

## WELCOME BACK!

The Museum re-opened on Wednesday 4 May 2022. It will be open three mornings a week, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday, from 10 am–1 pm.

We hope to be able to extend these opening times once things settle down and we have more stewards available to work on the front desk and welcome visitors.

## NEW EXHIBITIONS

Our kitchen display now depicts the 1940s, as in the photograph here, where you can also see the new large-scale OS wall map of Ventnor in 1895.



This year we have two new exhibitions about local communities: *Lowtherville* is the story of the growth of Upper Ventnor, told in the faces of its people and buildings. It developed as a quite separate community from the town itself. *Wroxall in Times Past* looks at the farming village which grew significantly over the later nineteenth century. The railway station opened in 1866, and the cottages constructed for the navvies who built the long tunnel under the Downs later became homes for the villagers. We've included a fascinating range of images from the Society's collection.

And in June there will be a special exhibition celebrating the history of *Ventnor Comic Jazz Band* who have been chosen to represent the South of England in the Queen's Platinum Jubilee Pageant in London.

## SOCIETY MONTHLY MEETINGS

One of the things that members have missed most over the past three years has been our monthly meetings, and the chance to meet up, chat with friends, and hear a good speaker.

We are therefore delighted to let you know that the meetings will be back very soon. Jeff Mazo is now preparing a series of talks to start this summer, and we have some interesting speakers lined up already.

As usual, the meetings will be held on the last Friday of each month, in the Masonic Hall on Grove Road, starting at 7.30. Members have free entry, and guests are charged £2.

**A full schedule of dates and speakers will be sent to members in the next week or so, as soon as dates are confirmed, and the details will also be on the website and in the Museum.**

### In your May 2022 newsletter:

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## REPORT: SOCIETY AGM HELD ON 4 APRIL 2022

The Chair, Leigh Geddes, welcomed more than 40 members to the meeting, our first face to face meeting for more than two years, and thanked everyone for what had been achieved since last the last meeting.

She paid tribute to some old friends. **Margaret Davison** died unexpectedly early this year; a Steward and Trustee for many years, she will be missed by many members who knew her. **Richard Downing** has suffered a stroke and he is in residential care, and his presence will also be sadly missed; he produced the Ventnor Town Trail boards, led guided walks, and was a Steward for many years,

Three Trustees were not standing again this year, and were thanked for their contribution to the work of the Society: **Les Matravers** developed Ventnor and District Heritage Facebook Group, giving the Society a social media presence for the first time; **Linda Chester** had looked after the volunteers, co-ordinated our Stewards and run the museum shop; and **Yvonne Hardy**, who retired at Christmas, had been our Treasurer for the last 16 years, and central to running the Society - applying for grants, looking after the Museum building and its day-to-day management, and fielding emergencies – we owe her profound thanks, and she has accepted life membership of the Society.

Keeping the Society running during the Covid pandemic had not been easy, but we were proud to have been able to welcome visitors safely to the Museum, while also making real progress in digitizing our photographic records by working at home, with over 4,000 images now available to researchers and visitors to the Museum, and publishing three new books, producing our weekly wide-ranging local history articles and answering research enquiries by email through thick and thin, and giving a student placement last summer to Gemma Jones, an MA student from Winchester University.

In conclusion, the Chair stressed that our priorities were now to welcome visitors back into the Museum in May and to resume our Monthly Meetings which have been sorely missed. The biggest challenge for the coming year would be to cherish our volunteers and find more people who want to join in. Everything we do depends on the presence of willing and able volunteers, and however fine our ideas and plans, we can only achieve them if good people make them a reality.

The meeting concluded with a slideshow of the history of Ventnor Cascade, drawn from material Jeff Mazo has provided for an information board which the Town Council are preparing.

**Society Trustees elected for 2022:** Leigh Geddes (Chair), Janet Griffin (Deputy Chair), Paul Kingswell (Treasurer), Jeff Mazo (Secretary), John Carter, Nigel Slater, and Lesley Telford.

## INTRODUCING TWO NEW TRUSTEES

### Paul Kingswell



Paul lives in Whitwell. For several years a member of the Society, he joined as a Trustee in 2021. He has a keen interest in all things historical relating to the Isle of Wight and the Ventnor area in particular as a result of the family connection over several generations, and is a passionate collector of Isle of Wight postcards and vintage photographs.

### Nigel Slater-Bishop



Nigel is the Business Development Officer for Ventnor Town Council. He is interested in the history of our town, and in how the Society and Heritage Centre can develop their contribution to the life of Ventnor.

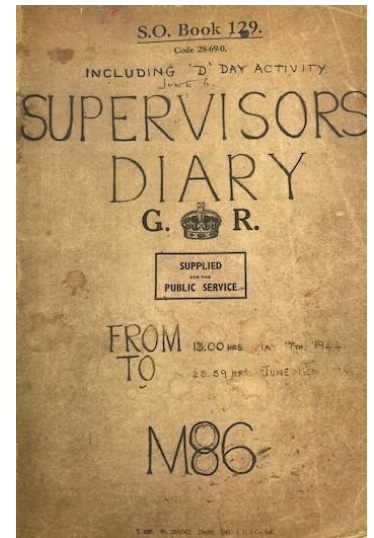
## SOCIETY COLLECTION NEWS

The Review Committee is meeting again after being unable to convene during the pandemic and there have been two meetings already this year. Paul Kingswell has joined the Committee, bringing his knowledge of Whitwell and of postcards,

It is always interesting to see the donations that are brought in by the public, and these are two that arrived recently.

