

VENTNOR AND DISTRICT LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY Newsletter 24 March 2014

MUSEUM PIECES

Margaret Lyndley arranged a meeting for the stewards in November after the Museum had closed for the season and many interesting issues were brought forward with views on the Museum's charging policy, camera phones and opening times to the fore.

It has been decided that for 2014 the concession rate for seniors to be removed, all adults paying the same rate of £1. 50. It was also decided that children under 16 be admitted free. The opening date for the Museum, usually mid May, be brought forward to Easter Saturday going through as usual to end of October but with restricted hours in October.

The use of mobile phone cameras has become an issue with some visitors taking photographs of our exhibit items for whatever reason. We will monitor this problem during the summer and see how prevalent this is.

A new carpet has been fitted to the office. The old one had become rather dangerous and threadbare. This, of course, entailed a good deal of moving boxes, files, cabinets etc. quite a lot of work, but it looks very nice – well worth doing.

This year's exhibition will have a transport theme, road, rail, steamers etc. Another screen will remember World War 1. Also, a screen will detail Ventnor people.

We are again looking for screen sponsors of £30. This has been a well supported policy over previous seasons, so if you would like to help us out by sponsoring a screen, please let me know.

We have recently had an advertising display in a panel at the front of Seasons shop in the High Street which operates as the local Tourist Information office. Recent storms wrecked this panel and so we shall have to wait for repairs before we can set this up again.
Graham.

DATE CHANGE – *The annual lunch at The Leconfield is now on December 5th – please can you alter on your Membership Cards?*

MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTIONS were due for renewal on January 1st (£7.50 cash or a cheque made out to Ventnor History Society). Numbers are keeping up well and at the time of writing we already have over 100 paid-up members. Renewals may be made at the Museum on a Saturday morning (10-12.30) or by sending to me, as Membership Secretary. 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 from the Museum.

FROM THE ARCHIVES - "X MARKS THE SPOT"

Graham writes: There are, as you are probably not surprised to hear, no Xs in our card index system. So this time we are going to have a look around the town featuring the location of some of our long-lost sights.

Let us start off with Drover's Nursery. At one time, Drover's had two shops in Pier Street, but their nurseries were in St. Boniface Road where the tennis courts are today and in Leeson Road. All home grown produce!

Many of our lost buildings were hotels.

The Globe Hotel (and the adjoining International Stores) were lost to a bombing raid in 1943. They were located on today's Central Car Park in the High Street immediately opposite the Market Street exit. Rayners Hotel, another victim of the war, was in Victoria Street facing down Albert Street. The site became Les Vanassche's garage and is now the Spar Store. The Montrose and Balmoral Hotels were sited next to each other at the western end of the Esplanade and were lost to land movement in 1960. The sites are now occupied by two modern cedar style houses opposite the Spyglass.

Who knows where Davy Jones' Locker was? The car park in Dudley Road used to be tennis courts, but below there on the grassy cliffs a small play area was laid out. This was Davy Jones' Locker and you can still see the humps in the grass where, amongst other things, a small windmill stood.

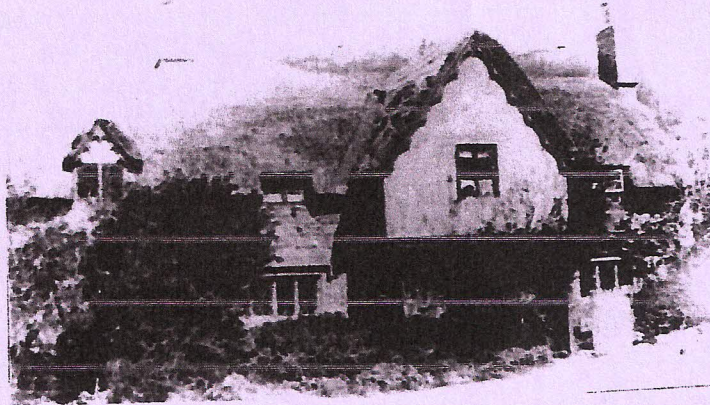
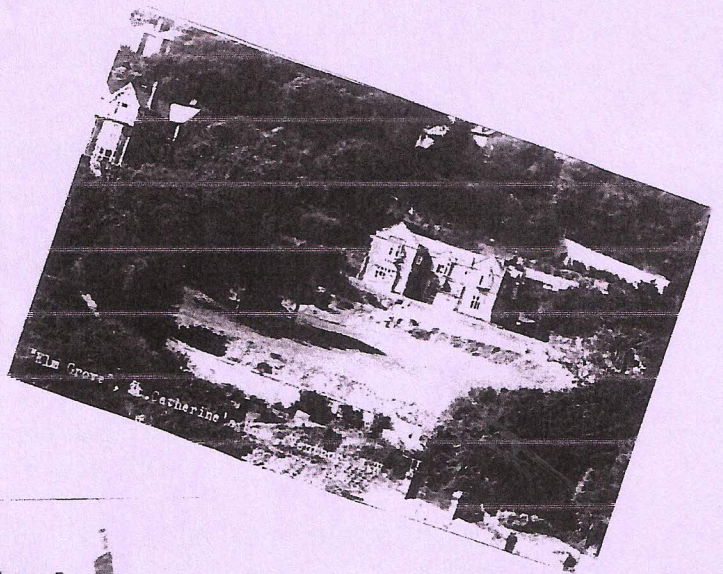
One of Ventnor's prime trading sites is the junction of High Street and Pier Street today occupied by the Co-op store. Until the early 1970s this was the location for Nash's car showroom.

