

VENTNOR AND DISTRICT LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER No. 19

September 2011

MUSEUM PIECES

As one of our stewards reports elsewhere in this newsletter, several improvements have been made to the Museum's image. The exterior banner, and an advertising panel in Seasons shop (our T.I.C.) in the town centre, has undoubtedly contributed to a very much improved visitor awareness. Admission figures to late August show an increase of 300 on 2010.

The exhibition this year features drawings by a local artist of the 1920s – Stanley Aldridge. Also new this year, panels on Appuldurcombe and Two Bonchurch Houses – namely Winterbourne and East Dene. The exhibition was opened by Richard Smout from the I.W. County Records Office.

Our screen sponsorship continued this year, eleven screens at £30 each were taken up. Thank you to all who participated.

Our booklets on local history are always good sellers, and, of course, provide a necessary revenue stream. Some of our older titles now look a bit out of date so it is our policy to re-issue some of these in a more customer friendly and attractive format. 'While I Breathe I Hope' and 'A Winter Sanatorium' have already been re-issued, and two new titles, 'Paddling to Ventnor Pier' and 'RAF Ventnor-The Cold War Years' are similarly presented.

Our booklet 'Ventnor Town Trails' has been available in A4 format for many years. I have always thought that this was an inconvenient size to take on walks, so we have now produced, in leaflet form, the first in a hoped for series based on these trails but updated. It is called 'Down to the Sea', is issued as a free leaflet, and is available around the town. This has proved successful and a second trail is now in the early stages of being prepared.

Through Roger Silsbury and Richard Downing, the Society participated in three walks for the I.W. Walking Festival. They were reasonably well attended and I would like to thank them both for their efforts.
Graham.

FROM THE ARCHIVES.

S is for SHARPE'S of VENTNOR

In February 1953 Ventnor saw one of its biggest funerals when almost every organisation was represented to say goodbye to Mr. A.J. Sharpe, Ventnor's 'Grand Old Man'. He was 86. He was, at the time, the town's most prominent citizen, as, not only was he an extremely well respected former shop-keeper, but also a doyen of St. Catherine's Church for 76 years, had been an Isle of Wight and Ventnor Councillor, Carnival and Regatta Chairman, Commodore of the Sailing Club, School Governor, Magistrate...one could go on. It was said of him that during his years of Chairman of Ventnor Council no previous incumbent had taken such a lead in the social life of the town.

In 1893 he opened his shop at No.4 Clarence Buildings, High Street. A review of his shop in an 1894 directory describes it 'as a spacious full-fronted shop, handsomely fitted out, and is particularly rich in fashionable novelties, everyday drapery goods, dress materials, carpets, linoleum, a charming variety of haberdashery of every conceivable kind, embroidery and silk, and all the latest London and Paris fashions'. Quite a write up!

In 1905 he opened his Spring Hill store, now our Heritage Museum. In 1914, a 21st anniversary tribute stated that from a small shop, the business had 'over-run' four premises including the well equipped and handsome furniture emporium in Spring Hill. His fair dealing and conscientious endeavours were the secret of his success. The staff had grown from a couple of employees to nearly thirty.

His Christmas Bazaars held in his Spring Hill store became famous. The 1907 event was described 'as a veritable fairyland, mechanical toys set in motion by dainty young ladies in charming Japanese costumes, a wonderful toy railway with trains running at regular intervals causing great excitement...

and a wonderful electric tramway which brought you a present when you paid the fare...or visit Father Christmas in his castle.' Mr. Sharpe, dressed up as Father Christmas would arrive at Ventnor Station, then be transported around the town in his sleigh – each child waiting at his store would receive an orange and a special gift – this he did for many years. In 1915 he had a 'North Pole Camp' in his Spring Hill store.

No wonder he was such a loss to the town.
Wonderful days indeed!

Graham.

AN IMPORTANT EVENT.

SATURDAY, SEPT. 23,

OPENING OF

A. J. SHARPE'S

NEW FURNISHING STORES,

Opposite the Crab & Lobster Hotel, SPRING HILL.

STEWARDING AT THE HERITAGE MUSEUM.

You must have all noticed the improvements at the Heritage Museum, or maybe not? There is a brand new banner proclaiming MUSEUM, so that it is easily noticeable from the car park; the books have all been re-arranged so they are the first thing to take your eye as you look in; Margaret is working her little fingers off putting new covers over tables and stands; and the front window has an inviting display. Graham's exhibition is as good as ever and drawing praise from visitors.

