

♦ VENTNOR AND DISTRICT LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY ♦

Issue 5

September 2004

The Museum opened for the season on May 15th, only three days after the decorators left - a close call. Of course, it was not supposed to be like that; all work should have been completed by the end of April. Anyway, the new Exhibition got off to a good start, our M.P. Andrew Turner officially opening the proceedings. About sixty visitors came in during the day - a pity it was free entry!

At great cost we now have a ramp for wheelchairs. Unfortunately, no-one has used it yet!

Usually our pleas for help fall on deaf ears, but this time we must have 'got through' as six new stewards have joined us. In addition one of our members comes in regularly and applies a duster. Great work!

The flower containers in front of the Museum were not filled this year by the usual agency, so late in the season (July) Fred and Olive Waterhouse kindly supplied plants from their own garden with excellent results.

Our Curatorial Adviser, Rachel Silverson, from the IW Council's Museum Service, paid a visit in August.

MUSEUM PIECES by Graham

She was pleased with our efforts, was impressed with our filing system and was very complimentary about the exterior decoration and window display. Whilst on the subject of the window, many thanks to Jo Pratt for stepping in with her lighthouse model, etc.

We have received a very large number of old photographs, mainly depicting Carnivals over fifty years ago. We intend to display those which we have not already identified when the current Exhibition closes, probably in November, in an attempt to identify more of the people featured. Watch the local press for details.

Now that we have the computer database complete, we are able to produce a catalogue of our collection. This has just been completed by Mrs. Gwen Reed. It is available for anyone to look through, but I warn you, it is a considerable volume of some 700 pages!

We have asked our visitors to complete a simple survey form, asking where they come from and how they found out about us. This will help to direct our advertising next year. Data from the survey will be available soon.

Stop Press - We have now sold 1000 videos!

That's all for now!

From the Archives - E is for ELM GROVE

Ventnor and the Undercliff contain many fine Victorian villas. Indeed it is one of the delights of the area. "Elm Grove" at the top of Grove Road was a classic example.

The exact date it was built is not known but it was probably in the late 1830s. It was of local stone construction in the Tudor style, well sheltered to the rear by cliffs and trees, with extensive views to the South over sloping terraced gardens.

In 1849 Albert Hambrough, eldest son of John Hambrough of Steephill Castle, was in residence. Its finest years, however, came with the Olive family who lived there for 50 years from 1870. About 1890 a 52 ft. music room/theatre was constructed, complete with stage, footlights etc. Grand balls and garden fetes were held in the grounds, which were illuminated with thousands of Chinese lanterns. In July 1890 a "Grand Fete and Fancy Fair" was held which included a Fine Art Exhibition, a Rose Dance by children, gipsy tents and a 'Cafe Chantant' where songs and recitations took place. In the evening W.S. Gilbert's play "Broken Hearts" was performed in the theatre, scenery by Walter Spindler. Entrance ticket 4/-.

In 1920 the house had 10 bedrooms, smoking lounge, library, stabling and a vinery, set in 5 acres of grounds. It was sold to St. Catherine's Home in 1922.

In May 1981, the Mother Superior stated at a public inquiry that the building was "full of cracks, riddled with dry rot and a danger to the Home's children." the cost of repairs was put at £165,000. Unfortunately, it was not thought worth such a sum and in 1982 this well-known listed building was pulled down. What a shame! The site can still be seen by looking over the wall near the top of Grove Road.

Graham.

A UNIQUE MODEL

Please come and see the beautifully restored model of a pair of the original RNH 'cottages' now displayed at the Museum. After many letters to conservators, I contacted several colleges and Corinne Hillman of the Camberwell College of Art showed a keen interest and visited the Museum to consult with Graham and me last November. She was very intrigued and took it back to be used as a project by one of her students, Georgina Whiteley, for her Final Project.

Georgina gave us regular progress reports and after the model had been exhibited in London, it was returned to us in pristine condition. The roof of the model and the floors beneath are constructed so that they can be lifted off and minute details of each room, corridor and stairway can be seen. Only payment for the materials and carriers' costs were involved. The Trustees and the Executive Committee are very grateful to Corinne and Georgina, who incidentally, obtained a First. Congratulations to her!

Fay

EVENTS

As Brenda has been poorly for some months, she has been unable to organise events through the Summer. However, several members and friends really enjoyed a visit to New Close Farm, near Carisbrooke by kind invitation of Mr. Brian Gardener. It was a lovely afternoon. The Society's lunch is on November 26th - venue to be decided. We have very much missed Brenda at the Museum and at our meetings this year.

