

VENTNOR AND DISTRICT LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

March 2010

Newsletter No. 16

MUSEUM PIECES.

Setting up the new exhibition is now well advanced. I am always a little unsure how a new display will work out. After I have thought up the theme I wish to portray, I then have doubts if I will be able to provide enough entertaining and informative material, but, with our now extensive archive to rely on, there always is. In fact the problem is usually agonising over what to leave out. This year the main theme is postcards. Called "Greetings from Ventnor," it has cards representing all decades from 1900 to 2000. My very first exhibition back in 1997 had a postcard "Wish You Were Here" theme, so I reckon after all these years a repeat performance will be new to many. Local churches and a look at "Shopping in the Old-Fashioned Way" completes this year's new displays.

Our DVD "Ventnor and the Undercliff" has continued to sell well over the Christmas period and a further 500 have been ordered and put in stock ready for the summer.

Melting snow and frost again caused problems with water coming in through the Museum roof. We are now considering taking the expensive step of having a new roof. Water is the last thing one needs in a Museum archive and we must take all necessary steps to keep it out. Graham.

SCREEN SPONSORSHIP

This very successful scheme is running again this year. For just £30 you can sponsor a Museum screen display. Putting on an annual Exhibition is expensive, so sponsorship is very much appreciated. Let Graham know if you can help, please.

NO LUCK

Unfortunately the chance to purchase the flat above the Museum was beyond our reach financially. The Committee would like to thank all those who offered their help.

We would like some members' contributions next time, please!

FROM THE ARCHIVES

P is for PULPIT ROCK

In old prints and photographs of Bonchurch, a rustic cross can be seen above the village. This was the Pulpit Rock. The rock, with two others, The Battery and The Reading Desk, were in the extensive grounds of The Maples on a level with Leeson Road. If you look over the edge today, the rocks are, of course, still there, but now covered by trees, ivy and ferns.

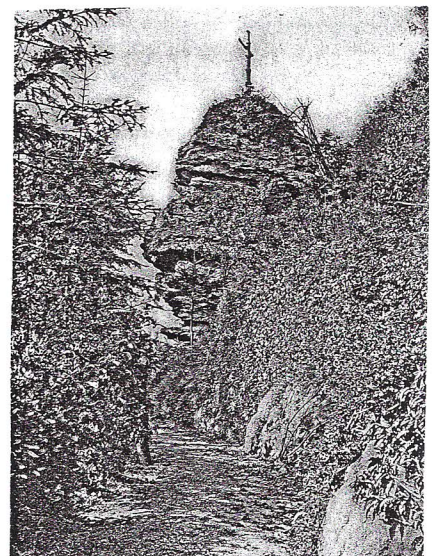
The cross was erected on the rock c1820 by two gentlemen who were staying in the village — Sir W. Heathcote, who was an MP, and the Rev. Arthur Percival. It is, however, not thought to have any particular religious relevance, perhaps they thought St. Boniface preached from there.

The Maples Estate was considerable and in the 1840s, The Pitts, an old quarry, was sold off for gentlemen's superior residences. One of these houses was called Pulpit Rock (still with us), and the rock, although part of The Maples gardens, was immediately behind this new house.

In earlier days the rock was apparently open to public access as illustrations show visitors on the path, with the cross in the background.

Guide books of the times considered this unusual structure worthy of description. In 1794 Wyndham refers to a "... most remarkable pyramid of rock distinguished by a flagpole on its top." This is presumably the future Pulpit Rock. A Brannon engraving from 1824 shows the cross but with no properties around it. Barber in his "Picturesque Illustrations of the Isle of Wight" suggests "...take the base of the cliff to Pulpit Rock—an advanced crag so called from a wooden cross placed on its summit from which a prospect as extreme as is beautiful is commanded." Black's Guide of 1878 describes "...a projecting mass of sandstone surmounted by a rural cross." Davenport Adams tells us in 1886 "...the rock is 400 ft above the sea, formerly a flagstaffe and was called Shakespeare Rock."

According to a 1953 report the cross was damaged in the Second World War but had been restored and residents and visitors were admitted to the gardens to view. We are not sure of the date when it finally disappeared. If anyone knows, please get in touch with us.—Graham



A VERY OLD TROUGH

In the Autumn, I had an unusual query from a man who was attempting to locate all the remaining cattle troughs that were originally erected by the Metropolitan Drinking Fountain and Cattle Trough Association. Although most of the troughs were erected in London, several were placed around the country, including two at Shanklin and one at Ventnor. He thought it had been placed here in 1907 but I had a note in my files that the Local Board agreed that one should be placed in the town in 1876. Many of us remember the trough near the Station, which was put up for sale in 1948 and bought by the late Albert Payne (hairdresser in Pier Street for 27 years). Shortly before he died in 1971, Mr. Payne donated the trough to the town and it was put as an object of interest in the Botanic Gardens (then known as Steephill Pleasure Gardens), where it can still be seen today. Whether it was put in Ventnor in 1876 or 1907, it is still a very old part of the town. Mr. Payne was a member of the Council from 1947-1951 and from 1959 until he died, and Chairman when the Queen visited in 1965. He had many local interests including the Ventnucky Minstrels and the Sailing Club of which he was Commodore and President when it was reformed after the War. His daughter, Mrs. Doris Ross, was also very active in public life and was our Society's President.



