society members from his two recent talks on researching British soldiers and sailors from the First World War, and Susan, who did much of the research for the talk, was a volunteer, trustee and Speaker Secretary in 2017–18.

Using old photographs, maps, deeds, title records, census records and other documents, Jonathan traced the history of the house from its construction in 1870 up to 2012, including biographies and family histories of many of the owners and occupiers. The photo above shows the house in 1900. Many of the photographs and documents are to be found in the Heritage Centre archive, but Susan and Jonathan were also lucky to have found a box containing much valuable material in the house when they bought it.

The second half of the talk covered the sympathetic restoration, renovation and redecoration of the near-derelect villa. Many original features and fittings were restored, and others (missing or damaged) were replaced with original pieces from other sources. Before-and-after photographs showed the extent of the effort Susan and Jonathan have put in to this still-incomplete project.

– Jeffrey Mazo

**Copy Date for Next Issue:
Wednesday 23 January 2019**



Exhibition: Daphne Carter's Photographic Archive

On Saturday 22 September the Friends of Ventnor Library hosted an exhibition of Daphne Carter's photographs of the town. The event was held in the 'pop-up' library on Victoria Street.

Daphne's photographs are being digitised as a joint project of the Friends and the Ventnor Heritage Centre (see the July 2018 Newsletter). If you are interested in helping, please e-mail info@friendsofventnorlibrary.co.uk or leave your contact details at the Library in person or by phone on 07976 009361.

Society Talk: Further Extracts from a Naturalist's Journal

On 28 September Andy Butler gave another of his interesting talks based on the diaries he has been keeping since 1957, when he was 15 years old. (See report on his previous talk, 'Extracts from a Naturalist's Diary, 2015–2016', in the April 2017 Newsletter.)

This time, rather than focusing on natural history observations for a particular year, Andy covered miscellaneous events of historical interest he had personally been involved with or observed over the last six decades.

Topics included multiple shipwrecks, the Newport Grammar School (one of the oldest buildings in the town), the All-Island Sea Angling Championships in the 1960s, flooding in Newport in 1960, the 1970 Isle of Wight Festival, the rescue of a cow from the cliffs in 1989, the first Mackerel Fair in Niton in 1988, the introduction of the now-common feral goats to the Island from Devon for the National Trust in 1992, and the discovery at St

Catherine's Point in 2000 of a prehistoric burial of a 12-year-old girl who died under suspicious circumstances.

Andy presented the incidents in rough chronological order, providing vivid personal anecdotes and illustrating the events wherever possible using his own photographs.

– Jeffrey Mazo

New Donations to Ventnor Heritage Centre

The Museum has received a variety of new donations over the last few months.

These include postcards and photographs of Ventnor and District, especially some aerial photos of Ventnor between 1930 and 1950, postcards of International Stores and staff in 1932 when Leslie Heasman worked there, Knight's Library in the upper High Street and snapshots of the roller-skating rink.

Other items include a book commemorating the life of Francis Gray Bacon, pieces of wreckage from two air crashes on St Boniface Down, copies of the diaries of Edwin Wheeler and Robert Harvey and the memoirs of Clifford Rayner.

We've also been given a collection of Mauchline ware and crested china. Mauchline ware comprises wooden souvenir items such as trinket boxes, needle cases, napkin rings, some with pictures of Ventnor on them. Another unusual item is a china toilet chain pull with 'H.G. Deighton, Ventnor' on it. For more on this last item, see Michael Freeman's article in the *South Wight Chronicle* on 30 August.

– Janet Griffin, Review Committee

Nigel Traylen

We are sorry to report that a well-known face in Ventnor, Nigel Traylen, sadly passed away on 24 September.

Many of us remember him from the book shop, Ventnor Rare Books, in Pier Street, which he ran with his wife Teresa for many years.

He was an expert in antiquarian books and prints, and a good friend of the Society; two years ago he helped to arrange for the bequest to the Society of a valuable collection of books by Alfred Noyes, which he also catalogued for us.

