

Ventnor Brewery

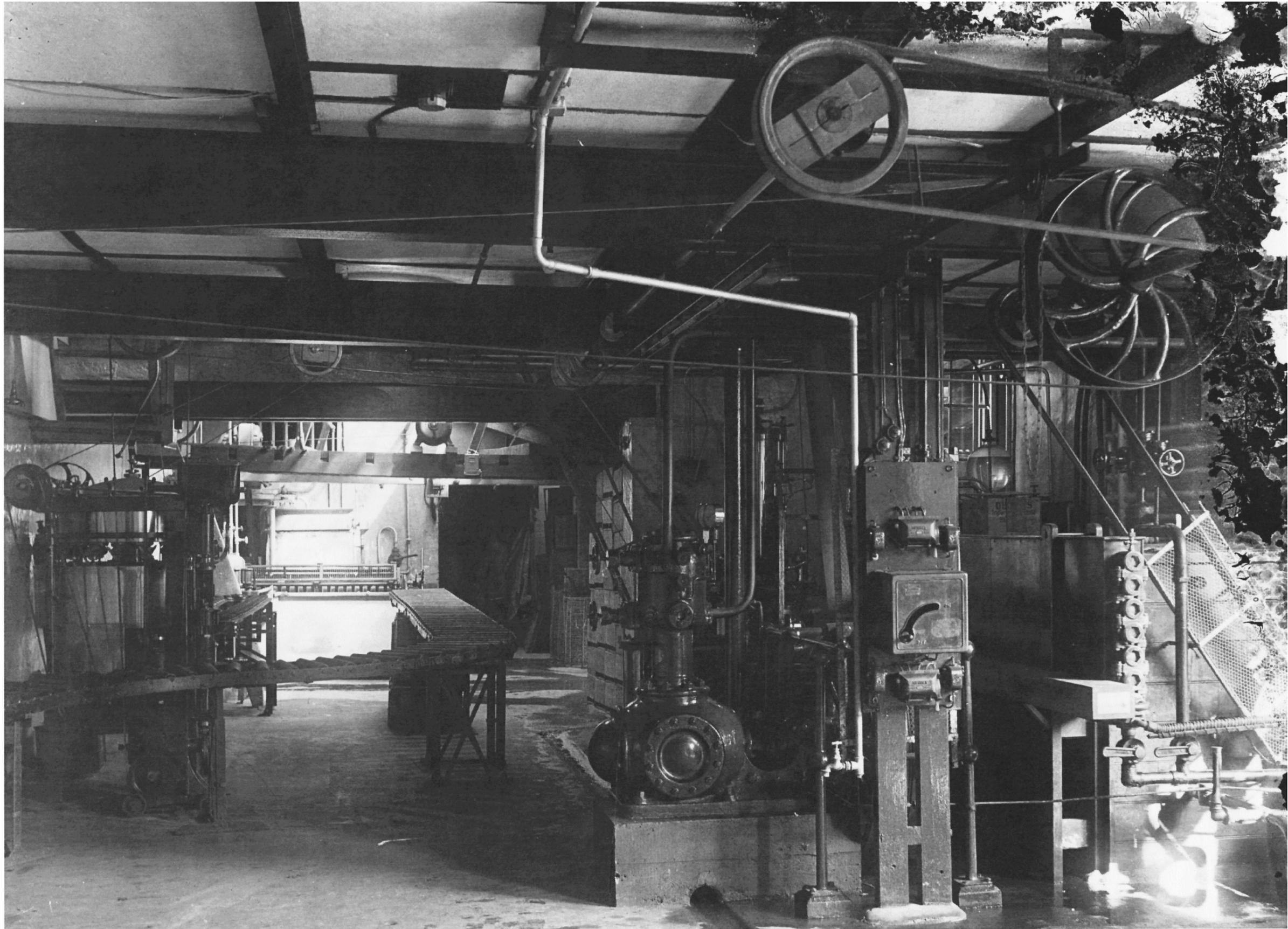
Brewing began in Ventnor about 1840, at a very early stage in the town's growth. Before railways, even the smallest of towns had a brewing facility, a function of the high costs of transporting a commodity like beer that saw enormous weight gain in the process of its making.