Cook's Farm. Never heard of it? This was a rather ramshackle place where Zig Zag Rd and Park Avenue meet. Byrnhill Grove was built partly on the site and has smartened up this area considerably. Incidentally, on the corner here, a small sweet and tobacconist shop stood, called The Rendezvous.

One of Ventnor's finest Victorian villas, Elm Grove House, stood three quarters of the way up Grove Road on the left. Only the gateposts and the grounds are visible today. The house became part of St. Catherine's Home and fell to land movement in the early 1980s. In its heyday, the house, which had its own theatre, was the home to local concerts and it is said the grounds were beautifully illuminated with Chinese lanterns.

The town's police station was at one time in West Street, a few houses up from the High Street on the left. It was bombed during the war and the site now occupied by 1950s style council houses.

CONTRIBUTED ARTICLES – Please could we have some more input from members – it provides variety for our readers.

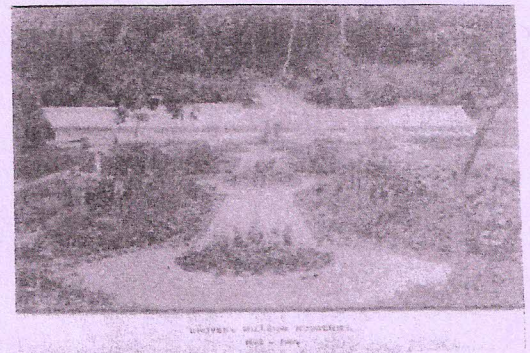


Globe Hotel
 Elm Grove
 Cook's Farm
 Drover's Nurseries
 Rayner's Hotel
 The Rendezvous
 (once Redan Villa)
 Nash's Garage

RAYNER'S TEMPERANCE HOTEL,
 VICTORIA STREET, VENTNOR.



GOOD COFFEE, DRAWING, PRIVATE SITTING, BED, SMOKING AND
 COMMERCIAL ROOMS.
 MODERATE TARIFF OR INCLUSIVE TERMS.



DECLARATION OF WAR

I have been reading Ventnor's reception of the news that war had been declared in August 1914. It was at the height of what was proving to be a singularly prosperous season, due no doubt to the statements made by responsible Ministers but a few weeks before particularly by Mr. Lloyd George that the country was in for a settled period of freedom from international complications.

"The news that war had been declared was received in Ventnor by the late Mr. James Corbould, who in the very early morning communicated it to many in Pier Street. Almost immediately afterwards, it was heard that the Government had taken over the railways, and the late arrival of the newspapers confirmed the town's fears.

Thereafter the town patriotically entered into all the affairs which the Great War entailed. It had good leaders in the Vicar, the Rev. R. W. Colquhoun, whose announcement at the Parish Church that Sir John Jellicoe had been appointed to command the British Fleet was rapturously received; and in Sir John's mother-in-law, Lady Cayzer, and Mrs. Daniel Watney, amongst many others.

Committees were quickly organised, allotments were acquired, the Council even went into a period of pig-keeping, food control was splendidly managed from the Country House; and all this more serious work was subsequently relieved by the humour very often associated with the military tribunals.

Later on, Ventnor nobly responded to the appeals for the lending of money for the purchase of war and other Government bonds and in this respect, the initiative of Mr. A. J. Sharpe, new then to public life, was invaluable. Another pleasant memory was the wonderfully generous response given to appeals made by the then Editor of the local paper for befriending prisoners of war and for other purposes.

All sorts of provisions and warm garments were sent to the continent and overseas, and an upstairs room of the *IW Mercury* office was devoted to the packing and dispatch of parcels, this work being kindly carried out by lady residents. A humorous recollection was that there was a tremendous demand for 'bulls' eyes,' and these were sent out in special tins. Indeed, sweetmeats of any description seemed to be as welcome at the front as cigarettes. Ventnor had no need to be ashamed of the part she played during those strenuous days."

UNUSUAL PROJECT

Owing to Health and Safety Regulations, many of the crosses in our Cemetery were laid down to save them falling. I have photographed many of these and identified them, where possible. Some were illegible and I resorted to the plan. Some had fallen flat earlier and larger flat stones had gone into the grass and inscriptions could not be seen. It has been a time consuming task, but one of great interest to me and I hope to others in the future. Many of the graves are in a sad and sorry state – some sinking badly. Whilst walking around I came across a grave of 10-year-old Adeliza Julia Van Berckelaer, who died in 1876. It sounded a fascinating story. A friend, Tim Woodhouse, helped me with this search. The parents were married in Europe, emigrated to Australia and Adeliza was born at St. Kitts, Victoria, as was her brother Eugene. She returned to England, presumably for health reasons, where her grandfather lived and on her death certificate it recorded the cause as tubercular meningitis. Members of her family later lived at Steyning in Sussex but so far I have been unable to trace them. A very sad tale.