

VENTNOR AND DISTRICT LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

March 2011

Newsletter No. 18

MUSEUM PIECES

Final visitor numbers to the Museum for 2010 were 955—a disappointing result for what, I thought, was an attractive postcard theme.

At the request of some of the stewards, a meeting was held to discuss various problems, including, of course, the visitor numbers. Some ideas were put forward but the location of the Museum off the High Street tourist trail is a problem. One of the ideas was a sign at the junction of High Street and Spring Hill. We investigated this but when we discovered the amount of form filling, site location plans, elevation charts, and the high fee necessary etc. we decided not to take any action.

Heritage Open Day was once more a success with 79 visitors attending. Our DVD 'Ventnor and the Undercliff' has now exceeded 600 sales. Our new book on Ventnor's history: 'Ventnor—the English Mediterranean' has sold approximately 580 copies since its launch in September. Sales of these two items certainly helped our turnover.

Two new blue plaques have been unveiled: the site of Ventnor Mill and 'Winterbourne,' Bonchurch (Charles Dickens, Myles Birket Foster and William Adams).

This year's main exhibition is 'Impressions of a Ventnor Artist' - the work of Stanley Aldridge (1920s). Also new this year: 'Appuldurcombe' and 'Two Bonchurch Houses' ('Winterbourne' and 'East Dene').

One of our big Museum windows was attacked by a drunken reveller. The cost of renewal was over £800, never mind the clearing up and the inconvenience. Our insurance company are not pleased with us,, as we have also claimed for a new office roof and drainage works.

Some of our display screens in the Museum have had a make-over and are now boarded in deep red—looks regal. We are looking for screen sponsorship again this year which helps with the cost of putting on the exhibition (advertising etc.) It is £30 a go, so if you would like to contribute please let us know.

Graham.

FROM THE ARCHIVES

R is for ROYAL HOTEL

The Royal is well known to us all. It started out as Fishers Hotel when it was built in 1832. Before that there were farm buildings and stables on the site. As we look at the building today, the east, or right wing is the original, although many alterations have taken place down the years.

It was not Fishers Hotel for long, becoming the Ventnor Hotel in 1843. An interesting print by Barber from 1845 shows cows being milked on the grounds opposite the hotel (now the gardens), Barber describes it as one of the four principal hotels in the town. It became the Royal in 1855 after a visit by Queen Victoria. A Post Office directory for that year calls it the Royal with William Bush as the proprietor.

By 1895, a prominent guide books tells us: "...the Royal Hotel has been re-built, re-decorated and is patronised by the Queen and the Royal Family. French, German, Italian and Dutch is spoken.' Some prices from 1908 give apartments at 6/6d per night, dinner 5/-, breakfast 2/6d, luncheon 2/6d.

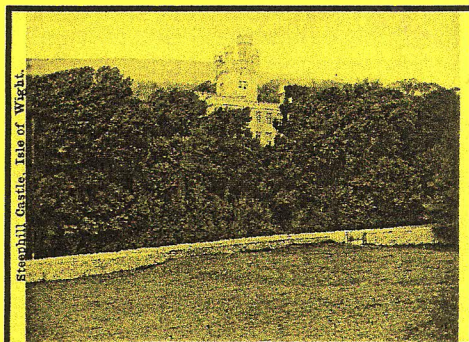
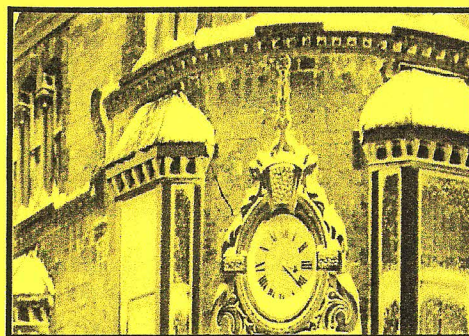
In 1907, 1910 and 1911, the hotel was up for sale. The sale particulars advise us that it is "A Celebrated Fully Licensed Property of attractive appearance and in good order throughout .. It is replete with every modern convenience including electric light installation.' The 1910 prospectus lists 57 bedrooms, 6 sitting rooms, 6 bathrooms, spacious public rooms, a palmery, very handsome saloon lounge etc. Across the road was a sunken croquet lawn (today the car park), flower beds, lawns etc. steps up to The Mount giving majestic sea views from the top. (It still does). In 1911 the suggested price was £9,000 including all the excellent furnishings. The number of bedrooms was now 61.

