

# VENTNOR AND DISTRICT LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER No. 3

September 2003

## "MUSEUM PIECES"

The Museum opened on May 10th and was well attended - about 40 visitors coming in to look around. The theme this year is property and architecture and called "From Cottage Door to Castle Gate." Ventnor in the snow entitled "Winter Wonderland" is another highlight and makes a nice change from the usual summery scenes of beach and Pier.

Our opening day's success was the only bit of good news we had, as two incursions of sewage caused many problems and I had to close the Museum on public health grounds for twelve days, a loss of business for us at a busy time and good press publicity wasted.

We appear to have a gremlin in our midst! Both the computer and the video player broke down, the Ventnor West model railway ran erratically and then stopped, and our old till jammed up and had to be partly dismantled. Help! What next?

Brenda has again worked wonders creating a cardboard Steephill Castle for our window display.

A very elegant photograph of Mr. A.J. Sharpe is now on permanent display, as, of course, our Museum was his furniture shop for many years.

I am not too happy with the state of the Grove Road windows. Unfortunately, it is a huge job accessing them and needs about four strong men to lift out the window boards. However, Brenda has made some new curtains which improves the presentation.

Some of you may recall the three old street name-plates we acquired. These have now been professionally rust-treated and painted in black and white - they look very smart indeed.

The Museum was "on the road" in June - we took our displays to Exhibitions at Bembridge and Sandown.

We now have a piece of Niton rock. Actually, it came from the exterior walls of "Beauchamp House" which has now been demolished. A sad end to 200 years of history.

Finally, with thanks to Ernest, we have acquired his fine collection of old Island books.- Graham

## From the Archives - "C" is for the Chalet Hotel

*The Chalet Hotel must be one of the most photographed buildings in the Isle of Wight. There it stands, with its Italianate architecture and its tower with the clock gazing back at us as we marvel at the view over the Cascade Gardens to Ventnor Bay. What though of its past?*

*It was probably built about 1848. In 1846 the Rev. Shutte held a lease on the land from John Hambrough, it being a condition that a dwelling was built on the land within twelve months. It was named "St. Augustine's" and was a private house. Later it was sometimes referred to as "The Clock House."*

*In 1908 it was advertised for sale as "suitable for a first-class Temperance Hotel or Boarding Establishment."*

*A description of "St. Augustine's" in 1913, by now a hotel, tells us that "it is a really grand place, its position the finest, standing on a hill in its own grounds." The author's room "was quite large and had a verandah. We could see the steamers coming into the Pier." The charge for a double room was £3.10s, breakfast 2s, luncheon 2s., afternoon tea 9d. and dinner 2s.6d. Electric light in the bedroom 1s. per week, hot water bottles 1d. per night. The description continues by stating that the hotel was owned by an Irish family and that staying there were nineteen people from seven different nationalities.*

*In 1917 a Mr. Evans purchased the property. It appears its name was changed to "The Chalet" then, as we have correspondence referring to it under both names.*

*Prior to the Second World War it was empty for some considerable time, but in 1947 Mr. J. E. Thomas became the owner and carried out extensive improvements.*

*A 1960 guide book advertises it as having "Excellent catering and a liberal table!" Terms - six and a half-nine guineas.*

*In 2001 the clock was restored to the tower. Earlier this year the hotel was, regrettably, renamed the "Harbour View Hotel." - Graham*

## WHAT'S NEW AT THE MUSEUM?

Since the last Newsletter, the Trustees have accepted many more items, including some pictures of Morben House School, Park Avenue; part of Knight's Red Book 1908; photos of Bonchurch Village Road and Post Office 1934, the Pier and Eastern Esplanade c1890; a Book of Prayers used on the wards of the Royal National Hospital, and a particularly rare donation - a copy of the request to hold divine worship at Seaweed Cottage, Spring Hill, dated 1837.

