

# VENTNOR AND DISTRICT LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER No. 7

September 2005

**MUSEUM PIECES.** There is always a lot to do getting a new exhibition up and running. We are usually ready in good time, but there are always last minute things to do. Came May 14th and a wet and breezy morning did not help my attempts at putting out the welcoming flags, but completed just in time as everything happened at once. The IW County Press turned up to do an interview, Ventnor's Mayor Doug. Nettleton, had to be welcomed, Derek Poole, President of the Sandown Historical Society arrived to officially open the show, a crumpled speech hurriedly extracted from a pocket, and we were launched. Despite the rain, or perhaps because of it, sixty souls sought shelter from the elements and seemed to enjoy the Museum. Well, it was free entry!

The Museum has received some additional publicity recently in Robin McInnes' new book "50 Years Along the Undercliff," and, thanks to member Derek Jacobs, a feature article in the excellent "Ventnor" magazine.

We are trying to encourage counter sales, and with this goal in mind, we are now stocking some of Francis Frith's excellent local history titles, plus "Shipwrecks of the IW" and Adrian Searle's "Walking IW History," all super publications ideal for presents, or for your own reading.

The Museum is at last on the Internet, our Web address is: [www.ventnorheritage.org.uk](http://www.ventnorheritage.org.uk) Give it a look!

This year we have altered our opening hours. We are now closed on Mondays but open Tuesdays to Fridays 10 a.m. to 4.30 p.m. including lunch-time. This has proved a successful move. I was always unhappy about asking our visitors to leave because it was 12.30 p.m. closing time. Now, thanks to our stewards' participation, lunch-time is covered and on most days the public have taken advantage of these extended hours. Saturdays remain 10 a.m. - 12.30 p.m.

So, no time for lunch - it's back to work. - Graham.

## FROM THE ARCHIVES.

## G is for GILLS CLIFF

In 1585 two religious martyrs were returned to Ventnor from Winchester Prison to be hanged here. It seems unlikely, but if it did happen then they were probably executed on the Gallows Cliff, or as we know it today - Gills Cliff. Early names for this area were Gils and Gallows.

On many old views of Ventnor, the imposing Park View Villas in Upper Gills Cliff are to be seen. Their leases ran from 1871 so presumably they date from around this time. At that time no other properties were located in this part of the town so they were a prominent feature.

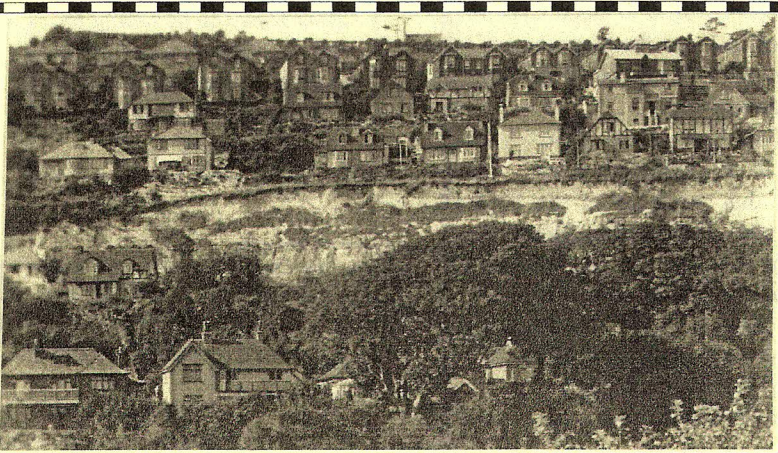
The Gills Cliff was part of the Hambrough Estate and in 1925 sixty-four building plots were available.

The road had been called Gills Cliff for many years, but in 1927 the Council debated what to call the roads. Park View and Quarry were favourites, then Gills Cliff for the Upper and Quarry for the Lower, but they then decided to retain the status quo and Gills Cliff for both roads was adopted.

There had been a quarry in the lower road for many years and in 1923 the Tar Macadam Co. was located there in eight and a half acres adjacent to St. Alban's Steps. This project did not last long. As it was a considerable eyesore and complaints of white dust were widespread, maybe this was just as well. In June 1926 the Company could not continue in business and was wound up in December 1927. The firm employed about 50 men, and at the ensuing sale several pieces of nearly new plant, including the crushing machines, a cement block-making machine and a stone cutter were sold.

In 1953 evidence of Belgic occupation was found in an archaeological dig, including plates and beakers. The site was near Pine Point and was dated to AD10-AD43. Also found was part of an iron age brooch. - Graham.

(Some items above were included in research carried out by Fay for a Museum enquiry)



You will find a page from the Ventnor Tar Macadam Company's Sale Brochure later in the Newsletter, together with photos relevant to various articles.

*THE TRUSTEES have held meetings regularly sifting through all the artefacts which still continue to be given to the Museum. It is exciting because we never know what interesting items are going to turn up next!*



## CONFESSIONS OF A MUSEUM STEWARD

by Derek Jacobs

"Eee lad, it's a champion place ther've got here, it is your'n?"

