

WELCOME BACK

Well, it's that time of year again!

The museum is open again after the winter break:

Wednesday to Saturday, 10.00 to 13.00 hrs.

EXHIBITIONS

New exhibitions include one on Niton, accompanying those on Godshill, Whitwell, and Wroxall, which give an insight into the development of the villages with photographs that help track specific events, for example there are details of the medieval tithe barn in Whitwell, some of which is still standing today. Other exhibitions include a particularly good display about the Russian influence in Ventnor during the 19th century, the story of Olivia Parkes (sometimes known as *Britannia*), and a history of Ventnor Brewery, while some of the panels describing the early development of Ventnor have also been updated. More exhibitions will be announced during the year.

SOCIETY MONTHLY MEETINGS

We have a full programme of monthly meetings where more detailed information about aspects of Ventnor and Island life is explored. The [Monthly Meetings page on our website](#) will show details of all coming meetings. (*Remember, there are no meetings in August and December.*)

Date:	Speaker(s) and title of the talk	
26 May 2023:	Jeffrey Mazo	<i>Ventnor in Old Maps</i>
30 Jun 2023:	Sally Kavenagh	<i>History of Godshill Grammar School</i>
28 July 2023:	Paul Kingswell	<i>An Isle of Wight Postcard Collection</i>
29 Sept 2023:	Richard Smout	<i>Passing the Time in the Undercliff</i>
27 Oct 2023:	<i>Speaker and title to be confirmed</i>	
24 Nov 2023:	<i>Speaker and title to be confirmed</i>	

THE ALMOST MAGIC LANTERN SHOW: A JOURNEY THROUGH TIME (27 July 7.30-9.00 pm)

Our new event for this year's Ventnor Fringe week is *The Almost Magic Lantern Show: a journey through time from Blackgang to Shanklin*. Presented by Andy Butler and Alan Clark in what used to be 'The Manhattan Bar' in the Central Hotel in Church Street (now the 'Better Days Café'), the show uses historic glass slides from the Society Collection.

This is a free event (with donations welcome) but places are limited and there is only one performance, so members are advised to book early if they are interested: you can book tickets on the Ventnor Fringe Website using this link: bit.ly/3VGOAVi, or in person at the Ventnor Exchange in Church Street.



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REPORT OF THE 2023 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The 2023 Annual General Meeting of the Society was held on 24 March at the Masonic Hall. In her annual report, outgoing Chair Leigh Geddes thanked Society members and volunteers for their help and support throughout the year. She highlighted their efforts in the museum, reviving the monthly talk series, catching up on items donated to the archive, running local history walks, and other behind-the-scenes help. She noted in particular our decision to make entry to the museum free, so we can better meet our mission statement to share our assets and expertise with the community. Treasurer Paul Kingswell presented the 2022 annual accounts and reported on the financial position of the Society.

John Carter, Leigh Geddes, Paul Kingswell, Jeffrey Mazo, Nigel Slater-Bishop and Lesley Telford were re-elected as Trustees and Melvin Hurst was nominated and elected as a new Trustee. Lesley was elected as Chair, and Leigh, who had decided not to stand for Chair again, was elected as Deputy Chair. Paul and Jeff were re-elected as Treasurer and Secretary respectively.

After the meeting, Paul Kingswell gave a short slide show and talk about his favourite new acquisitions by the museum and archive over the previous year. One of these was a Memorial Plaque, often known as the 'Death Penny', which he said it was a privilege to have received.



Memorial Plaques were issued after WWI to the next of kin of all British Empire service personnel killed as a result of the war. The plaques were cast in bronze and came to be known as the 'Death Penny' due to their similarity in appearance to the standard penny coin of the time. 1,355,000 plaques were issued, which used a total of 450 tons of bronze. This one was donated to us by Mrs Snooke, Grand daughter of John Thomas Snooke, who was born in Wales but had moved to Ventnor by the time of the 1911 census, when he was living at 1 Maples Cottages, Trinity Road with wife Florence and two daughters, Dorothy and Evelyn (the couple had four daughters in all).

John died from a shell explosion on 27th May 1918 aged 42 having served in France for about 17 months, and is remembered on Ventnor War Memorial.

2023 WEEKLY LOCAL HISTORY ARTICLES

We continue to identify and publish weekly Local History Articles in the South Wight Chronicle and on the News pages of our website. This makes them available to readers who live off the Island, something which has been requested in the past. Each article is available to read as PDF on the news pages of our website a week after publication in the South Wight Chronicle:

<https://www.ventnorheritage.org.uk/news/>

NEW VENTNOR HERITAGE E-MAIL SUBSCRIPTION NEWSLETTER

We have set up a new **email subscription newsletter** for the general public. It is completely separate from the **Members Newsletter**, and just gives news of events and new publications; anyone can subscribe by adding their email address via [this link on our website](#).