By 1964, a double bedroom, breakfast and bath was ... only £4.5.0d. Per night.

The Royal Tavern built around 1890 was badly damaged by fire in 1989 and demolished in 2000. It is now a garden. Today the hotel looks in excellent condition. Let us hope it will be with us for many more years to come.

Graham.

THE TOWN CLOCK. I recently had a query about the life of William Luce Hosking, from his great-great-granddaughter, who now lives on the mainland, but was born and brought up on the Island. She did not know until 1950 that her ancestors lived here. William came to Ventnor in the 1850s and established a shop at 1 Church Street. In 1872 he wrote: "The clock over my shop was placed there with the earnest wish that it might be a benefit to the community. In the event of my leaving Ventnor, the clock is to remain, where I trust it will usefully occupy its niche, and measure all the valuable moments as they flit away." The lady was so excited about the information that I sent her she said she felt like a candidate for 'Who Do You Think You Are' except that she wasn't famous! Ventnorians are pleased the new clock is in place. **THE HAMBROUGHS.** -I sent a large package to a lady in San Diego, California, whose mother was a Hambrough, four generations removed from John and Sophia who built Steephill Castle, telling her how the family were great benefactors to Ventnor. Her great-grandfather was Rev. Windsor E. Hambrough. In her effusive thanks to me, she said what pride she felt that her ancestors were such generous people. She sent me some pictures of other Hambroughs and these are now in the Museum archives. -Fay



RESEARCH Requests for information come in regularly at the Museum, and also to me personally at home. Any donations I receive in appreciation I put in the fund for conserving fragile artefacts for future generations. Queries I have had during the last six months include those on the Congregational Church, the Burlington, Michael Spartali, Marine Villa, Alexandra Café, the Carfax, Theodore Drudge and the Mackett family of Bonchurch. Two of the most interesting ones are detailed above. -Fay

MUSEUM REVIEW COMMITTEE - We sent over a dozen items to our Conservator, Mr. Rex Lancefield, in the Autumn. This work is very expensive and we can only afford a certain amount each year (over and above my donations for research). In the last 6 months, nearly 40 Acquisition Forms have been completed, but the number of actual items listed on these was around 120. Space is becoming a worrying problem as we accepted a large collection of school material from St. Margaret's (including Long-down papers), local Coastguard memorabilia and when Ventnor Middle School closes in July, we have agreed to receive scrap-books, photos, cups, and generally anything pertaining to the history of that school (and the Secondary Modern School) much of which was compiled by me when working there. It is important to retain these parts of Ventnor's history.

MEMBERSHIP is now over 100 (paid) and 24 Life or Honorary Members. This year's subscription renewals were due in January. If you wish to rejoin, please send £7.50 (cheques to 'Ventnor History Society') to Fay Brown (Membership Secretary, Ventnor Heritage Museum, 11 Spring Hill, Ventnor. IW. PO38 1AW.

April 29th 2011 'Pubs of Ryde' - Tony Gale

NOT SO LONG AGO

In October Derek Sprake related humorous tales about Village Shows; Wayne Pritchett told us about 'Newport Harbour' in November and the annual lunch at the Winter Gardens was much enjoyed; Rodney Ridell spoke (with personal memories) on 'HM Yacht Britannia' in January; and Dr. Tony Williams, a great authority on the life of Charles Dickens was the speaker on 'Dickens and Bonchurch' last month. Earlier the same day he had unveiled the plaque at 'Winterbourne,' on a rather damp and foggy day! He was delighted that Graham was able to show him various other places of interest in Bonchurch during his short stay.

We have been so pleased that Colin Elvers has been able to come to our meetings again. The Committee members have decided to make Colin an Honorary Life Member—well deserved!

ROGER'S WALKS

Isle of Wight Walking Festival. Roger Silsbury will be leading two walks on behalf of the Society during the Festival., On Monday 9th May 'West from Ventnor from Ventnor West.' A 6 mile circular walk along part of the old Ventnor West Branch and Pelham Woods to St. Lawrence, then down to Binnel and return along the cliffs. Meet at the west end of Ventnor Park at 10 a.m., duration about 4 hours. On Thursday 19th May 'A Gander Round Godshell.' A 7 mile circular walk through varied countryside on the western side of Godshell, with some far reaching views en route. Meet in car park opposite the 'Griffin' at 10 a.m., duration about 6 hours, bring a packed lunch. There is no charge for either walk, although a donation to the Ventnor History Society is requested. Both walks will be at a leisurely pace, with some steps and steep slopes along the way.

