



## Thomas Brading, builder and contractor



Thomas Brading came to Ventnor from Newport about 1881. He was apprenticed to the firm of Messrs Silsbury and Kingswell, based on Grove Road, and eventually took the business over himself. The photograph above appears to show the workforce standing outside Bradings's Grove Road premises around 1910 and, remarkably for Ventnor, these buildings remain standing, relatively unaltered, but without the long piece of signage. In the 1901 Census, Thomas is given as aged 35, with a wife Emily, aged 38, along with seven children, ranging in ages from twelve to one. He is described as 'Builder and Undertaker', two trades that typically went together. The firm went on to erect many buildings in the town, including the new Post Office on Church Street and St. Catherine's Church Parish Hall. Along with Edgar Harvey, the Town Surveyor, he developed an unrivalled knowledge of Ventnor's topography, the lay of its gas and water mains, as well as its drainage, in time becoming chairman of the Council's Works Committee. He and his staff also became a great asset to the annual carnival, building many 'cars' (floats, today) and providing erections for side-shows in the Park. He was Superintendent of the St. Catherine's Sunday School for many years, organising summer outings in 'coal-carts'.

Tom Brading died in 1950, aged 84. He had been out and about right up to a few weeks of his death, always a keen spectator at the cricket at Steephill. He had been a widower since 1922, his daughter, Nellie Brading, having looked after him all the intervening years.

*Ventnor & District Local History Society*: Michael Freeman, from files in Ventnor Heritage Centre, especially the local history index compiled by the late Fay Brown.



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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