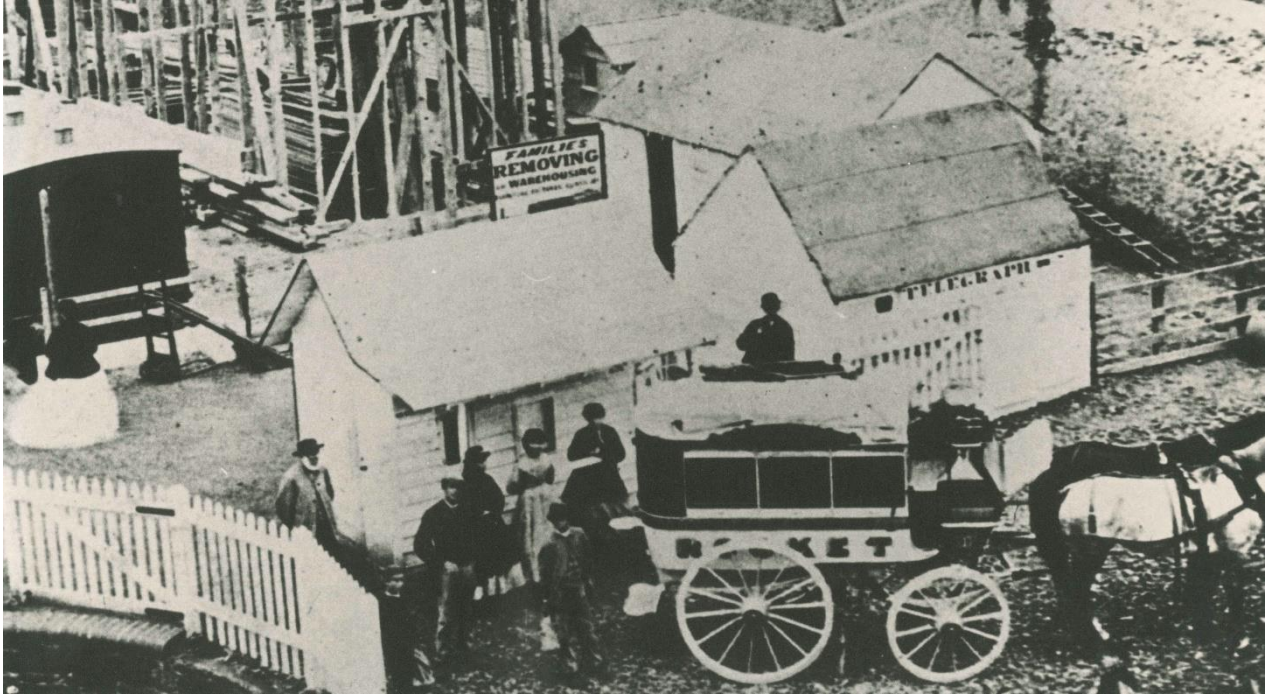




Coach, Horse and Slipper

This week's photograph shows the four-horse coach 'The Rocket' outside Ventnor Station in 1866 - a larger version of this photo can be seen on the window of the Heritage Centre at the Grove Roadside. It is hard to see the detail here, but two of the ladies apparently waiting for the coach are wearing crinolines, and one wonders how they managed to fit themselves into it!



The 'Rocket' is described in the advertisement here from 1875. It met the train from Ryde and ran between Ventnor and Freshwater every day except Sunday, the journey taking three and a quarter hours and offering visitors *Unrivalled advantages for viewing the magnificent scenery of the Undercliff, and the picturesque villages on the Southern Coast of the Island.*

The steep hills of Ventnor made life very difficult for coachmen, and we have a cast iron 'Brake Shoe' (sometimes called a 'slipper') on display in the Museum, something that would have been a very familiar sight in the nineteenth century. It's about a foot long, solid cast iron, and very heavy, and was essential when taking coaches up and down steep hills. This vivid description of how it was used is from Ambleside in the lake district, a hilly town full of tourists, not unlike Ventnor.

"It was a piece of metal shaped like a slipper and you pushed it under the wheel at the back of the coach, and then it held that one wheel and the horses could manage, otherwise it would overrun the horses. The coach sort of skidded down, that wheel [with the slipper on it] never turned. . . all the lads, if they wanted to earn a penny or two they would go to the bottoms or the tops of hills and put the slippers on and then people got out and walked, perhaps the very old stayed on, but the majority of them got out and walked up and down."

Removing the slipper wasn't an easy job: *"You had a very special thing, nearly like a boat hook, [to take the slipper off] because you knew the blooming thing was red hot [from] dragging. They used to back the coach off [the slipper] and then you had to pick it up with this thing and then you had to hang it up under the coach, because it had a chain attached and a special hook for it. The lads had to be frightfully careful because if it touched you it would burn you."*

Lesley Telford, Ventnor & District Local History Society. Sources: Society Collection and Ambleside Oral History Group

VENTNOR, FRESHWATER, ALUM BAY, AND
THE NEEDLES.

ON AND AFTER SATURDAY, MARCH 27th, 1875, the Old-Established and Well-Appointed
FOUR-HORSE COACH,
"THE ROCKET"

WILL RUN EVERY DAY (Sunday Excepted) between the above places, starting from the RAILWAY STATION, Ventnor, on the arrival of the train from Lyde which reaches Ventnor at 10.15 a.m., leaving the Marine Hotel, Ventnor, at 10.30, passing SANDROCK, BLACKGANG, CHALE, SHORWELL, BRIXTON and BROOKE, and arrive at Lambert's Hotel, Freshwater, about 1.30, where a fresh conveyance will be in readiness to convey passengers to ALUM BAY, and return in time for the coach to Ventnor, which will leave Freshwater at 3.45, arriving at Ventnor for the 7.10 train for Ryde.

The trip by this Coach affords unrivalled advantages for viewing the magnificent scenery of the Undercliff, and the picturesque villages on the Southern Coast of the Island. Regularity is ensured by the fact that

THREE TEAMS OF HORSES
are employed on this journey, horses being changed at Chale & Brixton.

FARES:—

SINGLE—FRESHWATER	5s. 0d.;	ALUM BAY	5s. 6d.
RETURN, DITTO	8s. 6d.;	DITTO	9s. 6d.

No difference is made between the Inside and Outside Fare; but persons wishing to secure any particular seat can do so by booking beforehand, and paying 6d. extra. The hours given above will be strictly kept, but the proprietors cannot hold themselves for unavoidable delays.

W. BUSH AND Co., Proprietors.