



Victoria Street or Cheapside



The image is a fine engraving of the brand new range of shops that was opened on the east side of Victoria Street, Ventnor, in 1883. It may well have been commissioned by the developer as part of his advertising efforts. By this date, Ventnor already had a vast range of retail and other premises, with Church Street, Pier Street and almost all of the High Street lined with businesses. The new range was presumably named after Cheapside in the City of London, for this was the street that, for centuries, had acted as a market, cheap deriving from 'chepe', the Saxon word for market.

The individual behind the development was Stephen Tuddenham who had come to Ventnor in 1866 as a carpenter. In the 1871 census, he is recorded as aged 34 with a wife Elizabeth, aged 36, and twin boys, Robert Stephen and Richard William, aged 3. By the 1881 census, he is living at Waterloo House (on the opposite side of Victoria Street) a property that appears to have been erected by him around 1878. Stephen's skill as a carpenter became a springboard for him to set up business as a furniture dealer, and, as the picture proclaims, by 1883 he offered a general furnishing warehouse (or emporium in the language of the day) that sold furniture, bedding, carpets, baths and other household items. You could hire as well as purchase items, probably a reflection of the scale of Ventnor's visitor accommodations where apartments and rooms for rent needed to be maintained in good condition. The Heritage Centre has in its collection a fine oak-framed aneroid barometer that came from Tuddenham, his name inscribed on its face. The range of buildings was erected according to Stephen's own designs and, if one looks along the same street today, they remain very little altered, aside from the fact that they are no longer shops.

Stephen turned out to be a very astute businessman over the years and served on Ventnor's Local Board. When he died in 1908, his funeral procession was marked by leading tradesmen attaching black shutters to the fronts of their premises as a mark of respect.

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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