

Ventnor and District Local History Society

NEWSLETTER 26

March 2015

VENTNOR HERITAGE MUSEUM RAILINGS APPEAL

Many Ventnor people remember 'Honeythorne' on the Esplanade with its music notes on the garden wall. For years it was a familiar landmark, but sadly the house is now a ruin, the garden wall gone.



It was the home of Victor and Molly Fleming, who came to Ventnor in 1948. Molly ran 'Honeythorne' as *'The Hotel with the Personal Touch'*, while Victor served as a member of Ventnor Town Council, and was Mayor in 1979/80. They were members of the Society, and Victor was our Vice Chairman for a time. A well known musician, he was co-founder of the Welsh Opera Company, and was conductor of the Midland Symphony Orchestra and the British Concert Orchestra, giving concerts the length and breadth of the country. When he retired in 1984 Victor donated his entire collection of music and orchestral scores to Ventnor Library, where it formed the nucleus of a music library, which became the Island's only music collection, with some 30,000 pieces ranging from works of the classical composers through Broadway musicals to the well loved songs of music hall.

Although Honeythorne is now a ruin, the Society saved one of the sets of decorative notes which adorned the railings, and it has been in the museum for many years, but sadly not displayed due to lack of space. As part of the restoration of the Heritage Centre, we hope to raise £1000 to redecorate our railings and display the notes on the front wall of the building. Though not in their old place on the Esplanade, the notes will be back in public view, as originally intended, where they can be admired by residents and visitors. If you can help us to put this little piece of Ventnor history back on view, please donate something to our 'railings appeal' - every little bit counts!

MUSEUM PIECES

The Museum will open on April 4th, and finishing touches are being put to the new exhibitions— *'Around the Villages'* and *'Churchill'*. A third exhibition *'Churches'* will be coming later in the year. We will be open all day Monday to Saturday during the coming season (no more half days!). We hope this will make it easier for visitors, but it does mean that we are short of Stewards, so if you are interested in becoming a Steward, please let us know.

Most members will know of the death of Graham Bennett, our curator for 17 years (see page 4). His death was a sad loss for us, but through his generous bequest to the Society we have been able to start much needed repairs to the exterior of the Heritage Centre. The building is surrounded by scaffolding at the moment as the canopy is repaired, redecorated and made safe.

Finally, some very good news! We received news this week that Peter Pye is recovering well from his recent operation, and we send him and Valerie our good wishes and hopes for a speedy recovery.

HERITAGE WALKS IN MAY 2015

Society members Roger Silsbury and Richard Downing will both be leading walks in the Island Walking Festival in May.

The Ventnor Health Heritage Walk. Sunday 3rd May at 10.30am. A circular walk led by Richard Downing to key sites in Ventnor's development as a Victorian health resort. Climate, health, medicine, sanatoria, hospitals and doctors. The walk starts from Ventnor Esplanade Pumping Station. 2.5 miles, 2.5 hours. Booking is not necessary (*donations in aid of the Undercliff Partnership*).

Sea to Sky 1 Monday 4th May at 10:30am. Walk with Roger Silsbury from sea level to the highest point on the Island whilst enjoying some varied terrain and views. Some steps and stiles. 6 miles over 5 hours. Starts from the Esplanade paddling pool at 10.30. Booking advised. 01983 853621 (*donations in aid of Ventnor & District Local History Society*).

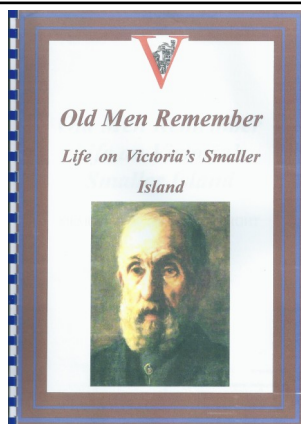
Sea to sky 2 Thursday 7th May at 10:15am. Roger Silsbury leads a Local History Society walk from Niton Village to sea level and up to the second highest point on the Island. Some steps and stiles. 6 miles over 5 hours. Starts from Niton Church at 10.15. Booking advised. 01983 853621 (*donations in aid of Ventnor & District Local History Society*).

Ventnor Downs: pre-history to Cold War Saturday 16th May at 10.30am. A circular downs history walk led by Richard Downing looking at Bronze Age round barrows, a medieval manor house, a WWI rifle range, a sandstone quarry, a Victorian railway station and RAF Ventnor. 5 miles over five hours and rising 600 feet to the top of the downs. Reasonable fitness required as well as suitable clothing. Booking essential. 01983 856210 (*donations in aid of the Undercliff Partnership*).

OLD MEN REMEMBER—LIFE ON VICTORIA'S SMALLER ISLAND

'Old Men Remember' contains fascinating extracts from the diaries of two Victorian men. Mark William Norman remembers his solo walk from London to the Isle of Wight aged only twelve, and then his time working alongside smugglers in Niton, and his life in Ventnor as a fishmonger and self taught Geologist. Henry Farrand Griffin, from a much wealthier background, came to the Isle of Wight from America aged thirteen in 1893 and records his memories of Bonchurch.

This is a new, spiral bound edition of this popular book, (£3 from the Museum, £4.20 by post including p & p).



WHO WAS GEORGE RICHMOND?

