



Horace Grant – Ventnor's own 'Steptoe'

Every town and village has its characters, whether it be many years ago, or more recently, in living memory. Ventnor is no exception to this and we have, through these pages in the Chronicle, highlighted some of the recent ones, especially in Upper Ventnor: characters such as 'Donkey Milligan', 'Annie Bucket' and 'Pete Cortesi'. Older members of the Lowtherville community will also remember Horace Grant (affectionately known as 'Dido') touring the Ventnor area on his horse and cart collecting anything people no longer needed.

The 'Marine Stores Dealer' business was founded in 1889 by Horace's grandfather, Albert, trading from West Street, Ventnor, and later, when his lease expired, at No.15 Lowtherville Road. When Albert retired the business was taken over by his son George Henry Grant. When Horace was demobilised after the war, he took over the 'reins' (pun intended!) from HIS own father, George, continuing to collect rags etc. for many years. Although he no longer used his horse and cart from the 1970s onwards, he did still collect rags, etc. if delivered to him. Eventually this gruelling occupation forced him to take things easier so, at the age of 68, he became night porter at the Royal Hotel, Ventnor!



'Dido' was born **Horace Edward Hoskins Grant** in 1918 at No.1 Rugby Terrace, Newport Road, but he spent a lot of his childhood in Whitwell and sang in the village choir there. In 1939 he married Abigail Sarah Simpkins and a son, Brian, was born later that year. At the outbreak of the Second World War, Horace joined the Royal Navy and part of his war service was spent on board HMS Glasgow, a Town-class light cruiser, where he served as part of a six-inch gun crew. Despite constant, heavy bombing from the Luftwaffe, the crew of HMS Glasgow were involved in the rescue of some 50 tonnes of Norwegian gold reserves hidden in the town of Molde. The ship, with the gold on board, made it safely back to Liverpool and subsequently on to the USA and Canada. As a result of this action, the crew members were awarded the *Norwegian Participation Medal* in recognition of their bravery and Horace, accompanied by his second wife Freda, was presented with his medal by *Commander Paal Hope* of the Norwegian Navy at the Royal Hotel in October 2006. Horace and Freda had married in 1954 and a daughter, Noreen, was born in 1955. They spent all their married life in Lowtherville Road until ill-health forced them both to move to Downside House in St. Boniface Road, where Horace died in 2013 aged 85.

In the heyday of Horace's 'rag and bone' days, an advert in the IW Mercury (the predecessor of the South Wight Chronicle) read:-

'H E Grant & Son, Marine Store Dealer, best prices given for metal and rags and houses cleared of all rubbish at a moderate cost. Dealers also in bottles, bones, rubber, old iron, etc. Postcards receive prompt attention'. They don't make characters like that, anymore!

Ventnor & District Local History Society: Colin Beavis, from Society archives as well as from personal knowledge



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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