



Ventnor Roller Skating Club - 'It was magic at night'

Ventnor Roller Skating Club was formed in 1950, and the roller-skating rink was on the Eastern Esplanade, just along from the canoe lake - where the car park now stands.

Win Smith (Win Salter as she was then) remembers many happy hours spent there, and she has given us copies of her photographs of those days. When she was fifteen she was a member of the Ventnor Ladies Roller Skating Netball Team that travelled to Southsea for a match in May 1950. She recalls *"We wore pale blue skirts made by Janet's mum, and we embroidered the club name on our tops ourselves. It was the first time we'd played away, and we were very nervous, overwhelmed really by the experience - we lost five nil, but it was good."* The photo here shows the team (left to right) back row: Win Salter, Janet Deighton, Jean Randall; front row: Doreen Amy, Valerie Beavis.



The Roller-Skating Club ran the events on the rink, and when in 1950 the Pier Parks and Gardens Committee rejected a proposal for hockey to be played there as well as netball, they protested, pointing out that including hockey as well as netball would mean that the men could meet other clubs from the mainland for matches: although most rinks catered for netball for ladies, the men's team couldn't find anyone to play against. It went to a vote, and all but one voted for hockey to be allowed.

Win remembers *"We were just teenagers. We played, hockey and netball, mixed boys and girls. Then there was speed racing, where we did circuits round and round the rink, and we used to practice fancy dance manoeuvres - two-step and twirls. The boots were so expensive, we had to save up and put our Christmas money towards the cost. Once you'd bought them you took them to the man who attached the skates. Those boots were so stiff at first until they were worn in - you'd go home with blisters all over your feet, but you daren't tell your mum!"*

On gala nights we skated into the evening, and there were huge crowds around the rink. They would throw money onto the rink, and the youngsters would scramble to pick it up - it all went into club funds. It was magic to skate at night, with the lights from the pier, and the sea, and the moon shining on the water. Afterwards we would go to the 'Continental Cafe' [Wally Zuber's café on the Esplanade, once Belinda Boarding House] who used to serve us coffee and doughnuts."

We have the minutes book of the Roller-Skating Club in our archives, and they show that Win remembers the club in its heyday - by the end of 1952 there was very little activity, and the girls' netball team was no more; sadly the club wound up in March 1966.

Lesley Telford, *Ventnor & District Local History Society*, with grateful thanks to Win Smith for her memories and photographs; additional information from our archives.