Theresa, who is one of our volunteers and works as a Steward in the Museum, has asked that people who wish to give donations in his memory should make them to the Ventnor Heritage Centre (c/o Henry Ingram & Sons, 12 Albert Street, Ventnor PO38 1EZ).

– Lesley Telford

Notes and Queries

A column devoted to the asking and answering questions about local historical facts and issues. In this issue, we highlight some of the questions asked by visitors to the Heritage Centre over the last three months, and the information we were able to give them.

Miss Dick and Miss Havisham

A woman contacted us via the website seeking information about two of her ancestors, Charles George Dick and his wife Williamina of Madeira Hall. She had heard that Williamina may have been a model for Charles Dickens' writings, and asked if they were buried in Ventnor.

We were able to tell her, first, that the couple are in fact buried in Ventnor Cemetery; there are even photos of their headstones in Fay Brown's files. And although Charles Dick was a friend and neighbour of Dickens during the latter's sojourn in Bonchurch in 1849, and may be the namesake for "Mr Dick" in *David Copperfield*, the story about Williamina is probably a garbled version of the better-known tale that one of Charles George Dick's sisters was the model for Miss Havisham in *Great Expectations*.

Both Mary Diana Dick (d. 1868) and Margaret Catherine Dick (d. 1879) are said to have had unhappy engagements and to have become bedridden recluses at Madeira Hall.

Albert Street Cottage

The recent buyer of one of the cottages hidden away between Albert Street and Dudley Road came into the museum to ask about the history of the house. We were able to date the house to at least 1851, and give the names, family connections and photographs of many of owners/occupiers, including studio portraits of the couple who lived there the longest, from at least 1881 to 1911. Copies will now have pride of place on his wall.

Unique Nursing Home

Another museum visitor sought information about the Unique Nursing Home, where he was born. We were able to dig up an advertisement for the home in an old directory, identify it as the Seafarers Rest on St Boniface Road, and provide photographs of the building before, during and after it was in use as a nursing home.

Send your queries and replies to jeffreymazo@hotmail.com or by post to the Society address (see foot of page).

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:

'Joan Wolfenden (1920–1996) "Artist Extraordinaire"', *SWC*, no. 1383, Evelyn Knowles, 26/7/18, p. 8.

'Carnival Time in Ventnor Heritage Museum', *SWC*, no. 1384, Michael Freeman, 2/8/18, p. 8.

'The Lost Pubs of Albert Street Part One: The Prince Albert Inn', *SWC*, no. 1385, Jeffrey Mazo, 9/8/18, p. 8.

'The Lost Pubs of Albert Street Part Two: The Albion Inn', *SWC*, no. 1386, Jeffrey Mazo, 16/8/18, p. 12.

'1913: A Holiday in Ventnor', *SWC*, no. 1387, Lesley Telford, 23/8/18, p. 8.

'Pulling the Chain', *SWC*, no. 1388, Michael Freeman, 30/8/18, p. 12.

'A Summer Weekend in the Late 1940s', *SWC*, no. 1389, Lesley Telford, 6/9/18, p. 12.

'Amazing Women: Elizabeth Thompson and Olivia Parkes', *SWC*, no. 1390, Lesley Telford, 13/9/18, p. 12.

'Steephill Road Becomes Park Avenue', *SWC*, no. 1391, Lesley Telford, 20/9/18, p. 12.

'The Royal Hotel and the Redan Villa', *SWC*, no. 1392, Lesley Telford, 27/9/18, p. 12.

'1940s Bomb Damage at the Royal Marine Hotel', *SWC*, no. 1393, Michael Freeman, 4/10/18, p. 12.

'Alan Thorpe – Earning a Living in the 1930s and 1940s: Part 1', *SWC*, no. 1394, Lesley Telford, 11/10/18, p. 12.

'Alan Thorpe – Earning a Living, Part 2', *SWC*, no. 1395, Lesley Telford, 18/10/18, p. 12.

'Pier Street Almost a Century Ago', *SWC*, no. 1396, Michael Freeman, 25/10/18, p. 12.