The site of the brewery was half way up the north side of the High Street and the building erected in 1951 remains, although now derelict. The attraction of this particular site was its water supply - from a chalk spring issuing from the downs above.

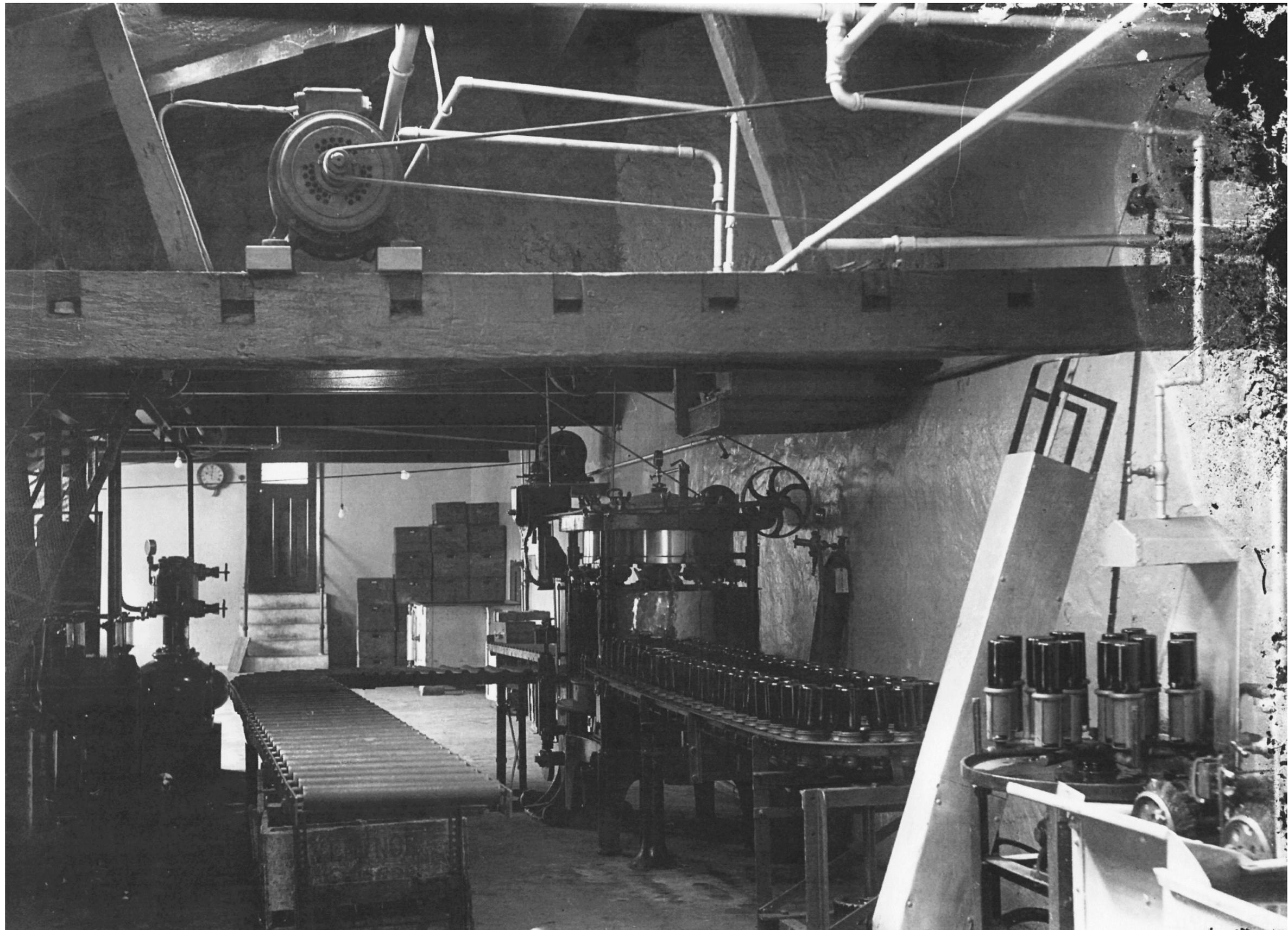
In 1850, the Brewery owner secured agreement with the local water company to take water at sixpence a year for 1,000 years. The sum was so nominal because the water company wanted to avoid water coursing down the road, especially in times of peak discharge.