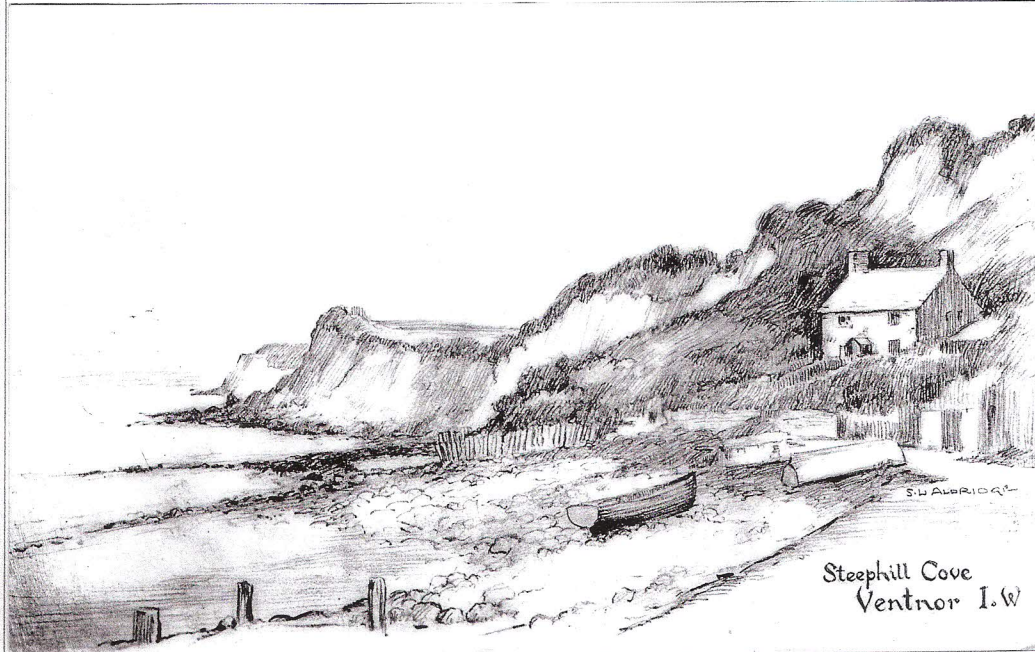
We have selected some items for conservation this year and estimates are awaited. This is a really costly exercise but well worthwhile to preserve Ventnor's past.

October 31st Meeting  
"A MIXED BAG"  
Andy Butler



**PLEASE COME AND JOIN US!**

We have had four events during the Summer. The first was a visit to Bembridge to meet members of their local History Society. We had a guided tour around part of Bembridge, returned for refreshments and a look at their Exhibition. A lunch at Hill House, Spring Hill was enjoyed very much. On July 10th we visited Newclose Farm by kind permission of Brian Gardener. It was a wonderful place to be - lovely views and good company - and a delicious tea! On August 20th we had a walkabout in Whitwell. It was a very happy event concluding at The White Horse for lunch. I hope to arrange a visit to the Havenstreet Railway in October. The Society's lunch is on November 28th - venue to be decided. - Brenda.



**STANLEY ALDRIDGE**

This is another of the many cards produced by Stanley Aldridge. This one looks at Steephill Cove, a very peaceful interpretation, with the cliffs in the distance. At the slide show in July, several different cards were seen by the audience.

**WHAT AN AMAZING LIFE!**

I have been kept busy since the last newsletter with enquiries about all sorts of subjects. A recent one was about John Jolliffe, who was born in Shanklin but lived the latter part of his life at "Thorncliffe," Niton (later Graytiles). The Jolliffe family is one of the most prolific on the Island but uncovering the story of John's life was amazing. I spent considerable time at the Records Office in Newport and found that he died in 1891. His life "unfolded" whilst I copied out his obituary. In 1845 he obtained a commission as Acting Surgeon RN, went to the East Indies and then to Borneo where he was present at several engagements with pirates. In 1847 he was engaged in attacking a formidable slave establishment in Mozambique. For his services he received Admiralty thanks and promotion to the rank of full surgeon. The next five years he passed on "HMS Pandora", mainly in New Zealand, surveying the coasts and harbours and exploring rivers and estuaries. Collections in Natural History, such as botany, zoology, conchology etc. were under his direction and made chiefly by him. He then went to North America, the West Indies, Central America, Brazil and South American Stations as far south as the Falkland Islands and Cape Horn. His active life was prematurely closed by malaria poisoning contracted in South America. He was confined in a state of great debility to Haslar Hospital for over a year when he was invalided out of active service. The last 12 years of his life were spent in doing deeds of kindness to all who came across his path at Niton and that is where he is buried. One lovely afternoon I walked around the churchyard and was pleased to locate his gravestone and photograph it for my "client" What an amazing life! - Fay

**SPRING HILL**

One of the street name-plates referred to by Graham on the front page

Many times this year the Museum has taken on the role of an unofficial Tourist Information Centre. We are, of course, pleased to answer visitors' questions but hope that by next year the TIC will be in a more accessible place.

*Have you seen  
this year's  
EXHIBITION  
at the  
Heritage Museum  
We would like  
to see you  
looking round.*

**NEXT NEWS-LETTER**  
March  
2004