

VENTNOR AND DISTRICT LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

March 2009

Newsletter No. 14

MUSEUM PIECES.

Our new DVD 'Ventnor and the Undercliff' is promised for the end of March and the production company has plans to 'premiere' the film at our AGM on March 27th.

Final visitor numbers for 2008 were 1346. (The record is 1390 in 2006). So quite encouraging.

This year's exhibition, which opens on May 9th, has a then and now theme. 'Past and Present' will show views from our old prints collection, which has not been used for some years. These will be compared with photographs taken recently from the same, or similar locations. Upper Ventnor, or 'Up Shute,' will have its own exhibition, plus a look at World War 2 in Ventnor (70th anniversary this year). This will be our third new display.

A very successful winter exhibition 'Schooldays Remembered' ran for a few days in January. This was made possible by recent acquisitions of a considerable number of school photographs, mainly from the 1960s, 1970s and the 1980s. We had almost 200 visitors, indeed it was so popular we extended it by a couple of days. Everyone enjoyed seeing themselves, members of their family, twenty or thirty years ago ... or longer. To see about 50 people in the Museum swapping stories and crowding round the photographs was a very rewarding sight.

We are again running a 'Sponsor a Screen for £30.' All sponsorship is most welcome - it helps to defray the high cost of putting on these exhibitions. So, if you would like to contribute, please let us know.

The exterior canopy, railings and front door will be repainted shortly. This will entail scaffolding being erected for a few days, probably in May.

Graham.

FROM THE ARCHIVES

N is for NASH'S COACHES

In our 2007 Exhibition on the Twenties and Thirties, one of the highlights was a collection of charabanc photographs of Ventnor coach companies.

In the early 1920s Crinage's were operating from their headquarters at the corner of Hambrough Road and Pier Street. In 1920 Nash's started at 23 Pier Street, not a touring company to begin with, but in 1922 a Leyland coach was acquired—they named it "The Red Chief" and started their tours. In due course, the company took over Brown's Posting Establishment in Pier Street as their garage.

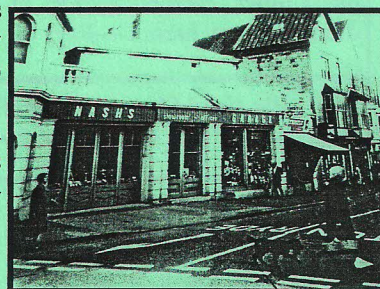
Their charabancs were magnificent machines in red and cream livery, later green and cream. To start with they were open to the elements, but photos from the 1930s show superb vehicles with folding roofs. The coaches had a garter insignia on the side with the words 'NASH'S SAFETY COACHES.' In those halcyon days, wandering down Pier Street on a summer morning you could see Nash's and Crinage's open for business and observe the competition for customers which was quite vigorous. Like other companies, Nash's staff were immaculately attired in long white coats and peak caps. "Nash's are Enterprising, have Courteous Drivers and Consider their Patrons" ran their advertising in 1937, together with the motto "Try the Armchair Way."

By 1954 they proclaimed "Coaches Equipped with Public Address Installations." A view of the garage in the 1950s shows destination boards and two coaches. The boards read "Osborne House and Carisbrooke Castle 5/9d. Round the Island 9/6d."

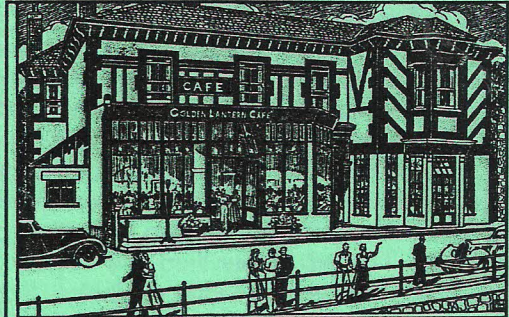
Nash's also ran Brown's Station Bus. In 1949 they were in dispute with Southern Vectis over an objection that they did not operate to a proper route. Mr. Nash, in his defence, stated "Brown's Bus has operated even before the age of motors, is a great boon to all as the bus collects and delivers passengers to and from their place of residence by request." Nash's won the case—but had to increase fares from 9d. to one shilling. Their taxis vied with other local firms!

In June 1956 the company sold their coach business to Southern Vectis. The garage and five coaches were included in the sale. Nash's continued to trade with their car showroom in Pier Street (today—Somerfield) until 1970 when Gerry Nash died.

