



VENTNOR AND DISTRICT LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER No. 2

March 2003

MUSEUM PIECES

The Museum closed for the Winter on November 2nd. Visitor numbers saw a late rally, probably due to the Ventnor West display which we advertised in the IW County Press. During the Winter we are open on Saturdays from 10 a.m. - 12 noon.

Brenda had an excellent Christmas window display and with the coloured lights made a fine sight to lighten the darkness of Spring Hill. Although the Museum was not open over Christmas, we did participate in the Victorian Ventnor Fair on December 14th, the afternoon of which had some very wet weather, so we were not very busy.

Found hiding in the darkest recess of the Museum, an old hotel sign with the letters 'V' and 'M' on a large 'V.' We have put an appeal in the local paper to see if anyone can identify where it came from - "Victoria Mount" in Victoria Street has been suggested.

It is hoped that the Museum will soon have its own Web Page on the Internet and that we will be able to send and receive E Mails.

Preparations for this year's Exhibition are now in full swing. Entitled "From Cottage Door to Castle Gate" it will take a look at property and architecture. Also new this year is a screen entitled "Winter Wonderland" which depicts Ventnor in the snow. We open on May 10th.

Winner of the Comic Postcard Caption Competition was Mr. John Plumridge of Swindon, runner-up was Mrs. Jane White of Upper Ventnor.

In October we were pleased to welcome a party from the Beckenham History Society in Kent and we took them on a guided walk around historic Bonchurch.

The Roots group from Newchurch visited the Museum on November 21st - a very pleasant afternoon was enjoyed by all. Two weeks later we visited them to give a film show and partake of a Christmas tea - very nice!

That's all this time. I had better get back to preparing the new Exhibition.

Graham

From the Archives - 'B' IS FOR BANK FRAUD

According to newspaper reports in December 1878 "Ventnor has been in the greatest state of excitement during the past fortnight." A Mr. Richard King, Manager of the Capital and Counties Bank in Ventnor had absconded with £1000 in notes from the bank funds. Apparently Mr. King had gone on a visit to the mainland, which he frequently did, but this time with his wife and several large suitcases. No alarm was raised until the following Monday and the next day a bank inspector arrived and on checking the books discovered the discrepancy.

However, that was not all, as a few days later a Mr. Daniel Attrill, who had a butcher's shop in the town, was arrested after a struggle at his home at Dean Farm, Whitwell. Also, a local farmer Mr. George Jenkins Hunt of Rew Farm was held the next morning, both involved in a fraud which apparently entailed alterations to bank ledgers by Mr. King. Several large sums were credited to Attrill when they should have been credited to other customers of the bank.

The court proceedings were held in Ryde amid "the greatest excitement and the courtroom was crowded to suffocation." It was estimated that about £8000-9000 had been conspired between King and Attrill. Mr. Attrill's shop account was among the largest at the bank.

King was sought far and wide, and in 1879 was traced to Buenos Aires. Presumably he stayed there beyond the long arm of the law.

Attrill was found guilty, but the jury recommended mercy as he had been the dupe of King. The judge summing up said "he had been party to a most abominable crime" and sentenced him to one year in prison with hard labour. The prisoner replied: "I am purely innocent. King lent me the money."

As regards Hunt, regrettably the records do not say what became of him. Perhaps he got off!