It's the visitors that make stewarding an enjoyable job. It is an opportunity to meet people from all over. They are relaxed and on holiday and interested in finding out more about the Island. The Museum is the best place to discover who did what and when. Many people have long associations with the Island and are playing their own version of 'Who Do You Think You Are?' If, as a volunteer steward, I cannot help them, their queries are passed to Fay or Graham for pursuing.

Looking through the Visitors' Book at their comments I noted that in the past month there have been visitors from Germany, Kent, South Africa, Berkshire, Florida and London, to name just a few. The Florida visitors wrote 'So lovely, we are coming back.'

We do need more stewards and you don't need to have any specialist knowledge, you just need to love the Island. There are over 170 members and only 16 stewards, so think about giving it a try. Call Graham or email ventnorheritage@btconnect.com. or you can just pop in one day and speak to a steward.

Evelyn Knowles.

MEMBERSHIP

At the time of writing, membership was 174 + 24 Honorary or Life Members.

GIFT AID FORMS

If any members have not signed a Gift Aid Form, please can you do so as the financial reward is of benefit to the Society. Forms are available at meetings or at the Museum.

ALWAYS SOMETHING NEW TO LEARN!

Since the last Newsletter we have had some interesting talks: 'Pubs of Ryde,' Tony Gale; 'The Titanic Story—Updated,' Noel Stimson; 'From Muck to Murder,' Christopher Russell; and 'The Man the Island Forgot,' Patrick Nott. On September 30th Mary Case will be telling us about 'Products of the Hive.'

RESEARCH

by Fay

Originally the Lifeboat Temperance Hotel in 1880, the restaurant was run by a band of local ladies at 19 Mill Street (later Pier Street).

"LIFE BOAT" RESTAURANT,
Pier Street, Ventnor,
FOR LUNCHEONS, DINNERS, TEAS.

HOT JOINTS DAILY.
GOOD ACCOMMODATION FOR TOURISTS.
G. HOLDEN, Proprietor.

THE UNDERCLIFF SCHOOL,

5 & 6, ST. BONIFACE TERRACE,

VENTNOR, ISLE OF WIGHT,

Was established in 1857, for the Education of a limited number of Young Gentlemen to prepare them for the Universities, Civil and Military Appointments, the Professions, &c., &c.

The Course of Instruction comprises Classics; Mathematics, Pure and Mixed; French; English Composition; Sacred, Ancient, and Modern History; Natural Philosophy; Geography; Drawing, &c., &c.

The Principal has been very successful in preparing pupils for the Universities, and Civil and Military Appointments, not having had a single failure.

Inclusive Terms,

PAYABLE ONE TERM IN ADVANCE.

TUITION, BOARD, AND STATIONERY, ABOVE FIFTEEN YEARS OF AGE, 100 GUINEAS PER ANNUM.

"	"	ABOVE TWELVE	"	80	"	"
"	"	UNDER TWELVE	"	60	"	"

* Pupils can remain during Vacations. Arrangements made for shorter periods for the Sons of Visitors.
A Term's Notice will be required before removing a Pupil.

Ventnor, situated in the most delightful part of the Undercliff, has a Climate cooler in Summer and warmer in Winter than any other part of England. Well sheltered from North Winds, with an aspect due South, it has an atmosphere the equability of which is its most noteworthy feature. The situation has long been pointed out by the most eminent Medical Authorities as possessing, in a higher degree than any other place in the United Kingdom, the requisites of a residence for Invalids,

Part of the fun of doing research is that I just do not know what I am going to be asked about next! Sometimes I get 6 a week, and other times only 1, but it keeps me busy. The last few months I have heard from a man in New Zealand who volunteered to look for unexploded bombs after the August 12th 1940 raid on the Radar Station—he wanted to know if I could tell him where he stayed for a week (by his description), the name of the pub. he used and the location of an air-raid he witnessed. I did all that, sent pictures and text, and he was delighted—he is now 98! Other queries included those about 6 St. Boniface Terrace and former occupants, Belmont, Kingseat, Castle Cliff, Winston Churchill, Craigie Lodge, Smuggling, the Lifeboat Restaurant/ G. Holden, and Poplar and Myrtle Cottages. I had a phone call from a lady who was stationed here in the WRENS at the Heights in the War. She was eager to talk about her time here and the changes since then in Ventnor. So many memories are recalled by the enquirers and also by me. It is a fascinating occupation.

