



## Wollescote, Spring Hill, Ventnor



The picture shows members of the Deighton family outside Wollescote, in 1947. The Heritage Centre has no record of the names of those in the picture, but the man at the back on the far right may be George Deighton, whose father, Albert Edward Deighton, ran the well-known firm of Deightons, decorators, at 91 High Street.

The house in the picture was built sometime in the 1860s for a Mr. Thomas Pargeter who came to Ventnor for his health. He figures in the 1871 Census, the house then described as Wollescote Villa. He was 28 years old and unmarried, his unmarried 34-year-old sister, Caroline, living with him. They employed a housekeeper, Rebecca Mursell, aged 61, a cook, Rose Wheeler, aged 26, and a housemaid, Caroline Cliff, aged 28. The house itself was quite grand, with inner hall, dining room, library (fitted with mahogany glazed bookcases) and drawing room, together with four first-floor bedrooms. There were servants' bedrooms in the attic along with a servants' hall, kitchen and scullery in the basement.

Wollescote occupied a very large land plot on the north side of Spring Hill which also incorporated a detached lodge cottage that fronted the street. The property also comprised a large area of land on the opposite side of the road which was laid out to kitchen garden, greenhouse, orchard, fountain and tennis lawn. We know such details from auction notices for the property that appeared in 1906.

Ownership and occupancy of Wollescote, including the lodge cottage and the land opposite, had an exceptionally chequered history. Tenants, in particular, seemed to come and go in rapid succession. A Baptist Minister, Samuel Williams, was living there at the time of the 1891 Census. In 1914, the Reverend A. Mason, chaplain at St. Catherine's Home, was resident. Sometime during the 1920s, Wollescote Villa was converted into three flats, a practice that had become increasingly common in Ventnor where large Victorian villas, reliant upon small armies of servants, had become obsolescent. In 1935, the resident list for Wollescote comprised Charles Deighton, K.B. Emery, and Miss Punt, which, of course, brings us back to the Deighton family of the photograph.

In due course, and especially after the war, there was yet further division of the Wollescote 'real estate'. The Lodge Cottage was sold off, as was the large garden plot on the opposite side of the road, where bungalows now stand. Even the garden ground of the main Villa was eventually subdivided to allow a new three-storey dwelling house to be erected immediately to its west.

*Ventnor & District Local History Society: Michael Freeman, from files in Ventnor Heritage Centre. The photo was supplied to the Heritage Centre by Peter Godwin who once stayed at Wollescote, aged 6.*



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.

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