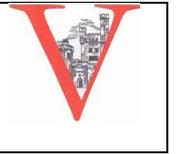


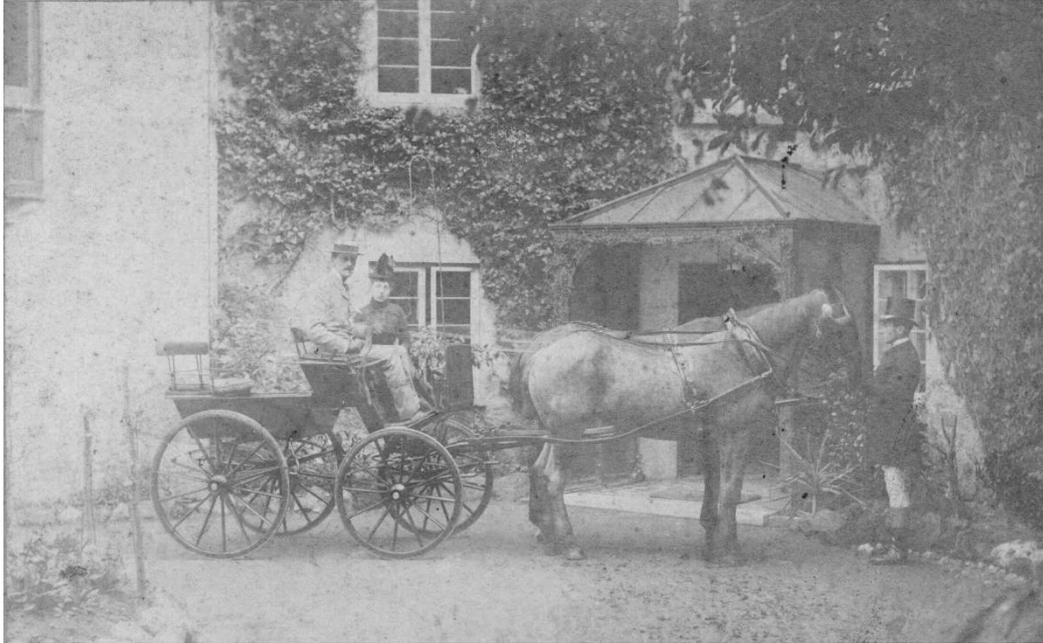


VENTNOR & DISTRICT LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

George Dennes and Hercules Langrishe



This photograph of a couple in a carriage outside an elegant house was passed to us by the Dennes family, who were not sure who was in the picture, although the photo had belonged to the family for many years.



So who is in the picture, and where was it taken? In the nineteenth century the Dennes family lived in South Street and Albert Street, most of the men working as coachmen and grooms, so the coachman in the photograph is likely to be one of them - probably George Dennes, who would have been 41 when it was taken.

The photograph is signed '*H R Langrishe May 9th 1887*', and it seems likely that the man in the carriage is Hercules Robert Langrishe, who would have been twenty-eight when the photo was taken. He was the 5th Baronet Langrishe of Knocktopher in County Kilkenny, and apparently something of a dashing figure in his time. An early motoring enthusiast, he was a Captain in the Army Motor Reserve and he drove Viscount Northcliffe's Daimler in a 1900 RAC road trial (Northcliffe, founder of the Daily Mail, was another enthusiastic early motorist who used his newspaper to extol the virtues of motor cars). Hercules Langrishe had connections to the Isle of Wight - there is a memorial to him in Holy Trinity Church, Cowes, recording his 54 years as a member of the Royal Yacht Squadron - and he may well have visited Ventnor, as many people did in those days, but sadly there is no clue to the name of the house behind the carriage.

However, although George Dennes was born in Ventnor, living in South Street, working as a groom and later a coachman, he actually lived and worked on the mainland for some years. He moved with his wife and two children to Love House, near Eton in Buckinghamshire in the early 1870s, to work as coachman to a wealthy paper merchant, Mr Chater. In 1871 Mr Chater had been staying at the Bonchurch Hotel with his wife; perhaps at that time he came across George Dennes, and was impressed with him, and persuaded him to come and work for him at Love House.

George and his family worked for Mr Chater for several years. They had moved back to Ventnor by 1891, but we don't know when they returned, so it is possible that this photograph was not taken in Ventnor or Bonchurch at all, but dates from when Hercules Langrishe was working for Mr Chater in Buckinghamshire. Sadly, Love House seems no longer to exist, so we can't check what it looked like.

I started out trying to identify a house, and became intrigued by the man in the carriage, whose life is well documented, and by the coachman standing at the horse's head, whose story is just as fascinating, but harder to puzzle out. (Postscript: the house has now been identified as Winterbourne in Bonchurch.)

Lesley Telford, *Ventnor & District Local History Society*. This article was first published in 2016