



VENTNOR & DISTRICT LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY



The Old Church of St Lawrence



This charming photograph of St. Lawrence Old Church was taken in the 1870s, clearly showing its diminutive size. Surprisingly, though, when completed in the 12th Century, it was even *smaller* than shown in the picture.

The Old Church was built by the d'Aula family and when completed, was only 20ft long and 10ft wide and had the honour for many years to be one of the smallest churches in the land. Although there are smaller places of worship than St. Lawrence – such as the tiny church at *Les Vauxbelets* on the Channel Island of Guernsey - it remains the smallest to be built as a *Parish* church and remained that way until the building of the new parish church in 1878, a few hundred yards away on the main road. (Incidentally, when the chapel at the Royal National Hospital was demolished in 1969, the stained glass windows were removed intact and later re-installed in the new parish church, a Grade II listed building).

Numerous alterations and additions were completed to the Old Church over the centuries, with a major refurbishment by Percy Stone in 1926. (this was the same stone mason who carried out two major refurbishments of St. Boniface old church at about the same time – obviously a very skilled, and busy, craftsman)

The nave has a coved ceiling and what windows there are, derive from several different periods of history. The *Baptismal Font* dates from the 15th century and the *Stoup* is 16th Century. The *Altar* was built in the 17th century and there are also a series of 18th century hat pegs.

In 1750, legend has it that the Reverend Corbet Shelbury, late for a Sunday service, hurried in through the North door, and was killed when he hit his head on the low lintel. After this unfortunate incident, the North door was blocked up.

The old church was extended by the addition of a 10ft long chancel in 1842, by Charles Anderson-Pelham - the first Earl Yarborough.

Ventnor & District Local History Society: Colin Beavis (Photograph from the author's collection).



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.

www.ventnorheritage.org.uk / telephone 855407

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