Graham

PUBLICITY FOR VENTNOR and financial help for the History Society

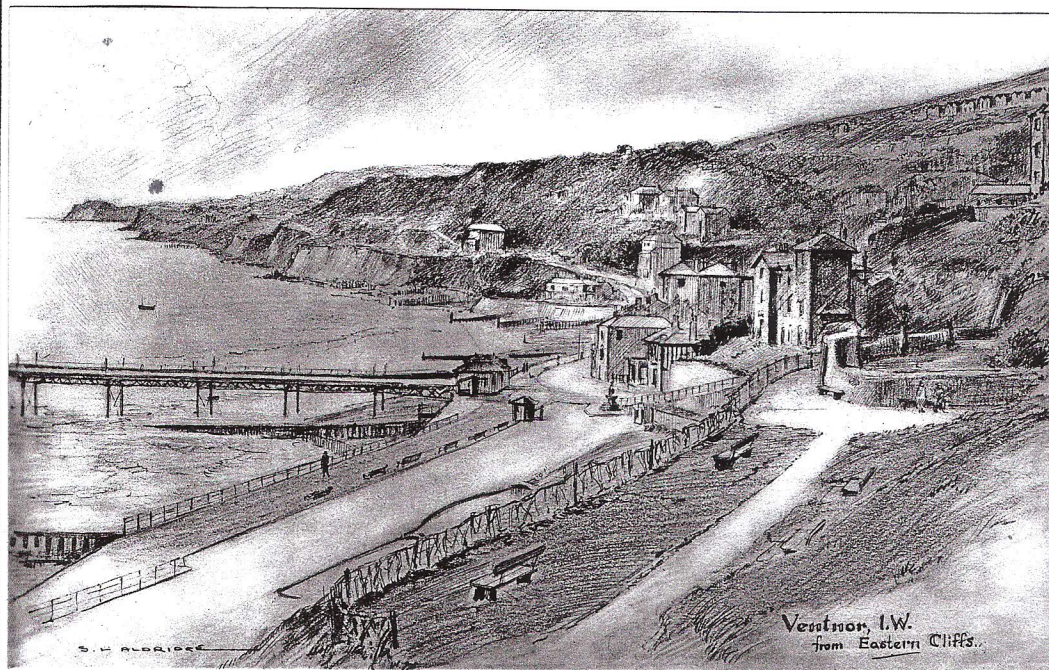
During the last six months, several slide shows have been given by Fay to organisations in Ventnor and other places on the Island. She has also attended Craft Shows and Fairs, selling her home-made photographic cards and Society booklets. Graham and Brenda gave a slide show at Bonchurch. Donations and proceeds from the stalls are helping the Society's work.

Other Ventnors

We are keeping in touch with two other Ventnors in the world, and regularly write to Jeannette Adams, who is Secretary of the Ventnor, New Jersey, USA Historical Society, and to Julie Box, who is connected with the Ventnor on Phillip Island, Australia.

**April 25th Meeting -
Adrian Searle on
"VENTNOR IN
WARTIME"**

BRENDA CREESE (Events Organiser) is arranging various meals, outings etc. for the next few months. Details will be announced to members - please support her efforts.



STANLEY ALDRIDGE

This is just one of the many cards produced by Aldridge who lived in Ventnor and had a kiosk near the Pier. We are privileged to have a large collection of his work, the gift of Miss Jacobs some years ago. A booklet containing information and pictures is available from the Museum.

NEXT
NEWS-
LETTER
September
2003

RESEARCH REWARDING

Many research queries are received at the Museum - sometimes as many as 20-25 monthly and the majority are mostly answered by post by Fay, who combines Museum records with her own research files at home. Since the last Newsletter, queries have included those about the Hygeia emblem, the houses at the foot of The Cut, Hillside, James and Rosa White, Air Raids on Ventnor, Huish Terrace, Britannia, Harding's Baths, Flowers Brook, the Palmerston Hotel and Pollikett family. Quite a variety!

Last year's financial report showed the considerable amount of money realised in donations for this work.

Members of the Executive Committee have met in September, November and February to discuss the business of the Society. We would be pleased to have new faces on the Committee. Meetings are only about six a year.

EXHIBITION
at the
Heritage Museum
opening
on **May 10th.**
Please come
along and
look around.

CHANGES IN THE TOWN

At the moment we are seeing many changes in our town. The Kings View Flats are taking shape on the site of the Rex Cinema. People have different opinions about this building. The Cricket Academy is beginning to look very smart. The (almost) continuous noise on the Esplanade heralds the arrival of a Haven (small harbour) and the on-going work is proving a great attraction to residents and others from farther afield. The former garage and 'The Nest' in South Street are no more. It was all once part of the St. Boniface Villa estate. It is quite a shock to have a sea view as you traverse East Street. New building will erase this, as it has done with the short-lived view from Alpine Road.

ACQUISITIONS SINCE SEPTEMBER 2002

These include many photographs, including one of the interior of Ventnor Power Station in the early 1920s, one of F.J. Rolf's refuse lorries and St. Lawrence Hall and coachman 1910; some postcards; and the papers relating to Ventnor Yacht Harbour Scheme 1990 and items concerning the Ventnor Railway Association. After consultation with the Executive Committee, the Trustees sent several items for conservation, including auction catalogues, photographs, pages of old newspapers and a parasol. Total expenditure for this was in the region of £1500 which is why we are constantly trying to obtain grants to help with our work. Some items will just deteriorate if they are not conserved.

OTHER ISLAND SOCIETIES

We are forming friendly relationships with other Island Societies with interests in local history. Graham mentioned "Roots". Shortly members of the Bembridge Society will be visiting us, and then we have a trip to Bembridge. Keep in touch for details.

Hope to see you at the next monthly meeting.

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