

VENTNOR AND DISTRICT LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER 39

JANUARY 2019

"Ventnor Chronicles"

Longstanding Society Member Gordon Childs was in touch this month, commenting among other things on the list of *South Wight Chronicle* articles which we include in each newsletter (see p. 4).

"The Newsletters are well written (credit to Fay, you and now Jeff)", he wrote, "and, apart from keeping abreast with the latest Society news, I always enjoy reading the interesting research articles. However, I find the list of articles submitted to the *South Wight Chronicle* somewhat teasing, as I have seen only a few of these when fortunate enough to obtain copies on my visits! Would it be a feasible idea to put these articles on the website?"

We have been producing our weekly 'Local History Page' in the *South Wight Chronicle* since 2015, which means we now have 200 of these articles, covering nooks and corners of the history of our area. In the long term we do intend to make them all available on our website, but are thinking now of publishing a collection of the articles as a booklet of "Ventnor Chronicles" for sale in the Museum or online through the website. If you think this is an interesting idea and might be tempted to buy a copy, do please e-mail us and let us know and that will spur us on to get this done!

– Lesley Telford, Society Secretary

Materials Recently Donated to Ventnor Heritage Centre

There have been two Review Committee meetings since the October 2018 newsletter. As the Heritage Centre has been closed over the last few months there have not been as many donations for the collection.

We have received several postcards, brochures for the Clarendon Hotel, census entries and other documents for Old Park, and copies of Brannon's *Vectis Scenery* and Whitehead's *The Undercliff of the Isle of Wight*. A particularly interesting object is a coat hanger from A.J. Sharpe drapers (see photo at left).

– Janet Griffin, Review Committee



Volunteering Opportunities at Ventnor Heritage Centre

"It's a great team to be part of."

"I love finding out more about Ventnor history."

"It's great to answer people's queries about their Ventnor ancestors."

"Love the friendly atmosphere."

"Really enjoy my weekly stint as a steward."

"Lovely way to keep in touch with Ventnor community."

"I've enjoyed talking to old Ventnorians who have returned for a holiday."

"Had great fun helping at the Victorian Family Christmas event."

These are just some of the comments I have heard from our wonderful team of Volunteers since I joined the team last April. I can endorse all those comments – it surely is "a great team to be part of"! A great team who would welcome new members to help in all areas of our work: Stewarding, looking after the Museum, research, admin and cataloguing, to name but a few.



In particular, we are looking for a volunteer with general office experience to work closely with the Society Secretary (who is welcoming and won't bite). The work is straightforward, part time and some of it can be done from home, though you do need to be able to come in to the Centre, so this invitation is for Island members. If you are comfortable using a computer, and paper doesn't scare you, please call Leigh Geddes on 01983 857360 any evening to find out more.

For other volunteering opportunities, please please get in touch either directly (I am in the Centre most Saturday mornings during the winter or by e-mail at linda.chester-vhc@outlook.com) or leave a message for me on ventnorheritage@btconnect.com. I look forward to hearing from you!

– Linda Chester, Volunteer Coordinator

**Copy Date for Next Issue:
Wednesday 24 April 2019**

Society Talk: Chapels in the Isle of Wight

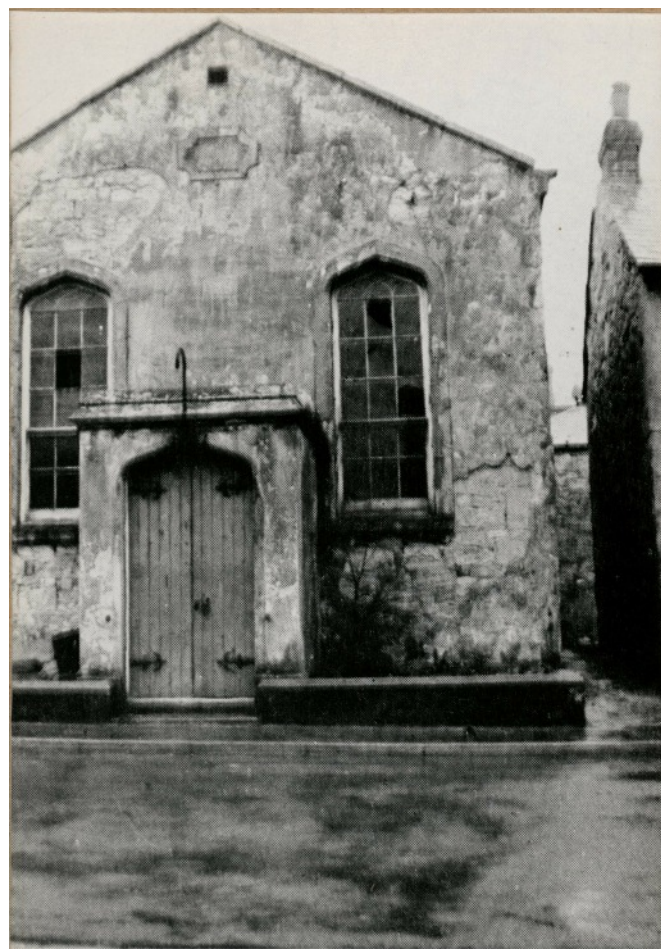
On Friday 26 October Len Pullinger addressed the Society on the subject of the 210 Nonconformist chapels identified on the Isle of Wight. Len's father had been a local Methodist preacher and Len used to accompany him on the circuit.

