



VENTNOR & DISTRICT LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY



## Ventnor Horticultural Society



It is a fine summer day on an August Bank Holiday in the 1920s. The small crowd of spectators are relaxing in Ventnor Park on the occasion of the Ventnor Horticultural Society's annual show. The roped-off seating reflects the fact that their Flower Show was held in conjunction with a sports programme, which included high jump, hurdles and the hundred yards sprint. There were separate races for children and for the over-50s. You will notice that the tree trunk left of centre has the number '3' painted on it, suggesting that this is a specially reserved seating area, perhaps for officers of the Society and their families. An annotation on the photo states that the three individuals on the extreme right are Mrs Emily Franklin, Mrs Annie Attrill and Molly Attrill (the toddler in arms). The Attrill family seem to have had a long association with the Society, extending back to at least around 1900.

There was an Undercliff Horticultural Society as early as 1865, according to the Ventnor Red Book of 1903. It seems to have been based around the big houses in places like Bonchurch and St. Lawrence, with annual shows arranged in their various grounds. Alongside, the Society also helped to arrange floral displays at venues like the Assembly Rooms (later Town Hall), the Pier Pavilion, and the Summer Pavilion on the Esplanade. The garden fronts of properties along the Esplanade also became party to regular shows of blooms. However, after Ventnor Town Council acquired the land that now forms Ventnor Park, it was increasingly the case that the main annual show was held there, activities extending well into the evening, with all kinds of refreshments laid on and lots of side shows. By this time, the name had become the Ventnor Horticultural Society, and rather later, the Ventnor and District Horticultural & Allotment Association.

The annual show seems to have reached a peak of popularity during the 1950s, with music being provided over the public address system and the sports programme being steadily enlarged, including a tug-of-war open to teams from across the Island.

*Ventnor & District Local History Society: Michael Freeman, from files in Ventnor Heritage Centre*



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](http://www.ventnorheritage.org.uk) / telephone 855407

