

V ENTNOR AND DISTRICT LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER No. 6

March 2005

MUSEUM PIECES

A special exhibition of photographs from 1950s' Carnivals was held in November. On most days old Ventnorians could be seen reminiscing about when they were "nippers." It was a most enjoyable few days and on occasion the Museum resembled a Social Club with memories recalled and personalities identified.

On Christmas Eve we had one of our large Museum windows broken - the cost of replacement and boarding up was £1,220. We have for a long time wanted to improve our window displays in Grove Road but it was a considerable problem gaining access. However, this has now been completed, and I think, looks very attractive. Let us hope it does not encourage further attention from passing hooligans.

The protracted saga of our roof canopy continues. Estimates for this seemingly simple job have taken for ever to obtain, but hopefully action is on the horizon.

The new librarian at Ventnor Library asked if we would be interested in providing materials for a permanent display advertising the Museum. Of course, we agreed. This is now up and, hopefully, proving of interest.

The Ventnor UDC branding irons used on Council benches and deckchairs were recently donated to us. They are quite heavy and very unusual. We certainly get a varied assortment of items for the archives.

The History Society is 25 years old and the Museum building 100 years old this year. I intend to commemorate both these events with a suitable display. The main Exhibition will feature the years 1945-1975. A third new presentation will take a look at old guide books. To tie in with this theme our new booklet, due out in May, also features these interesting "pages from the past." Our Summer Exhibition opens on Saturday, May 14th.

Graham.

FROM THE ARCHIVES

F is for "FOUNTAIN COTTAGE," BONCHURCH

Many of us have admired the charming "Fountain Cottage" on the road to Bonchurch, although set amid its many trees they do tend to hide the house from view. The cottage was built about 1830 as the Gardener's Cottage to "The Maples," the large house up Maples Drive, now in flats.

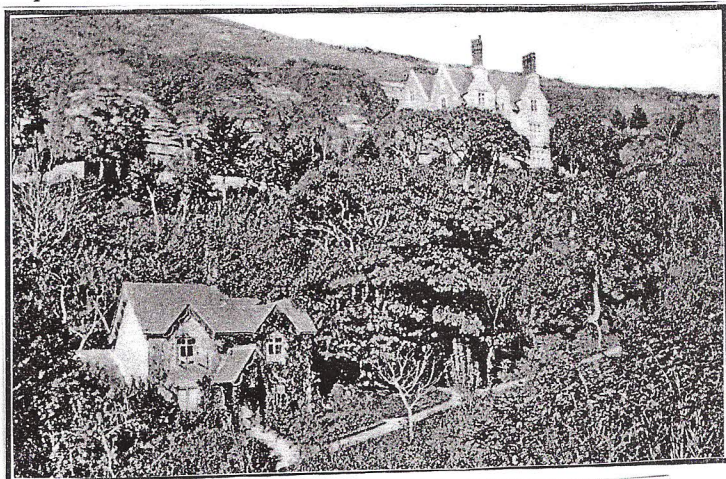
Dr. Leeson, after whom Leeson Road is named, owned "The Maples" and at the time of his death in 1874 his estate encompassed "Pulpit Rock," "Brookside" and the now long-gone "St. Boniface House." The Gardener's Cottage is described at this time as being built of stone with a tiled roof, rustic porch, projecting eaves and the walls covered with climbing roses and ivy. It contained two rooms below and bedrooms above. In front was a vegetable garden and orchard.

"Fountain Cottage" and garden were part of an estate which extended to about eight acres. The cottage was enlarged in the 1930s. It was then operating as a small market garden. The top tier of the garden is called "The Glade." Lower down is the famous fountain and pond, still today a magical place, and in Victorian times was a favourite with artists and visitors.

When "The Maples" estate was put up for sale in 1874, the Particulars of Sale delightfully described the area as having caves, waterfalls, ponds, paths, rare trees, and of course, the fountain.

To end, I quote from the Sale Particulars relating to "Fountain Cottage" ... "descending from "The Maples" lawn by a flight of stone and winding steps, we find the Gardener's Cottage, near which is a piece of flat grass in which is a rock basin with stone vase and fountain, and close hereto is a steep bank over which a waterfall cuts down into the rock"

Bonchurch was indeed a remarkable place.
Graham.



