



Station Memories



An icy winter's day on the platforms of Ventnor station about 1964, although there seems to be a little sun trying to penetrate the thinning fog. A ribbon of snow and ice is visible along the edge of the near platform, but the area fully under cover appears quite dry, so there has not been a blizzard of any sort. A few figures are visible in the distance, but there are no signs that a train arrival is imminent. A platform trolley is loaded with what look to be mailbags, but whether they are waiting to be put on to the next train, or waiting for local GPO collection, is unclear.

If there are any waiting passengers, they have probably all sought the warmth of the Refreshment Room. It had been added by 1926 after the Southern Railway had made extensive alterations and enlargements to the station building, beginning in 1924. For many years, the Refreshment Room was run by the Dixon family of Mitchell Avenue. Two daughters ran the day-to-day work, with extra help drafted in for the summer season. The railwaymen staff took advantage of the facility, including Percy Primmer, who recalled from the early 1930s a certain ribald humour with some of the women staff, but always with a subtle line drawn so as not to offend husbands and boyfriends. Nevertheless, a few budding romances did sometimes bloom, though perhaps not quite in the mould of that between Celia Johnson and Trevor Howard in the famous 1945 film: *Brief Encounter*, which played out in the Refreshment Room of Carnforth station on the LMS west coast main line.

In later years, Ventnor station's Refreshment Room was run by the Channings (of Landslip Tea Garden and Smuggler's Haven fame). Daughter Gwen, together with two Burke sisters from Wroxall, ran the Room on a day to day basis, with help from Molly Lush. A later proprietor was Aubrey Randall of Bonchurch, while Vi and Ken White took on the mantle for the 18 months up to the railway's closure.

Ventnor & District Local History Society: Michael Freeman, from files in Ventnor Heritage Centre. Percy Primmer's memoir appeared in the *Maple Society Newsletter*.



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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