



Ventnor Comic Jazz Band: 'Music, Mirth and Mayhem'

Ventnor Comic Jazz Band is a vital part of our Carnival, providing what has been described as 'Music, Mirth and Mayhem' for many years, and we were delighted to hear that they had been invited to represent the South of England in the Queen's Platinum Jubilee Pageant on June 5th in London. But we wonder if London knows what it might be in for . . .

Everyone in Ventnor has fond memories of the Band's appearances in the Carnival procession. Performing with perhaps more enthusiasm than skill, they never fail to entertain, whether marching in the wrong direction, holding everyone up for an impromptu concert, or simply disappearing into the distance to hold sway and entertain the guests in the Crab and Lobster, Volunteer, or Royal Hotel.

James 'Skimbo' White led the Band from the 1950s until shortly before his death in 2004. A familiar figure in his pith helmet and kilt, the crowds lining Ventnor High Street (seen here in 1964 outside Eastmans the butcher's and Timothy Whites on the corner of Market Street) would cheer as he attempted to launch his 'swizzle stick' over the top of the bunting stretched across the road.

But the Band has been entertaining the crowds for much longer than that. Robert Trowbridge, a longstanding Jazz Band member and their unofficial historian, has produced an exhibition in the Ventnor Heritage Museum this summer on the history of the Band, telling the story of how it started as a 'Mop Brigade' entertaining the Carnival crowd in 1894 by drilling with Mops instead of rifles, and describing the Band's long connection with the Isle of Wight Rifles (later part of the Hampshire Regiment) over two World Wars, and how different generations of several families became members of the Band over the years.

And he reveals where 'Skimbo' found the idea for his trademark kilt – but you will need to see the exhibition to learn that.



Ventnor & District Local History Society; Lesley Telford. Photo from Fay Brown's collection.

The exhibition 'A History of Ventnor Comic Jazz Band' will be on display in the Ventnor Heritage Museum from 1st June. The Museum is open on Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday mornings from 10 am – 1 pm.



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.

www.ventnorheritage.org.uk / telephone 855407

[Ventnor & District Heritage Facebook Group](#)

