



The Salvation Army Hall



January 1947 saw a red letter day for the Ventnor Corps of the Salvation Army, notwithstanding the severe cold that characterised winter that season. It marked the re-opening of the local Hall on Victoria Street, after several years of repairs and renovations. The building had been badly blitzed in a German air raid of 26th April 1944 and, at one stage, the expectation was that it would end up being demolished. On the day in 1947, the Revd. W. Sinclair turned the key in the lock and members and guests in attendance were treated to a musical concert by Newport's Salvation Army Band, with 'Songsters' from Cowes. An address was given by Miss Nell Milligan, to whom the Ventnor Corps owed its continued existence.

Whilst workmen had been engaged in repairs to the Hall, late in 1945, they had discovered some handbills relating to a sixpenny halfpenny bazaar held there when the Great America Bazaar Company paid a flying visit to the town around 1900. These recorded some excellent bargains on offer, including iron and tinware, cutlery, tools for engineers, joiners, cabinet-makers and gardeners, as well as fancy and domestic goods and glass. At the time, the building was known as Rayner's Albert Hall, after the family that ran the large temperance hotel opposite. One assumes that they either owned it, or had a lease on it. In either case, it augmented their suite of public rooms that were available for use by different local organisations.

The history of the Salvation Army in Ventnor can be traced back to 1891, when on Saturday February 28th of that year, an open air meeting was held in Pier Street. Further meetings were held in

the Assembly Rooms the day after, as well as another open air meeting on the Esplanade. On one occasion, when the Army Band was playing in Pier Street, several coach guards, along with others who had equipped themselves with horns, cornets and other instruments, sought to distract proceedings and struck up a kind of competing musical accompaniment, the effect of which was highly erratic to any listening ears. As a result, the Salvation Army in Ventnor started out with a bad press, for letters of protest soon found their way into the local newspaper columns.

The Hall survived until 1966 when it was demolished for redevelopment, along with 28 Victoria Street. Nell Milligan was by then well-known as that 'Sally Army Lass'. Born on Newport Road and once a pupil at Albert Street School, she died in 1976 aged 84.

Ventnor & District Local History Society: Michael Freeman, from files in Ventnor Heritage Centre, especially those belonging to 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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