



VENTNOR & DISTRICT LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY



## Ventnor High Street in 1972



This picture may jog memories among older residents from in and around the town. It is probably a photograph taken by Fay Brown in anticipation of the wholesale demolition of this line of buildings on the north side of High Street extending from the bottom of Spring Hill eastward for close on 50 metres. The site is roughly opposite where Tesco now stands and the area now forms part of the shopper's car park. To people who never knew the town at this time, the narrowness of the roadway is striking and it is no wonder that there are double yellow lines on both kerbsides. One can also understand how motor traffic through here was made one way as early as 1937. The shops all look to have been vacated already, but the signage marking out Billy Flint's sweet shop at 59 High Street is still in situ. The vertical signage on the side of the building to the far right would read 'dry cleaners' if it was fully visible. This was Bright & Minns shop, run by a company that had a history on the Island that dated back to 1833. They started as dyers and scourers in Newport. They subsequently opened branches all across the Island, establishing in Ventnor in the 1880s on the corner of Market Street and Albert Street. The branch was soon moved to 61 High Street, the location in the picture. The company held a royal warrant under Queen Victoria.

By the date this picture was taken, Billy Flint had relocated to the premises now occupied by Premier newsagents lower down the north side of the High Street. His shop at number 59 had previously been run by the Bryan Brothers. Pat Bryan was Deputy Mayor of Ventnor for two years, while his brother Tom was a great photographer and used to give slide shows at St. Catherine's Parish Hall.

All of this line of buildings had survived wartime bombing relatively unscathed, but a long line of buildings that extended east from Bright & Minns either took direct hits or suffered heavy blast damage. And aside from the Congregational Church (which was anyway recessed from the road and extended right back to the low cliff behind), none of these buildings was re-instated. The story of this missing line of shops is very apparent in the 1951 Kelly's Directory entry for Ventnor High Street. Bright & Minns was 61, High Street and the next business listed was 91 High Street, for many decades Deighton's hardware store, but by 1951 housing Barnett's Corn and Seed merchants. In effect, no less than fourteen premises had vanished, among them the International Stores and the Globe Inn.

Looking back at the main picture, the shops here in 1951 included Wells's greengrocer, Gibbs & Sons outfitters, Elsa's ladies' fashions and an antique dealer, Mrs. Broughton-Thompson. A few older residents may perhaps remember some of them.

Ventnor & District Local History Society: Michael Freeman, from files in Ventnor Heritage Centre.



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](http://www.ventnorheritage.org.uk) / telephone 855407

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