Several members
have died since the
March Newsletter.
We shall miss their
interest in the
Society.

THE NEXT
NEWSLETTER
will be published
in
March 2005

RESEARCH QUERIES continually come to us at the Museum, sometimes by visitors looking round and many by post. I also get callers at home, on the telephone and at the door! As usual, I have been kept busy looking things up and then adding information from my files at home. Recent queries have included those about the Landship, Alexandra Parade, H.de Vere Staquoile, the Royal Marine Hotel, Thurgood's shop, steps in the area, Henry Ives and William H. Tomkins.

William was the Editor of the 'Isle of Wight Express,' a description of which can be found in the advertisement on this page. In the 1871 Census he was a master printer, employing two men and three boys; by 1881 he was employing four men and five boys. A November 1870 edition had its front page entirely devoted to advertisements. G. Jackman of Mill Street (now Pier Street) had recently acquired a 'patent funeral carriage' - so to answer the purpose of a hearse and mourning carriage in one. This had long been needed by the public in this neighbourhood, it recorded. On the lighter side families were recommended to use "Elephant Starch, which does not require boiling," and "obtain more light for less money" by using a patent gas burner. Advertisers included Knight and Son, Scott, H.G. Field, H. Tucker, Mark Norman (whose diaries form part of "Old Men Remember"), R. Medley and J. Fowler. The Undercliff Cricket Club announced as their President the Hon. Evelyn Anderson Pellam, and patrons as Lord Monson, D.A. Hambrough, Gen. Sir. J. Cheape, GCB, Capt. Newall, T.L. Popham, J. B. Martin, H. Ingalton and the Hon. R. Baillie Hamilton. At a different time, the IW Express" office was at 99 High Street and in 1881 plans were passed for a stable at the rear of these premises for Mr. Tomkins.

I receive some delightful letters of appreciation from many of the people for whom I do research which makes the work, although very time-consuming, so worthwhile - and I really enjoy it. Financially too it is very rewarding for the Society, to whom I give any donations - well over £200 this year to date.

Fay

WHAT'S NEW AT THE MUSEUM?

Since the last Newsletter, the Trustees have accepted many more items, including a cup, saucer and plate decorated with a very old picture of the Esplanade, various postcards, a plan of Old Park Estate, Theodore Saunders' document containing costings for the proposed 1912 Inclined Lift; interesting memorabilia (mainly 1939-45 War items) relating to Miss Nessie Drover, who died in March and items collected by the Harding family, including many posters and programmes c1900. We also purchased a teapot (minus lid but nevertheless very collectable) - there is a picture of thatched Rose Cottage, High Street on the side (demolished 1932) to make way for the SEB Showrooms. These are only a few of the items accepted by the Trustees in the last three months.

We have selected some items for conservation this year. This is a really costly exercise but well worthwhile to preserve Ventnor's past. We are grateful to the Town Council for a regular grant of £100-£200 each year which goes toward conservation.

Strangers on a Bus!

A chance meeting between Graham and a young lady from New York on a bus from Shanklin resulted in an intriguing afternoon.

The lady had come to try and find the home where her great-great-grandfather had been born in 1888. She produced a faded photograph of a building in Church Street which is now Careless and Kemp, Solicitors (then the Capital and Counties Bank and later Lloyd's Bank). They went inside and explaining the situation to the receptionist, Graham's new found American friend happily took photographs inside and out.

After a brief tour around Ventnor, they retired to the Museum where a phone call to Fay, who knew all about the family's history, made her day complete. She was overjoyed and loved our town and its scenery, and had realised a long held ambition to come here. A fortunate meeting indeed!

The Isle of Wight Express,

A FULL-SIZED 8-PAGE

FAMILY NEWSPAPER,

AND

Visitors' Directory,

PUBLISHED EVERY SATURDAY MORNING,

PRICE 2d.

W. H. Tomkins, Proprietor.

"The Express" contains

THE LOCAL AND DISTRICT NEWS;

A SUMMARY OF

GENERAL INTELLIGENCE;

TIME TABLES;

A List of Visitors, &c., &c.

PUBLISHING OFFICE,

116, HIGH STREET, VENTNOR

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

October 29th Meeting
"Recollections of a
Wroxall Lad" -
Maurice Leppard

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