In 2021 we were contacted by a collector who had acquired a copy of the Ventnor Radar Station Logbook for 17 May to 12 June 1944, but was having trouble interpreting some of the handwriting in the logbook. We put him in touch with Delia Studt, who had transcribed Mark Norman's diaries for us, and he has now presented us with a facsimile of the logbook, which contains a copy of each original page, with a transcript of the notes included opposite. It really is a fascinating record, including D-Day itself, with the supervisor trying to piece together what was happening.

The second surprise offering was a collection of material relating to Ventnor Racing Pigeon Club, an organisation we had no information about – we'd be interested to hear if anyone else has any knowledge of it.



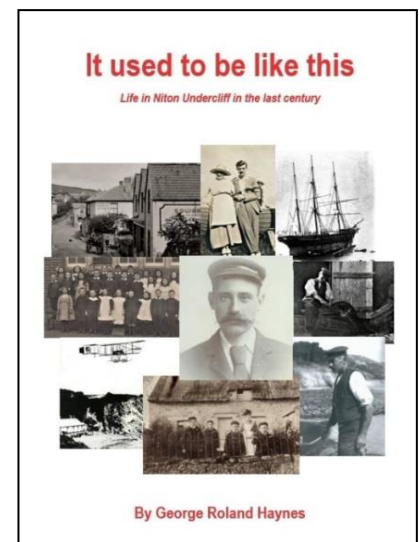
## SOCIETY PUBLICATIONS

We were able to continue working on Society publications during the pandemic, and over the past two years have produced three titles, including our long awaited photo book, *Ventnor & the Undercliff – In Search of Lost Time* (2020), and *Ventnor – A Brief History* (2021) an introduction to the history of our area, with a map of the town and double page spreads on vanished pieces of history like Steephill Castle, Ventnor Pier, the Royal National Hospital and the railway stations. We also produced a Society Calendar each year – another new venture for us!

We have several publications planned for the next two years, including a new booklet on *Lowtherville* being prepared by Colin Beavis, based on Fay Brown's 'Up Shute' booklets, but with improved illustrations, and an updated *History of St Catherine's School*, again using additional photographs from our Collection.

Our most recent publication is an expanded edition of *It used to be like this* by George Roland Haynes, now including more than 40 additional photographs.

Born in Castle Haven in 1906, Haynes wrote: *Already the lifestyle of my childhood is beyond the grasp of the young people of today. I have written all that I thought should be recorded before it is completely forgotten, about things that are now totally gone.* He depicts a community where most employment came from the big houses of the Undercliff, describing in detail the craft and skills involved in fishing and farming almost unchanged since the 1800s. With quiet good humour he remembers the ordinary events as well as the excitements: home life with the weekly drudgery of washday, a childhood spent roaming the Undercliff, and the many shipwrecks off that dangerous coast with strange cargos washed up on the shore and many lives lost. [52 pages; 48 black and white photographs; £8.50]



All our books are now available through our online shop  
<https://www.ventnorheritage.org.uk/shop/>  
as well as in the Museum.

## LOCAL HISTORY WALK DURING VENTNOR FRINGE (JULY 2022)

In collaboration with the Society, Stephan Roman, author of the book *Isle and Empires*, will be repeating the guided walk around Ventnor that was very successful during last year's Fringe.

*Ventnor: Cradle of the Russian Revolution* tells the story of Ventnor's 19<sup>th</sup> century connection with some of the Russian radicals, writers and poets who opposed Russian imperialism and began to imagine an alternative, liberal Russia. Stephan has worked with us to trace the areas and some of the houses where these visitors stayed, and the walk follows our town as it was in the 1850s and 60s, still growing from what had been little more than a fishing cove to what would become a fashionable destination for people from all over Britain and Europe.



The walk starts at 10 am in front of the Winter Gardens, lasting two hours and finishing at the Museum (walkers should be aware there are some steep sections). It's offered on 27, 28 and 29 July (tickets are £10.00, available through the Ventnor Fringe Office at Ventnor Exchange or online). Stephan will also give a talk at the Society Meeting on Friday 29 July, and his book *Isle and Empires* (Medina Publishing 2022) will be available to buy in the Heritage Centre and in our online shop.

## 2022 WEEKLY LOCAL HISTORY ARTICLES

Our weekly Local History Articles are coordinated by Michael Freeman and published in the South Wight Chronicle and on the News pages of our website, making them available to readers who live off the Island, something which has been requested in the past. Recent articles are listed below; they are all available to read as PDF on the news pages of our website: <https://www.ventnorheritage.org.uk/news/>

*Station Memories* (January)

*Bath Road, Ventnor* (January)

*Captain Bernard Augustus Beavis MBE* (January)

*Regel Bus snowbound near Wroxall* (January)

*Timothy White's* (February)

*Puckaster* (February)

*Britannia's Hut being dismantled* (February)

*Donkey Milligan* (February)

*The Royal National Hospital Pig* (March)

*86 High Street, Ventnor*: 3 articles on a shop and its various owners over the years (March)

*Hibberd's Cordials* (April)

*The YWCA in Ventnor* (April)

*Miss Margaret Catherine Dick, once of Madeira Hall, Bonchurch* (April)

*Albert Bull's funeral cortège, 1912* (April)

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