VENTNOR REMEMBERED



Daphne Carter was a longstanding member of Ventnor & District Local History Society who, during the 1980s and 1990s, photographed the people, buildings, streets and landscape of our area.

Her collection of thousands of images is now being made available on a dedicated website, [Ventnor Remembered](#), a project undertaken and developed by Friends of Ventnor Library, supported by the Society and enabled by a grant from [Down to the Coast](#). Daphne died in 2017; the photograph here shows her working on an exhibition in the Heritage Museum in 2004.

VOLUNTEERING OPPORTUNITIES

Besides the usual Museum stewarding work, the Society also has a wide range of other opportunities for people interested in donating their time to us. For example, for the past two summers, from May to September, we have had a student join us as a volunteer, working around their commitments to summer jobs and study.



Gemma was an MA student studying Museum Development; Eloise was a third-year History undergraduate. *Picture shows Eloise in front of her self-researched display about Whitwell.*

Over the months with us, they had the opportunity to look ‘under the bonnet’ of a local history society and museum. They joined the team of Stewards running the Heritage Centre, helped lead the ‘Ventnor, Cradle of the Russian Revolution’ guided walk, and followed their own research projects. Eloise also designed a calendar and set up a display on the history of her home village of Whitwell.

Later there were glowing comments from the students:

‘I got a job as a Saturday custodian at Carisbrooke Castle Museum ... It was such a valuable learning opportunity for me. I received a Distinction/First for my masters, and a First on my placement module which I would have struggled to achieve without the experiences offered to me during my time at the Heritage Centre.’

‘The head of the MA course I’ve been offered, mentioned my volunteering with the museum specifically, so it really helped my application to stand out, and I also had fun there :)’

It was a delight to have them as lively members of the team, and we are offering a voluntary placement again this summer, to students who live on the Island and are in at least their third year of a relevant university course.

If you, or someone you know would like to get involved in the many varied activities of the museum then please contact Leigh for an informal chat.

To find out more, contact info@ventnorheritage.org.uk or call Leigh Geddes on 07791619378.

MERCURY STORY

The museum has a great number of back-copies of the Mercury. This newspaper was a favourite amongst Islanders. Future newsletters will contain information from these back-copies. Hopefully they will be both informative and enjoyable to read. They will cover very different aspects of events on the Island, but especially Ventnor and its surroundings. This first example is from the 95th year of the newspaper's publication, and is dated Friday December 29th 1950. To many people the date would appear to be not that long ago! However, the changes in the fortunes of Ventnor and lives generally since that time period, becomes all too obvious when reading the paper.

On the title page there are numerous adverts for New Year functions – the Winter Gardens hosting a New Year Dance – 7.45 to 11.45pm! The resident band was 'The Ryde Castle Swingtet'. Admission was three shillings and sixpence. Meanwhile The Rex was showing, during the next week, an Arthur Askey film entitled 'The Ghost Train', followed by 'Treasure Island' in Technicolor and 'Rogues of Sherwood Forest' with Diana Lynn. If this was not to your liking then in the Town Hall Theatre there was the final showing of the pantomime 'Sinbad the Sailor'. The reader was advised to 'book early at Clarkes Radio Store in Ventnor', telephone number 443.





Of further interest is the number of shops and service in Ventnor in this post-war period. Sharpes in Albert Street at that time, sold furniture. Ventnor Wallpaper Company in the High Street assured people that whilst wallpaper was going to be in short supply generally, they had placed large orders with the mill so had a good supply of wallpapers. Saul of Pier Street was promoting New Year cards, calendars, toys and gifts.

Reported stories included a column about the BBC television service. The newspaper reports that by June 1946 only 1,300 licences had been issued,

but that had risen to a current number of 555,000. The erection of television stations meant that 80% of the population would have the service by 1954, with the Isle of Wight being served from the Southampton transmission station. A further piece of news was about Mr Harold Fry of Ventnor Station who, during a recent blizzard, spent two hours clearing the points so that the train could get through. The train reached Ventnor but could not get away again for some time. The Mercury writer then extends thanks to all the railway personnel who did 'a grand job', maintaining the train service and that 'only the men themselves know all the story behind these few words'.

VENTNOR, CRADLE OF THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION (GUIDED WALK)

There are still a few tickets left for our 19 May *Ventnor, Cradle of the Russian Revolution* guided walk, offered during the 2023 Spring Isle of Wight Walking Festival. [Details & how to book here.](#)

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