Old postcard by Briddon of Ventnor

EVENTS

We have very much missed Brenda over the last 12 months or so, at our meetings, in the Museum and for organising outings. Fay arranged the annual meal in November which was held at The Cricketers' Rest and proved very successful. Thirty-six attended and there was a reserve list. It was not anticipated that there would be as many as this wishing to come or we could have had a buffet meal. As a sit-down meal had already been arranged and choices selected, we could not make alterations at the last minute, unfortunately.

THE TRUSTEES have been busy looking through many items which have been donated to the Museum. Since September these have included various postcards of different eras, July 25th 1913 Isle of Wight Mercury, a photograph of Booth's outing in the 1920s, photograph albums, Ordnance Survey Maps, bits and pieces found when the Clarendon Press building was demolished, amongst which was a ticket to an Annual Picnic 1886 with details of the arrangements and destinations, a set of 35 coloured photos of churches, architecture and street scenes, a framed embroidery of the Hole in the Wall and a collection of photocopies relating to the Pearson family.

Regularly accepted into the archives are photos, taken by Fay, of demolition and building work, and other continual changes in the town. These may seem 'modern' now, but will not be in a few years time!!

Members much enjoyed the January and February meetings with Dr. Robin McInnes and Mr. Derek Sprake. Attendances are excellent recently.

THE NEXT NEWSLETTER will be published in September 2005

Several friends have died since the September Newsletter. We shall miss their interest in the Society, particularly Nell Chambers and Dave Stotesbury, long-standing members.



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

CONSERVATION

The Trustees continued their policy of sending items for conservation each year, with the agreement of the Executive Committee, and the Conservator has recently returned last year's selection, including several rare local books, photographs, plans and auction catalogues (e.g Ventnor Harbour Co, "Westfield" and "The Maples") and postcards. The Trustees feel that because some items are in a delapidated state, if they are not repaired professionally, they will not last for future generations to see. The cost was £1574, inc. VAT, - and by her request, the donations given by Fay to the Society for her research work, slide shows and stalls at Fetes and Fairs, was put towards conservation expenses.

2005 SUBSCRIPTIONS

The yearly subscription (£5) may be paid at the Museum on Saturday mornings, at monthly meetings or by post to the Museum, 11 Spring Hill, Ventnor, PO38 1PE.

WE PRESERVE LOCAL HISTORY

Please do not throw away any old photos, books or papers concerning Ventnor and district. Bring them to the Museum and they can be kept for the next generation and the next and the next

INTEREST in Ventnor's history and its inhabitants is continuous and I have once again replied to many queries since the last Newsletter. These have included the following topics: Huish Terrace, Belle Vue, Convalescent Homes, Oxford Terrace, Coastguards, Gandhi, Dr. Leeson, Hazelbrae, Martin's Garage, Britannia, Wroxall Bacon Factory and St. John's Church, Wroxall.

The advertisement below, which is taken from my own files, is for the hotel where Gandhi stayed when he visited Ventnor on at least two occasions. At the time Gandhi was a law student in London, and chose the hotel (proprietor - Mr. E. Dolby Shelton) because it offered a vegetarian diet. The reputed purpose of his visits was to see Sir Lawrence Peel, who lived at Under Rock, Bonchurch, to discuss independence for India. Sir Lawrence was then Chief Justice, Calcutta. Gandhi gave a lecture to the vegetarian society meeting at the Friendly Society Hall. In his autobiography, Gandhi mentions a brief infatuation with Shelton's daughter! Edward Shelton was a journalist and teacher of shorthand and at one time worked for the IW Express in Ventnor. - Fay



SHELTON'S

Vegetarian Establishment

OSBORNE HOUSE,

MADEIRA ROAD, VENTNOR.

Large and Lofty Rooms. Bath Room.

Extensive Sea Views.

Good Accommodation for Cyclists.

Table d'Hote Daily at ONE o'clock.

1890

Next meeting on April 29th will be "The Twelve Curiosities of the Isle of Wight" with Don Margham