KNIGHT'S CIRCULATING LIBRARY

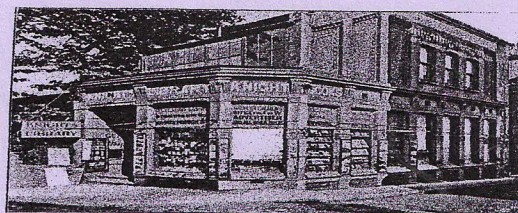
SUBSCRIPTIONS FOR LONG OR SHORT PERIODS.
NEW LIST ON APPLICATION.
The Largest in the Island. Over 10,000 volumes. Daily parcels from London.
Magazines and Periodicals supplied.



147 & 149, High Street.

Plain and Fancy Stationery. Artists' Materials.
Fancy Goods. Bookbinding. Die Sinking and
Printing.

Special Department for the Display of New Books.
Photographs. Guide Books and Tictorial Post Cards.



"Advertiser" Buildings, Church Street
(West End Branch), Opposite St. Catherine's Church

PIANOFORTE FOR SALE OR HIRE.

THE MISTS OF TIME

Warm, hazy, summer days bring time to reflect on memories of bygone times, Ventnor in days of childhood, picnics, paddling on the beach, walks through the Landslip, grandparents, parents, relatives and friends all combining to make one's formative years ones to enjoy and remember down throughout the years.

Reminiscences come tumbling back – the smells of the times – the clothes they wore – the lovely home-cooked food – the tarring of the roads in summer – and not least the boiling copper in Nan's scullery on a Monday morning – the smell of soap and utter cleanliness – and if lucky, we children were allowed to wield the well-worn and bleached copperstick in the steaming cauldron – being careful not to fall in!

Lavender, lilies of the valley which grew in profusion in the back garden, mint, delicious casseroles and steamed puddings – all were the wonderful smells pervading grandma and grandpa's house from time to time when my sister and I were small. We loved to go and visit – and on a Saturday would be given our 'Saturday sixpence!' These were times when old Ventnor had a much more gentle pace – people didn't seem to be in so much of a hurry then! Aah – those were the days!

These reflections were partly brought about by my sister-in-law, Fay, asking me to write a paragraph about 'something old' for the Newsletter and I turned to Knights Handbook to Ventnor and Bonchurch of 1894. (Old enough Fay?)

The adverts always fascinate me – H.A. Ives of Mayfield House, Pier Street, a Stationer and Newsagent, photographic agent, etc. had 'scraps for albums' – 'opalines' (were they bejewelled?) 'medallions in plush' or 'mounted for framing' while R.H. A. Woodman was a Silk Mercer and General Draper, Hosier, Furrier and Laceman, with departments for silks, velvets, plushes, mantles, millinery, costumes, jackets, ulsters (?) furs, ribbons, dress fabrics, household-linens, blankets, flannels, curtains, umbrellas, hosiery, gloves, ladies' underclothing and corsets! While the 'dressmaking and millinery departments were 'superintended by thoroughly efficient hands'! All these were available at Warwick House, Ventnor.

View Post Cards, Maps, Guides, and Souvenirs
of Ventnor and the Isle of Wight.

H. A. IVES,

BOOKSELLER, STATIONER
and NEWSAGENT,

Circulating Library,

3, Pier Street, VENTNOR.

A constant succession of Novelties
for Visitors throughout the season.

PUBLISHER OF VIEW POST CARDS
OF VENTNOR & THE I. OF WIGHT.

Every place of interest kept in stock.

— Foreign Stamp Expert. —

Collections bought, sold & exchanged. Albums & Accessories.

CREST and VIEW CHINA.

Information to Intending Visitors—FREE.

NOTE ADDRESS.



ESTABLISHED 1884.