A conversation about the 'George Richmond' commemorative walk at the Botanic Garden led Resident Artist, Judy Rodrigues, to the Heritage Museum to investigate whether this could be the famous painter of that name (1809-1896). His son, William Blake Richmond, was married in Ryde, designed in stained glass and campaigned for a smoke-free London—perhaps a connection to our National Hospital for Diseases of the Chest. Having followed several leads, Judy discovered that the walk appears to be named after a different George Richmond, 'a local benefactor of the Hospital'. However, it has been impossible so far to discover who this man was. If you know more about him, please let us know.

SEEKING A MODEL RAILWAYMAN

A couple of months ago, one of the museum side windows was smashed by a vehicle which failed to stop. The window repair is covered by our insurance, but will take some time and will involve moving the model railway,

We will be taking this opportunity to revamp the display in the side windows. It also seems a good time to give the railway an overhaul, and we are looking for a model railway enthusiast who might be able to repair the trains, both of which now need attention. If you are this person - or if you know someone who might be - please let us get in touch. We need to get the railway up and running again as soon as possible.

IT WAS FORTY YEARS AGO TODAY . . . VENTNOR'S FIRST NIGHT CLUB

It was actually forty five years ago, February 1970, when the Royal Hotel was granted permission for a licensed club called 'The Julisa Club'. (That year, the Royal was offering a "fully inclusive 'Bargain Break', at £6 per person per weekend. This covers two nights' accommodation, two days' meals including early morning tea, morning coffee and afternoon tea, and gratuities." A bargain indeed!)


Julisa's opened on 20 June 1970, and DJ Dave Cash came to Ventnor for the opening ceremony. An advertisement describes: "*Julisa's discotheque Zig Zag Road (behind the Royal Hotel). The IOW's new discotheque is open from 8.30 pm to 2 am every night except Sunday. Live Trio music every Monday and Folk music every Wednesday. Resident DJ and dancing every night. Fully licensed, waitress service, an exciting round glass dance floor and an intimate atmosphere. Gentlemen: Ties and jackets on Friday and Saturday". Membership was £2 (wife's membership £1, visitor's 10 shillings) and temporary membership tickets were available from any Southern Vectis Bus Company Depot.*

It was in August that year that Jimmi Hendrix played at the Isle of Wight Festival, attended by an estimated half a million people, and by the 1971 advertisements for Julisa's were suggesting a much more relaxed atmosphere:

"Join us in the groove down Zig Zag Road. A discotheque where you'll meet a happy-go-lucky crowd - holiday makers and locals - your kind of people. Julisa's is your kind of place if you love dancing - Soul, Tamla, Rock or Reggae - we'll play what you like. The discs are slipped on the turntables by our resident DJ (he'll turn you on too!)"

Carol Wyatt, whose husband Richard was the first manager, provided these pictures of DJ Clive Williamson and some of the dancers - are any of our society members among them, I wonder? (I would love to know what the young woman in the pink crushed velvet dress is whispering to her friend!)

Lesley



Where does Ventnor go-go-go at night?

Julisa's

discotheque, zig zag road

where the dance floor's round and glows • the discs are round and swing • the plates and glasses are round and full • and the customers ain't square • how about you?

Visitors' membership 75p (and you wait 24 hours)
Guests 40p. Apply at the Royal Hotel, or to the manager at Julisa's, or 'phone Ventnor 186.



GRAHAM EDWARD BENNETT 1941-2014

Most members will now know that sadly our Curator Graham Bennett passed away in November last year.

Graham was born at Herne Bay, Kent . The family moved to the Isle of Wight when he was about 18, and Graham immediately fell in love with the Island and especially Ventnor. He was our Curator for seventeen years, starting in 1997. At the same time Fay Brown became Secretary and the two were firm friends and made a formidable team. Graham's attention to detail was most evident in the wide ranging and varied displays he set up in the Museum, particularly the themed displays he produced each year to ensure that there was always something new to see. His knowledge of Ventnor and the surrounding district grew and, with his almost encyclopaedic mind, he was rarely at a loss to be able to answer enquiries. If he didn't know, then Fay did!



The Museum, alongside his other passion, the Isle of Wight Steam Railway at Havenstreet, gave Graham the happiest working times of his life. When he became unwell, he ensured that everything would be left in good order, and his generous legacy means that his beloved Ventnor Heritage Centre lives on and we thank him for that and for his unstinting work for Society. RIP Graham.

Roger

THE HARDING FAMILY

We hope that members have been enjoying the various articles the Society has been producing for the South Wight Chronicle Local History Page. We have three stories coming up on shipwrecks, one on Hillside Cottage, and we will also feature the memories of Marigold Harding who was a child in Ventnor during the Second World War.

Thomas Harding owned the 'Hot and Cold Sea Water Baths' at Pier View on the Esplanade in the 1870s and 1880s. The bath house is the white building in the centre of the photograph here (now the building beside the Mill Bay) and the baths advertised on the side wall—although it is difficult to decipher the words here.



His grandson, Tom Harding served an apprenticeship as a carpenter and joiner with Tom Brading in Grove Road, prior to starting his own building firm at Trinity View Works which stood at the bottom on Nine Stone Steps, opposite what was Farleigh's Stores, now Premier Stores. Before the Second World War the family also ran the tea gardens at Beulah Cottage on Trinity Road - Marigold, Tom's daughter, recalled feeling particularly important as she waited on walkers who used to call in and take refreshments. During the war the Hardings, like several other Ventnor families, moved out to St Lawrence to avoid the bombing raids - they stayed at Pulpit Cottage in Seven Sisters Road.

Tom Harding was one of those mainly responsible for the revival of the Carnival after the war, in 1949. The family emigrated to Tasmania in December that year.

Lesley



VENTNOR AND DISTRICT LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

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