



## WJ Nigh: one of Ventnor's own – part two



This fine picture appears in Mark Chessell's book on vehicles with 'DL' number plates (DL: Isle of Wight Motor Vehicle, 1896-1939, Chine Publishing, 2014 ). The motor-car is a Rover 8 four-seat tourer, with an 1130 cc engine. The black and white photographic print was sourced from Ventnor Heritage Centre, but there is nothing on the rear of the actual print that identifies the driver and occupants. However, the Heritage Centre's database records that W.J. (Billy) Nigh is the driver and we now also know that a sister Harriet and a cousin sit in the rear and the young boy in the front passenger seat is son Bernard D. Nigh. Jenny Gardner (née Nigh), has confirmed these identities.

The youngster was born in November 1918 so would have been five years old at the time the photo was taken. Like his father, he was a passionate sportsman as a youth, especially football, and he served in the Royal Hampshire Regiment in the Second World War. He was taken prisoner in North Africa after the four-day battle of Tebourba against German forces in December 1942 and then held in a series of Italian POW camps. However, he, along with other camp prisoners, eventually managed to escape across the mountains to Switzerland and, after a gruelling trek, ultimately arrived back on the Island in time for his father's birthday on 28<sup>th</sup> September 1944.

His father, Billy Nigh, remained managing director of the family business until 1950, when he retired on grounds of poor health. He died from coronary thrombosis in 1953, aged 72. The firm he founded was on the brink of celebrating its Golden Jubilee that year. The funeral service was held at the Congregational Church on High Street and was packed with business and sporting representatives, as well as many family mourners.

*Ventnor & District Local History Society*: Michael Freeman, from files in Ventnor Heritage Centre. With thanks to Jenny Gardner and Terry Nigh for their help.



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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