Len provided a taxonomy of the various Nonconformist denominations, including different Methodist, Baptist, Presbyterian, Congregationalist and Friends groups, etc. In West Wight there were mostly Bible Christian chapels, while in East Wight Wesleyan Methodist chapels predominated. The Bible Christian denomination appealed particularly to farm workers, and Samuel Wilberforce argued, while Rector of Brighthstone, that workers attending Bible Christian services be sacked and evicted.

John Wesley visited the Isle of Wight in 1735 on his way to America, and his brother preached at Cowes. Most of the Island chapels date to the nineteenth century, but there was a Congregational chapel in Newport as early as 1699. The first Wesleyan chapel was built in Cowes in 1804.

Chapels in Ventnor included Ventnor Congregational (now the Central Car Park); Wesley Court in Lowtherville; Albert Street (now a private residence); the United Free Methodist on Victoria Street, and the Wesleyan Chapel on the High Street (recently the boxing club, to be converted into flats).

– Jeffrey Mazo



The 1840 Wesleyan Methodist chapel on Albert Street. In 1861 it was sold to the Primitive Methodists, who used it until 1920. It was later the Briantree Restaurant, and has now been converted into two maisonettes, with significant changes to its appearance.

Upcoming Society Meetings and Speakers

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|---------------------|---|
| 22 February | Susan Weeks – 'At Home With the Spartali Family' |
| 29 March | Annual General Meeting |
| 26 April | Brian Greening – 'Island Life 100 Years Ago' |
| 31 May | Delian Backhouse-Fry – 'The Archaeology of the Undercliff' |
| 28 June | John Medland – 'The Island in the Domesday Book' |
| 26 July | Donna Needham – 'Around the Island in 115(ish) Churches' |
| 27 September | Richard Downing – 'Ventnor Breweries' |
| 25 October | Andy Butler – Title to be Announced. |
| 29 November | Mark Earp – 'Queen Victoria on the IOW. Tales of the Expected and Unexpected' |

All meetings to be held at 7:30pm in the Masonic Hall, Grove Road, Ventnor



**Ventnor Arts Club and Ventnor Heritage Centre present
a series of Monday talks in the Arts Club for Winter 2019**

*Dates as shown below. Talks are free but places are limited,
so please email or call to reserve your seat:
info@ventnorartsclub.com / Tel: 857060*

Monday 11th Feb: Andy Butler: *Gashouse to Luccombe:
A historical look along the Shore*

Monday 18th Feb: Colin Beavis: *Lowtherville: A history of the upper
part of Ventnor from its beginnings in the 1870s to the present day*

Monday 25th Feb: Robin McInnes: *Pre-Raphaelite Wight:
The Isle of Wight artworks of the
Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood and their followers*

Monday 4th March: Alan Clark: *Landslides of Ventnor
and the Isle of Wight in a national and international context.*

Monday 11th March: Lesley Telford: *A Very Victorian Family?
A journey from Jamaica to Bonchurch and beyond*

All talks start at 7.30 pm; doors and bar open from 6.30 pm

Society Talk: Curiosities of the Isle of Wight: Power, Passion and Politics

On 30 November 2018 Mark Earp gave the third talk in his "Curiosities of the Isle of Wight" series, covering a variety of interesting topics.

Besides discussing the impact of German V1 and V2 weapons on the Island during the Second World War, Mark explored an incident in which local children were paid a shilling each to pick up potatoes infected with Colorado Beetle (a serious pest) apparently dropped by the Germans in 1943 near Chale as a form of biological warfare, to threaten the British crop.

Mark also explored the Island's role in the history of rocketry, going back to the nineteenth century; the nine racecourses on the Island, including one on Rew Down; and such diverse claims to fame as the oldest holiday camp (Brighstone), the longest wooden pier in Britain (Yarmouth), the first theme park (Blackgang), the longest-running production aircraft (The BN-2 *Islander* produced at Bembridge) and the first-ever all-concrete house (1852, on York Ave in East Cowes), among others.

– Jeffrey Mazo



The *Black Arrow* launch vehicle undergoing static tests at the High Town test facility in the 1960s.

Membership Reminder

Membership subscriptions for 2019 are now due.

Why be a member? A modest £10 subscription gives you

- Access to the Museum and changing exhibitions and displays all year
- Interesting and varied monthly talks at the Masonic Hall
- Invitations to events and exhibitions linked to the Heritage Centre
- This delightful newsletter to keep you in touch with what is happening!

Please renew at the Museum on Saturday mornings, at the desk at our January monthly meeting or by post.