In 1848, Ventnor Brewery was described as having a water wheel, cellar, stores, stables, piggeries, together with an eight-bedroom dwelling house.

Inside Ventnor Brewery in a picture taken in the early 1900s



Inside Ventnor Brewery in the early 1900s, part of the bottling process



Tied Inns and Public Houses

Like many breweries in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the Ventnor business (as Burt & Co.) acquired a string of local inns and public houses to provide outlets for its beer. These 'tied houses' were not confined to Ventnor and its surrounding villages, but extended to places as far away as Shanklin, Arreton and even Freshwater. The image below is of Walmer Castle on the corner of West Street and North Street.





The Volunteer in Victoria Street, Ventnor, reputedly the Island's smallest public house

Interior view of the Mill Bay Inn, Ventnor, just before World War I



The Terminus Hotel, by Ventnor's main station (1930s), another tied house





Burt & Co's off-licence shop in Upper Ventnor, established between the world wars.

The Commercial Hotel (now the Central), was among the town's earliest hostelries and another tied house, as the wall signage makes plain. In Victorian times, when Ventnor was distinguished as a winter health resort, Burt's produced a beer known as *Invalid Stout*. This picture is circa 1930.



The Star Hotel at Wroxall, with Burt's signage clearly visible



Changing fortunes in modern times

Ownership of Ventnor Brewery changed quite a bit over the years. In the nineteenth century, it was variously in the hands of John Burt and Frederick Corbould (a well-known local wine and spirit merchant).

For much of the twentieth century, it was in the hands of four generations of the Phillips family, three of whom were killed in 1943 when German bombs devastated parts of the site. The Brewery was re-built by 1951 and its old coke-fired steam boiler replaced by oil.

By the final decades of the twentieth century, the business was facing tough competition from the corporate giants. Despite producing what many considered to be choice beers at very reasonable cost, Ventnor Brewery was soon on a financial roller coaster, with several changes of ownership.

In 1976, it had produced 100,000 gallons. In 2000, it produced over 70,000 gallons, winning sundry awards for the quality of some of its special brews. Sadly, it all came to a final end in 2009 when the bank, in the wake of the 2008 financial crash, refused to extend the overdraft.

Island Attraction . . .

“VENTNOR” ALES

on sale in the following Hotels and Inns:

- ★ **Central Hotel**, High Street, Ventnor.
- ★ **Chine Inn**, Shanklin.
- ★ **Hare & Hounds**, Arreton.
- ★ **Hole in the Wall**, Market Street, Ventnor.
- ★ **Millbay Hotel**, Esplanade, Ventnor.
- ★ **Royal Standard Hotel**, Freshwater.
- ★ **Stag Inn**, Lake Road, Lake.
- ★ **Star Hotel**, Wroxall.
- ★ **Terminus Hotel**, Mitchell Avenue, Ventnor
- ★ **Volunteer Inn**, Victoria Street, Ventnor.
- ★ **Walmer Castle**, West Street, Ventnor.

and **BREWED for over a CENTURY**

at

BURT'S BREWERY
VENTNOR.



A WIFE'S LAMENT !

There's nothing more likely to bring forth a tear,
Than the sight of your husband who's hooked on Burt's Beer.

It's oddly like something from Jekyll and Hyde,
For something quite strange happens to him inside.
A couple of pints of this all potent brew
And the signs of decline are quite easy to view.
The eyes start to bulge and the body will stoop
And everything else will quite visibly droop.

At last he'll remember his dinner's at eight,
It's nine o'clock now, he's already too late.
He didn't intend quite so long to delay,
But one of the nippers just led him astray.
He thinks of the wife, but he'll not give a damn,
He may as well hang for a sheep as a lamb.
By now he is seen to be listing to port,
"I'll have a pint" he will loudly retort.
His mate thinks that he'll try a small tot of rum,
It's clear these two lads are not under the thumb.

So straight down the hatch with no thought of his folly
Another swift half then it's off down the "Volly."
But now they call time and he fears for his life,
For what is he going to say to the wife,
He'll tell her the truth, for he's not short of guts,
And then he will hand her a packet of nuts.
A kiss on the cheek and she'll surely relent,
She won't really mind all his money's been spent.

