



W.J. Nigh: one of Ventnor's own – part one



William James Nigh was a native of Ventnor and became founder (in 1903) of the wholesale stationery and picture postcard business that continues trading under his name today. Although the firm is now based adjacent to Shanklin railway station, Nigh's vans are often seen around Ventnor, supplying local retailers.

The picture shows William in his later teens when he was working as a postman. He was born in 1880, the son of William and Elizabeth Nigh of Aldbury Terrace, Newport Road, Ventnor. For 40 years, William senior was a cab driver at Ventnor station. He had come to Ventnor from Kent as a youngster about 1870 and lived to the ripe old age of 80.

When W.J. Nigh began his business, it was run from 'Kilmurry' on Southgrove road. By 1919, though, the measure of his success was such that he had purchased a shop at 50 High Street (now the Turkish Barber). The family lived above the shop and the remainder of the accommodation (the cellar included) was used for the wholesale business. Nigh's were by then publishing postcards bearing local views, many of them taken by William himself. He was the originator of the series: the *Five Wonders of the Island*, with copyright registered at Stationers' Hall in London. He developed a close friendship with the famous Arthur Dixon and Dixon's company once

printed a lot of cards for Nigh's.

The lower picture forms the image that William had on his visiting cards. He was then a young man in his twenties.

W.J or 'Billy' Nigh, as always known among friends, was twice married, losing his first wife in 1921, aged only 37. He had five sons and four daughters (the eldest daughter sadly died age five), and all of the sons eventually followed him into the business. In later years, Billy Nigh was a fine bowls player, gaining his county cap for the Island. But as a younger man, football was his passion and he was secretary of Ventnor FC for 16 years.

Ventnor & District Local History Society: Michael Freeman, from files in Ventnor Heritage Centre, especially the Index compiled by the late Fay Brown. The lower photo was supplied by Terry Nigh who was also kind enough to look over the article for me. Part Two to follow next week



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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