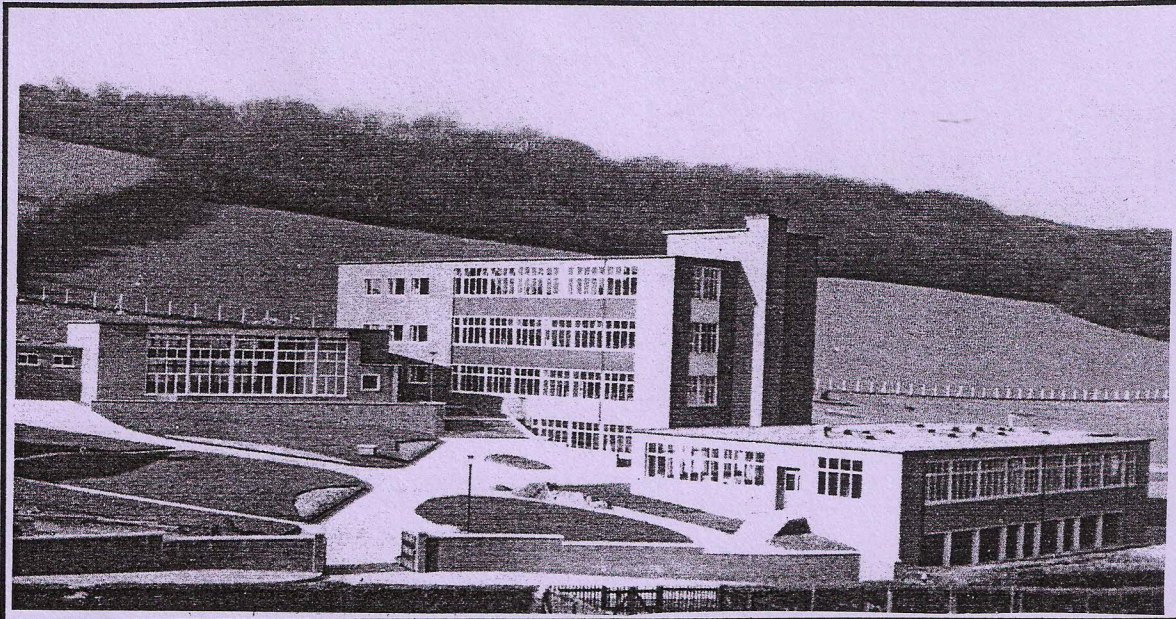
What a fantastic selection of items – no doubt a magnet for shopaholics – I would have been lost in there for days at a time! All those wonderful wares!

At this time, Knights Circulating Library – at 147 and 149 High Street, Ventnor – West End Branch, Bank Buildings, Church Street – contained 'nearly 8,000 volumes' with a Reading room and Lounge providing the 'principle daily and weekly newspapers' which were offered free for customers to read for a 'very moderate subscription' to the Library. Visions of a scene of peace and quiet apart from the occasional turning of the odd page!

After all this, you could repair home to sample the delights of Prime Ox Tongues, Corned Beef or Welsh Mutton from J. S. Cox, family butcher, of 78 High Street, Ventnor with 'special prices quoted for large Families and Hotels' and families were 'waited on at Niton, St. Lawrence and Bonchurch daily.'

What more could you want?

Jill Wearing. August 2011.



DEMISE OF VENTNOR MIDDLE SCHOOL

Members will have read of the closure of the Middle School because of the IW Council's re-organisation of the education system. The building was opened in 1957 as Ventnor County Secondary School (see picture above) and changed to a Middle School in the previous re-organisation in 1971.

MEMORABILIA SAVED

The majority of the thousands who have been pupils are not happy about the school's demolition. Having worked in the school office for 28 years, the thought of the building not being there has been devastating. When I first heard of the plans, I contacted the Headteacher to ask what would be happening to the memorabilia, much of which I had collated whilst I was Secretary. I was worried that it might be lost for ever. After a meeting it was agreed that I could choose items for the Museum. Enter our Curator Graham, who would obviously have the final say on how much we could accept. In the Spring we visited the school and made some decisions.

HISTORICAL VALUE

Lack of space at the Museum is a continual problem but I said that we definitely needed to have anything of historical value to Ventnor. This included Admission Registers, Log Books, scrapbooks of press cuttings, programmes of events, countless photos, trophies etc. Everything was left at the school, because it was intended to hold two Open Days shortly before closure, with displays everywhere. I was pleased to be asked to help with memorabilia, photos of earlier years and building changes, and spent many hours back in the environment I had loved for years.

THE LAST DAYS

Came July 18th and 19th and I was "detailed" to welcome simply hundreds of interested people. It was such a joyful occasion and there were many re-unions. I put much of the memorabilia on show in the foyer and asked permission to sell greetings cards of various school views in aid of our Society—I sold 106 cards @ 50p. each and this money has gone into our Conservation Fund.

COLLECTION

Then came the sad part: "Everything Must Go" as it says at sale times. Over three days Graham and I gradually collected everything we could possibly take for the Museum. Leaving the building for the last time was heart-breaking for me.

SAFE FOR THE FUTURE

Now gradually we must catalogue everything — it is a mammoth task — *but* I am pleased that so much of Ventnor's history is safe for future generations. Over recent months we have also accepted into our archives many items from St. Margaret's and St. Boniface C. E. Primary Schools. Graham hopes to exhibit some of the items during the winter months.

Fay.

*Please come and visit the 2011 Exhibition at the Museum before the end of October.
(We are always open on Saturday mornings 10 — 12.30 throughout the year.)*

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