But just when he's finished that pint in the tub,
Arthur suggests that they go up to the Club.
He'll just have a "quick one" and see who's around,
He might even dance to the number one sound.
So out goes our hero, off into the night,
But just a thought to his terrible plight.
He knows he's in trouble and will get his deserts,
But he just can't say "NO" to a quick pint of Burts.

(Any resemblance to anyone either drunk or sober is purely coincidental).

A "BEER" WIDOW!

This wonderful ditty
about a poor 'beer
widow' appeared in
the Isle of Wight
Mercury

CHRISTMAS 1966

TRY BURTS' PRIZE DRAUGHT BEERS

in 2, 4½ and 9 gallon containers

MILD ALE - - 10/- gallon

BITTER ALE - 11/6 gallon

BEST BITTER - 12/6 gallon

Free delivery throughout the Island

SAVE ON THESE OFFERS—

	Usually	Our Price
All brands of Whisky	51/11	48/6
All brands of Gin	50/3	46/9
Rum	51/11	48/6
Vodka	50/9	47/3
Harveys, Cockburns & Sandemans Port	20/-	19/-
Harveys & Sandemans Sherry	20/2	19/6
Martini Vermouth	20/10	20/3
Harveys Bristol Cream	29/9	29/-
Three-star Brandy	62/9	59/6

Savings, too, on all other brands and
on small size bottles.

Order from BURT'S Off-Licences—

119, HIGH STREET, VENTNOR. Tel. 153
DOWN COTTAGE, NEWPORT RD., VENTNOR

Telephone 852

Just look at the price of ale
in 1966, all in pre-decimal
money. One shilling is 5
pence in today's money

A tour of Ventnor Brewery in October 1968

For their October meeting, fifty members of the Vectis Amateur Winemaking Guild were treated to a conducted tour of the Brewery by the head brewer, Bill Phillips.

It commenced at the top of the buildings where the cold liquor tank was situated. Participants then passed down through the barley crushing and cleaning stages, the brewing stages and cooling plant, then into the fermenting room where the fermenting squares, with their copper sides, shone like a hall of mirrors. The tour finally passed to the bottling room. The layout allowed for gravity feeding in the entire production process.

Bill Phillips explained to the group that no chemical additives were used in the production of the beer, and, predictably, members got the opportunity to taste the beer which was regarded as excellent.

Nestling below the Chalk downs of St. Boniface rests Ventnor Brewery. Beer has been fermented here since 1840 using the age-old recipe of malt, hops and its distinctive ingredient of St. Boniface Natural Spring Water, which emanates from the rocks above Ventnor. As a result of the 1850 agreement an unlimited supply of the Spring Water was granted to Ventnor Brewery by the local Water Authority for the princely sum of sixpence per annum: a contract which was binding for the subsequent One Thousand Years.

This far-sighted deal was arranged by Frederick Corbould, son of James Corbould. In 1879 Corbould entered into partnership with John Burt who became the sole owner until 1906, when the brewery and its seven tied houses were acquired by Albert Phillips. His son and successor, William Arthur Phillips was killed, in the destruction of the brew house by a bomb, in 1943.



VENTNOR BREWERY

The new brew house was restored in 1953. The present owners of Ventnor Brewery have resolved to continue the long tradition of the brewery in its production of Ale. On acquiring the brewery they made the exceptional discovery of a hidden store of Antique Glass Bottles, circa 1897. Each has its own distinctive, characteristic.

In order to proclaim the bottle's quality and finite quantity, and also commemorate their centenary, Ventnor Brewery has created, using the time honoured recipe and celebrated Natural Spring Water, an individual ale to fill these unique bottles. Its name, St. Boniface Golden Spring Ale, derives from the St. Boniface Well which supplies the brewery with eternal spring water.

Saint Boniface, a Benedictine missionary was born in Devonshire in 675 a.d. He was an educator and reformer who dedicated his life to his personal perpetual struggle against heathen worship, customs and superstitions. He was also a man popular for his passion of learning and for brotherhood. He was full of warmth and respect for all men, Kings, Bishops, Priests and Layfolk. He loved companionship and was intensely devoted to God and to the Papacy.

ST BONIFACE GOLDEN SPRING ALE

Poster for a celebratory ale produced by Ventnor Brewery in 1996, the name inspired by the Down from which the spring water issues to supply the plant.