



The Heritage Centre holds a lot of materials on Ventnor Schools over the generations, not least, of course, numerous photos of class groups. Looking through one of the archive boxes recently, I came across a series of highly professional-looking school magazines from the 1920s, the adjacent image offering an example of one of the cover pages. It was printed by the Romsey Press and had Miss R. Buckley B.A. as its 'Editress', Margaret Hadenham as its 'Assistant Editress', working within a committee that included Brenda Brigden, Maude Tyrell, and Dorothy Westmore, in turn supported by Manager Mr. S.J. Guppy and Assistant Manager Fred Gibbs. Some of these individuals were, as one might guess, actually school pupils.

The magazine contributions, from pupils in the age range 11-14, were remarkably varied. There were short stories, poems and essays, the latter including discussions of colours, clocks and beautiful places seen by the writer. In parallel, there were reports of school events, including a Parents' Day that attracted 150 people. Pupils had excelled at swimming that year, with a boys team entered in the swimming races at Cowes.

Many pieces show a striking level of literary accomplishment for 11 to 14-year olds, and one is bound to wonder about the many careers that were missed all the while school-leaving age was still set at 14. Indeed, one of the things that the Magazine is able to record is the employments found by the school leavers that summer. Brenda Brigden (see below) was a cashier at Timothy White's, Dorothy Westmore a cashier at Newitt's, Maude Tyrell apprenticed at Sharpes's, William Creese apprenticed as a plumber at Ventnor Gas Works, and Fred Gibbs helped his father at Kent's Stores

The following literary contribution is by Brenda Brigden, age 14, from Standard VIII. It taps into the long-standing writing genre that makes fun of the shortcomings of holidaying in a boarding house at the British seaside. It was a theme that later found expression in plays and films. It is also memorably captured in parts of Bill Bryson's hugely entertaining *Notes from a Small Island* (1995).

A Recipe for a Good Holiday

Take three hours in a stuffy train, add slowly ten minutes' futile search for a vehicle at a reasonable charge, and stir in half-an-hour's roundabout walk to the boarding house. Then whisk in one whole ten minutes of hectic delving in half-a-dozen trunks, and then into two handbags for brush and comb, and soap, stuck on to your special pair of silk stockings.

Next, ladle in with a liberal hand, two hours of biliousness, in the form of tepid tea water, margarine, tinned salmon and stale bread. Follow with a thousand yells from the little dears on seeing the beautiful, cold sea, and the nice, gritty, messy sand

Four hours' sleep on a bed of marbles and cannon balls intermixed, followed by a luke warm wash, and burnt porridge breakfast, must now be thoroughly mixed in.

Mix with a week's water, part salt, part fresh from the clouds, and turn all into a long road uphill all the way, and finally bake, broil, roast and fry by turns in a large overcrowded train for another three hours.

When done, all traces of money, coolness, and good humour will have vanished (Brenda Brigden).

Ventnor & District Local History Society: Michael Freeman, Ventnor Heritage Centre



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