Graham.



VOICES FROM THE PAST Research queries which I receive via the Museum and privately from other sources continue to keep me busy each week. In the last six months, queries have included those about the Laundry, the Esplanade Pavilion (Gaiety), the Golf Club, Belvedere, Ventnor and Bonchurch Temperance Society, various facets of Ventnor's history, the Winter Gardens, Bonchurch Hotel, Orient House, Freemantle Gate and the Medley, Woodford, Hookey, Hadfield and Jenkins families. The value of my time spent over many years amassing so much local information for my files at home has been emphasised again and again, and I am able to combine it with information from the Museum to give enquirers a worthwhile 'package.' The letters of gratitude are overwhelming at times! One of my most interesting since the last Newsletter came from California from Geraldine Hanford, the grand-daughter of Laurence and Ethel Pitt who formerly had the Golden Lantern on the Esplanade (now Beachlands) and also ran York House, Belle Vue Road (Collingtree) before Laurence's death in 1945. Geraldine's mother, now 83, has written her memoirs entitled "Ventnor Girl" and has sent me a copy. Parts relate to her life locally. I was able to send her details of the two properties, and many cuttings about Laurence who came to Ventnor with the 'Colour' concert party on Ventnor Pier. He gave up this work and bought The Golden Lantern in 1926, but was always the first to offer his singing talent for the benefit of charity. The cuttings were given me by the late Flora Muller, who participated in many concerts with him. He made great improvements to the premises, giving it a more artistic appearance. The *IW Mercury* stated "The pretty tea room replaced the ugly little shops which caused so much criticism when the premises were adapted for their use a few years ago." He sold the business to Farmers' Dairies in 1935. Geraldine thought that the former York House had been demolished and was so pleased to hear that it had not.—
Fay



Graham has brought a few of the new items which have been accepted by the TRUSTEES to the monthly meetings. Recent donations have included old legal documents, CDs of Whitwell and Chale postcards, many photographs and books, information on local places and a painting. Over 30 items were accepted at the January meeting.

A NEW PUBLICATION FOR 2009

A new member of the Society, Michael Freeman, has been researching into Ventnor's past and has produced a booklet entitled 'A Winter Sanatorium' - Ventnor as a health resort in the Victorian era. He describes in absorbing detail Ventnor's benefits to health, especially for those with chest complaints, and the remarkable development of the town in a few decades. Including several pictures, it will be on sale at the opening of the Exhibition on May 9th, priced at £1.

MEMBERSHIP is already over 120, plus 24 Honorary or Life Members. Vincent Chambers, who was one of those principally responsible for 'Inns and Ales' and 'Old Men Remember' died at the end of September. Well-known 'local' Fred Andrews has been made an Hon. Member for 2009—we have made an excellent recording of some of his local memories.

April 24 meeting— 'BEMBRIDGE, A TRIP DOWN MEMORY LANE.' The speaker is ALAN DOE.

Member Jill Wearing writes:

A CLINGING TALE A footnote to your Smugglers' Tale entitled "Brandy for the Parson" in the last Newsletter. In the 1970s, Roy and I purchased a cottage in South Street, and at the time my Aunt told us that Noah Williams, who was reputed to be a smuggler, used to live there and that he was said to have only eaten limpets! We thought no more about it until clearing and digging the garden, when, with every spadeful up came—yes, you've guessed it! ***Limpet shells!*** (Sadly we didn't come across any brandy!)

(Noah frequently went on trips across the Channel. Once when he landed with a cargo of tubs at Bonchurch, a preventative officer's bullet went through his cap! He ran up against the authorities many times. He died aged 91 in 1925—the limpets obviously not doing him any harm! —Fay)

***** We would be very grateful to receive short articles from members for our Newsletter, by the end of Aug. 2009 please.

In October Gareth Sprack told us all about the 'IW Rifles at Suvla Bay.' The annual lunch at the Mill Bay in November was most enjoyable. There was a full house for Andy Butler's third talk on 'Luccombe to Blackgang' in January and last month the Rev. Graham Morris's talk was called 'From Rural Dream to Rural Dean.'

WE PRESERVE LOCAL HISTORY

Please do not throw away any old photos, books or papers concerning Ventnor and district. Bring them to the Museum and they can be kept for the next generation and the next

Our Email address has recently been changed to ventnorheritage@tiscali.co.uk

Produced for the Ventnor and District Local History Society by Fay Brown