



## Poplar Cottage, Church Street, Ventnor



This is the building that once stood on the site of Ventnor's former main Post Office. It was for some fifty-five years the home of John Thomas who was a common carrier operating between Ventnor and Newport. He continued in this role until a few years before his death in January 1895, aged 85. It is not clear when Poplar Cottage was built. The slate roof in this image appears to be in rather good condition and the image probably dates from the 1880s or early 1890s. It may at one time have had a thatched roof, but the pitch of the roof would have had to have been steeper to ensure rain was thrown off it effectively.

John Thomas came from Apse Heath and had a wife, Ellen, who was Ventnor-born. The 1851 Census recorded that they then had four children, aged between eight and one year. By 1881, his sons Henry and Thomas were assisting their father in the carrier business. The eldest daughter, Ellen, was a dressmaker in 1881 and unmarried.

As the picture indicates, the family offered apartments to let as a means of obtaining additional income. In 1891, the Census (usually taken in April) showed that Walter Stanhope and his wife Caroline, from Norwich, were staying, Stanhope described as 'living on own means', i.e. he did not work, but lived off the interest on investments, or the income from ground and property rents, as did so many of Ventnor's well-off visitors.

After John Thomas died, the property was auctioned by Sir Francis Pittis. It included extensive stabling and garden ground to the rear. The auction lot was bought by John's son, Tom Thomas, the High Street butcher (known as 'the sausage king'), for £1,570, who later gifted the land for a new Post Office, opened in 1901. He retained the stabling and garden ground with the intention of building two cottages there. However, the local authority did not approve the plans.

*Ventnor & District Local History Society*: Michael Freeman, from files in Ventnor Heritage Centre, especially the index compiled by the late Fay Brown.



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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