



When Bonchurch had shops

More than one hundred years ago, the village of Bonchurch in some ways boasted the status of a resort in its own right. At least, this was the view of Innell Jolliffe who grew up in the village, her father a well-known builder. In 1959, she wrote an article extolling the virtues of the place, remarking that the village catered well for visitors in the early part of the century. Many residents let apartments in summer and the Bonchurch Hotel was ever busy, its hotel bus meeting trains at Ventnor station almost every hour. But it was the range of shops and other facilities that struck most resonance: Edwards' grocery store and Post Office where you could also hire carriages of all descriptions; Medley's bakery where refreshments were available for visitors, along with his crusty loaves and penny buns; and Diffey's china and gift shop, ideal for visitors seeking presents to take home. Milk, cream, butter and eggs could be fetched from Irvine's Farm in Upper Bonchurch, while down on the seashore, Mr and Mrs Gould ran the 'Baths' as well as a small shop that offered cakes, confectionery and teas. The beach there afforded safe bathing and, in calm conditions, boat trips were possible in Dick Gould's launch. Bonchurch even had its own annual regatta, the village's own crew smart in their red and white jerseys aboard their boat the *East Dene*.

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BONGHURCH



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By the time Innell was penning this article, of course, much had changed. Many of Bonchurch's old mansions had been turned into flats or guest houses. The shops were slowly disappearing. Holidaying in Bonchurch seemed to have become a thing of the past, for Ventnor had overtaken it on almost all counts. For some, it had become a backwater. Today, however, in 2020, that has become an intrinsic part of its appeal, with self-catering accommodation for visitors the new 'norm', offering a holiday ambience that affords a break from the pressures of modern life, an oasis of calm in the spectacular Undercliff scenery.

Ventnor & District Local History Society: Michael Freeman. The late Fay Brown featured some of the substance of this article in the *South Wight Chronicle* of 2nd September 2010. I have not yet been able to find the original article by Innell Jolliffe to which Fay refers.



Ventnor & District Local History Society is a registered charity, working to preserve and record the history of our area and make it available to the public in the Ventnor Heritage Centre.

The Society and Heritage Centre are run and managed by volunteers.

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