Christmas Cheer

The Victorian Family Christmas event in the Heritage Centre held on 1–2 December as part of the Ventnorville celebrations was a big success. Our volunteers and members of Vectis Victorians had a lot of fun and many more members of the public came in to the museum to take part. Many thanks and congratulations are due to Linda Chester and Les Matravers for all their work organising the event, and to all the volunteers who helped out over the weekend.

Let's hope we've started a new tradition!

– Jeffrey Mazo Photo by Lori Little, *Isle of Wight County Press*.



Nigel Traylen Memorial Donations

After the death of Nigel Traylen, long-time friend of the Society, his widow Teresa, who is also a long-time friend and a valued volunteer at Ventnor Heritage Centre, requested donations to the Society from friends. We have now received these: the total sum is £436.18.

We are grateful for this generous donation and, with Teresa's blessing, we plan to put it towards creating a better display area for books and pamphlets at the Museum and making the sales/reception area more attractive and welcoming for our visitors and more comfortable for our stewards to work in.

– Leigh Geddes, Society Chair

Below: Nigel Traylen outside the Royal Hotel.



Ventnor Remembered Project: An Update

The project to digitise and make available selected photographs from Daphne Carter's 47 albums of photographs of the built environment, natural landscape and cultural and artistic life of Ventnor and district from the 1980s to the early 2000s (see July 2018 newsletter) has made considerable progress.

The selected contents of 15 albums (approximately 1,350 out the 4,000 assessed) are now on the web at <http://www.ventnorremembered.org.uk>. Another album is ready for scanning, and photos are currently being selected from a further eight. In total, half of the albums are completed or in progress, but there is still lots to do. Nearly 400 volunteer hours have been recorded, but I'm sure that more than this have been worked by people who are currently selecting photos and those who have contributed unrecorded hours helping with photo selection and organising and setting up events. Many thanks to everyone who has worked on the project.

We would still welcome more help, especially with photo selection. Albums still to be worked on include Ships and Shipping, Crafts, Engineering and Construction, Niton & Whitwell, Leisure, Ventnor People, Ventnor Businesses and Ventnor Services. If you would like to help please email info@friendsofventnorlibrary.co.uk.

A selection of the albums were displayed at the launch event for Annik Cullinane's art exhibition in Ventnor Central on 11 November, where they attracted considera-

ble interest from the attendees. Subsequently, five of the albums were displayed at the exhibition itself at Annik's studio in Ventnor High Street.

Four albums were taken to the 'Everything Cafe' in the Green Room at Salisbury Gardens, Ventnor on 10 December to show to attendees during a short presentation about Daphne and her photos and the Ventnor Remembered Project.

A number of people have told us that they were sorry to miss the Launch Event back in September and have asked where they could look at the albums. A second opportunity for people to look through the albums, and look at pictures on the Ventnor Remembered web site, will take place on Wednesday 30 January in Ventnor Library, starting at 6pm.

– John Carter,
Treasurer, Friends of Ventnor Library

2019 AGM

The 2019 Annual General Meeting of the Society will take place on Friday 29 March in the Masonic Hall on Marlborough Road at 7:30 pm. The meeting will be followed by a showing of the film "Island of the Sun" from the early 1960s, narrated by Cliff Michelmore. The film contains lots of Ventnor-related footage.

Recent articles from the Society published in the *South Wight Chronicle*

If you have a subject that you think would make an interesting story, please do let us know. The articles published since the last newsletter include:

'1874: Empress Elisabeth at Steephill Castle', Lesley Telford, *SWC*, no. 1397, 1/11/18, p. 12.

'Alfred Noyes: 1880–1958', *SWC*, Lesley Telford, no. 1398, 8/11/18, p. 12.

'The Armistice, November 1918: Some Excerpts from the Mercury', Michael Freeman, *SWC*, no. 1399, 15/11/18, p. 12.

'Victorian Ventnor: The Hadfield Family at Home and Abroad', Lesley Telford, *SWC*, no. 1400, 22/11/18, p. 12.

'Victorian Balls at Steephill Castle', Lesley Telford, *SWC*, no. 1401, 29/11/18, p. 12.

'A Tale of Two Ventnor Spinsters: The Misses King – Part 1', Michael Freeman, *SWC*, no. 1402, 6/12/18, p. 12.

'A Tale of Two Ventnor Spinsters: The Misses King – Part 2', Michael Freeman, *SWC*, no. 1403, 13/12/18, p. 12.

'Ventnor as Once Dressed for Christmas', Michael Freeman, *SWC*, 20/12/18, no. 1404, p. 12.

'Morris Dancing at Bonchurch School', Lesley Telford, *SWC*, no. 1403,* 10/1/19, p. 12.

'Three Doctors and the Climate of the Undercliff – Part 1', Richard Downing, *SWC*, no. 1405, 17/1/19, p. 12.

'Three Doctors and the Climate of the Undercliff – Part 2', Richard Downing, *SWC*, no. 1406, 24/1/19, p. 12.

*This issue number was accidentally repeated.