

Ventnor Nicknames

Prompted in part by Bob Trowbridge, always a mine of information on Ventnor history, I am using the Heritage Centre's local history page this week to remind readers of the staggering range of nicknames that were once current for the people who lived here. In 1977, Betty Ackford, one of many Ventnorians who had emigrated to Australia wrote in to the *Mercury* from her home at Seville in the state of Victoria to say that it was once common for almost everyone in the town to be nicknamed. When seeing the names in lists published in the *Mercury* around that time, she found that familiar faces were straight away brought back to her. She was lucky to have an old friend on Madeira Road who seldom failed to send the weekly newspaper 'down under', with all its local news.

Here's Some Good Old Ventnor Names!

A REGULAR reader over many years has recalled many old Ventnor residents and their nicknames, and wonders whether anyone can add to the list?

Tusker Weeks,
Sapsy Briddon,
Doola Brett,
Snatcher Guy,
Plonk Hess,
Skirry Channing,
Court Kingswell,
Bradawl Sharpe,
Squat Drake,
Emperor Nicholas,
Chidler Colenutt,
Stinker Barret,
Gent King,
Spicket Howell,
Jumbo Nobbs,
Tickey Bartlett,
Durbot Randall,
Potty Morris,
Fishy Frampton,
Bummer King,
Poop Langdon,
Kite Mackett,
General Stacy,
Boomer Bailey,
Di-Do Grant,
Brophas Attrill,
Snuffly Hooper,
Dungy Hoad,
Lasher Vince,
Holy Joe,
Poker Haynes.

Broady Vine,
Lala Cooper
Do-Dah James,
Snorker Harris,
Royal Seal,
Skinner Flux,
Moke Sivell,
Tossy Burchett,
Pydo Rayner,
Brish Wheeler,
Chopigen Grant,
Cronk Grant,
Buff Brown,
Gillie Gilbert,
Bill Fire Fum,
Bogey Grant,
Dink Bishop,
Chicker Davis,
Butcher Bill,
Knutsy Milligan,
Mirf Morriss,
Banjo Grant,
Stinker Pressy,
Roly Vince,
Emmet Denness,
Musher Sheath,
Pester Jackson,
Jake Bagwell,
Truggy Hart,
Pimp Symmons,
Piglet Clayton,

Here is a list published in the *Mercury* on 29th October 1976. This was a prelude to the newspaper featuring an entire page of nicknames on 15th April 1977, the editor observing that he was sure readers would come up with still more!!

Bob Trowbridge remarks that some names reflect what the individuals did, so 'Fishy Frampton', from the adjacent list, not surprisingly had a wet fish shop. 'Sooty Humphries', not in this particular list, was predictably a chimney sweep, while 'Putty Vincent' was in the decorating trade.

Arthur Hibberd wrote in to the *Mercury* at the time to elaborate on other nicknames. There were, for example, the bus and cab drivers 'Potty Morris', 'Lanky Morris', 'Tricky Glaire', 'General Fry' and 'Buff Brown'. None of these names reflected what they did in any direct sense. Some appear to have been more in the way of character descriptions, whether of body or mind. 'Musher Sheath' in the adjacent list was a donkey-cart proprietor with a stand near to the Pier gates, 'musher' being a slang term for a small cab proprietor, dating from the 1880s.

Very few women appear to have acquired nicknames. The outstanding exception was, of course, Olivia Parkes, primarily known as 'Britannia', but sometimes also as 'Nell Gwyn'. Another was 'Pretty-foot', the nickname given to Hannah Grimes who was often to be seen standing in her big boots at the corner of Spring Hill. She loved to attend weddings.

According to Bob Trowbridge, some nicknames passed down the generations, regardless of whether they remained in any sense applicable. This was the case with some male members of the Brading family, originally builders, and always known as 'Bradawl Brading'. The nickname of legendary leader of Ventnor Comic Jazz Band, 'Skimbo', may have been a corruption of 'skin and bone' – for he was a very thin child. But Bob Trowbridge is clear that this just happens to be the most plausible theory.

Ventnor & District Local History Society: Michael Freeman, from files in Ventnor Heritage Centre and with thanks to Bob Trowbridge.

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

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