VENTNOR URBAN DISTRICT COUNCIL

Horse Trough and Drinking Fountain

OFFERS are invited for the purchase of the granite horse trough and drinking fountain situated in Mitchell Avenue, Ventnor.

The purchaser will be responsible for the removal of the installation and is to pay any charges incurred thereby. Offers in writing to be sent to the undersigned not later than 10 a.m., Monday, November 15, 1948.

JAMES WEARING,
Clerk to the Council.

Council Offices,
Salisbury Gardens,
Ventnor.
October 26, 1948

STEWARDS

Do you value the Heritage Museum?

We need stewards for this summer. I have asked before without any luck. If you want the Museum to be open on a regular basis, we need members to come forward. Can you help please? It is a very pleasant job and there is no need to worry if your local history is a bit rusty. If you want to give it a try—contact Graham at the Museum.

MUSEUM REVIEW COMMITTEE - Items recently acquired by the Museum, include many postcards and photos (one of Barney Moses, well-known local character, and many Carnival and other interesting pictures), local extracts from 1913 'Who's Who' on the Island, guide books, sale details, over 200 transparencies, and a WW2 pass for a journey to the RNH in 1943. Conservation of fragile items remains a priority and we hope to send more this year. Over £750 which I have raised through donations for my research and selling my greetings cards I have asked should be allocated for this purpose. - Fay

At the time of writing 2010 Membership had already reached 125 plus 25 Honorary and Life Members. We were very sorry to hear of the death of Mrs. Elizabeth Ruck, a member for many years, and a faithful steward at the Museum over a long period.

April 30th
'St. Catherine's Rejuvenated'
Rev. Graham Morris

Since the last Newsletter, I have completed about three dozen research queries by post (using our archives and my own at home) This is in addition to all those that we answer when people pop into the Museum. Britannia, (Olivia Parkes) is a popular subject and others I have been asked about have included Madeira Hall, Steephilldown Terrace, Farleigh's, the RNH, the Montrose, Alexandra Gardens, the Radar Station and Rockmount. At the Museum we have a large collection of Sale Brochures which give so much information, particularly about the internal layout of houses in the past—these are a valuable asset. Until September I had never heard of Katherine Maria Clarice Beauchamp Hambrough who was born in 1887 and died in 1966. A lady parishioner of St. Mary Magdalen's Church in Brighton (where Katherine was baptised) wrote to me asking for details of the Hambrough family. Katherine was a first cousin of Windsor Dudley Cecil Hambrough, who died in suspicious circumstances at Ardlamont, Scotland in 1883. The ensuing murder trial of the accused, Alfred John Monson, was not proven but was well publicised in the press. The Hambrough family of Steephill Castle had residences in Brighton. Katherine took holy orders in Rome, and became an abbess as Mother Richard or Riccarda. She was active during World War 2, helping to shelter Jews from the Nazis. About a year ago her Cause for Beatification was accepted at the Vatican, but this process often takes many years. Her possible sainthood and life is of great interest to the parish of the Brighton Church, and Katherine is of great interest as an historical figure. A month or so after the first enquiry, I had another from a lady who was writing a book about her. Fay

WALKING FESTIVAL

Two of our members are leading walks during the Festival. On Thursday, May 13th at 10.30 Richard Downing will be leading a five hour walk over 5.5 miles (for the National Trust) entitled 'Ventnor Downs: prehistory to Cold War' taking in Bronze Age barrows, a medieval manor house, a sandstone quarry, a Victorian Railway Station, R.A.F. Ventnor etc. starting at Smugglers' Haven car park 10.30 a.m. Booking essential 741020. On Weds. 12th May, Roger Silsbury's "Holy Wells and Pilgrim Paths", approx 3 miles, starts at Whitwell Church 10 a.m., finishing at Botanic Gardens (approx. 2 hrs.). On Tues. May 18th starting at Whitwell Church at 10 a.m., a circular walk to the north of Whitwell, approx. 4 hours—again led by Roger, whose walkers are invited to donate to V&DLHS.

Starting 2010 at our new venue, St. Catherine's Church, Andy Butler gave us 'A Time-Traveler's Trip to the IW;' Len Pullinger spoke on IW Chapel Buildings in February and March sees yet another AGM—the years certainly fly by!

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