It was my Tuesday morning to be a steward at the Museum. A couple had come in to look around. Holidaymakers, so they told me, down from Yorkshire. The remark had been made by the man. I told him that the room in which we stood, and its contents, were not "my'n," but later in the morning I began to think. During the few hours of stewarding, the Museum really did become yours, to choose to do whatever you wanted. You could walk around the display boards with an almost proprietorial air. If there were no visitors, you could choose whether you played the video or not. (At quiet times, Shaw Taylor is good company). You could play with the trains. When I was young I always wanted an electric train set. Now I had two. If you felt like it, you could sweep the pavement and exchange greetings to passers-by. Or you could just stand in the Museum's doorway, looking up Spring Hill, or down to admire the facade of the old Island Furnishers shop!

But by far the best time of all, when you are a steward, is when your customers come in. There we are using the "y" word again. Some are holiday makers familiar to the area, or making their first visit. Some live, or have lived here. Some have or have had parents or grandparents who lived here. Some have come here from the other side of the world. As a steward you are very pleased to see them. If they didn't come, you would have a very boring morning. So you put on the video. Tell them the harp playing the musical introduction doesn't mean they've gone to heaven. Very corny, but it usually creates a smile. Leave them to walk round for a while before asking if there is anything of particular interest. And that's when they will ask their questions. Some of these can be dealt with straight away, with the help of the Museum's own reference system, or if more complex, referred to Fay. As a steward dealing with a question, nothing can be more rewarding than to be able to find the answer.

As your customers leave, hopefully carrying a copy of the video, or a pamphlet of two, you ask them to sign the

visitors' book and complete the questionnaire, although you've known for some time where they come from. Surprising how well you can get to know each other in such a short time. A few more words and off they go. Thank them for coming and ask them to come again. You look to see what they've written. Hope they mean it. Sure they do. Then it's time to hand over to another steward, and the Museum isn't yours any more. Well, not until your next stewarding day.

As our Yorkshire friend said, the Museum is a champion place. The credit for that must go to the hard-working and dedicated people who have made it so for the past 25 years and continue to do so today. And if I can help them a little, by enjoying being a Museum steward for a few hours, then I'm well pleased.

*(Derek is in his second season as a Museum steward)*

Don Rugg and Graham looking at the screen advertising the Exhibition's Sponsors - the Spyglass Inn and the Mill Bay



Have you visited the 2005 Exhibition yet? It is not to be missed! So do come along to the Museum soon.



Next meeting on October 28th is "Box in the Attic" - a light-hearted look at days gone by. Speakers are Hilary Lloyd and Christine Broom.

In April, Don Margham was poorly and unable to come to talk to us - this has been re-arranged for next year. Colin Elvers kindly substituted, with Fay assisting. In May John Lea told us about the IW Post Services. In June David and Andy Butler described the Coastguard Service and Graham and Fay showed slides - "Backwards and Forwards" in July.

2005 seems to be racing by and we only have one more meeting. In November we are having a lunch at The Cricketers' Rest

Hope to see you at the next monthly meeting.

THE NEXT NEWSLETTER will be published in March 2006



### POSTAL RESEARCH WORK

Looking through the Museum archives and then going home and delving through my files at home is a regular weekend (and sometimes weekday) task for me and I thoroughly enjoy it.

Some years ago I helped a member of the Tarleton family, whose relation Robert Alfred Tarleton, had, with a silver trowel, laid the foundation stone for the enlargement of the Congregational Church in 1872. She happened to mention that the trowel was in the possession of another relative in South Africa and I asked if it was possible to obtain a picture. This duly arrived and is now in the Museum, and there is a picture in this Newsletter.

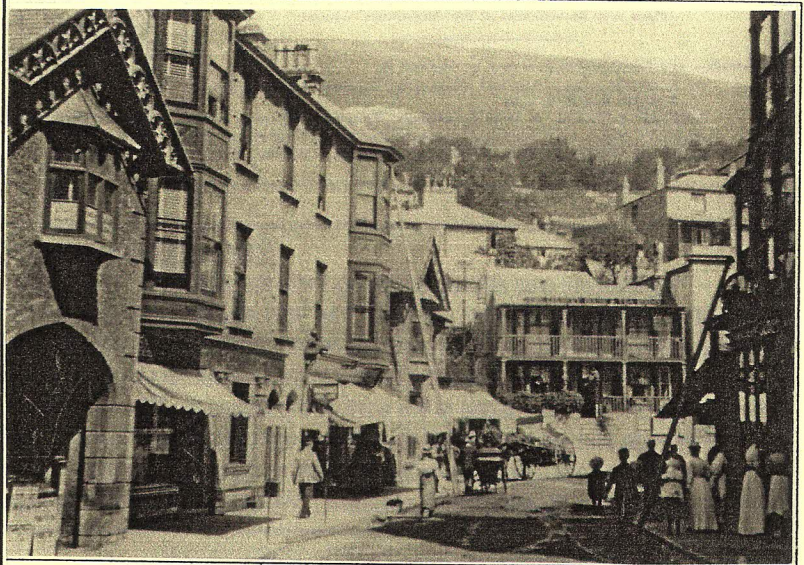
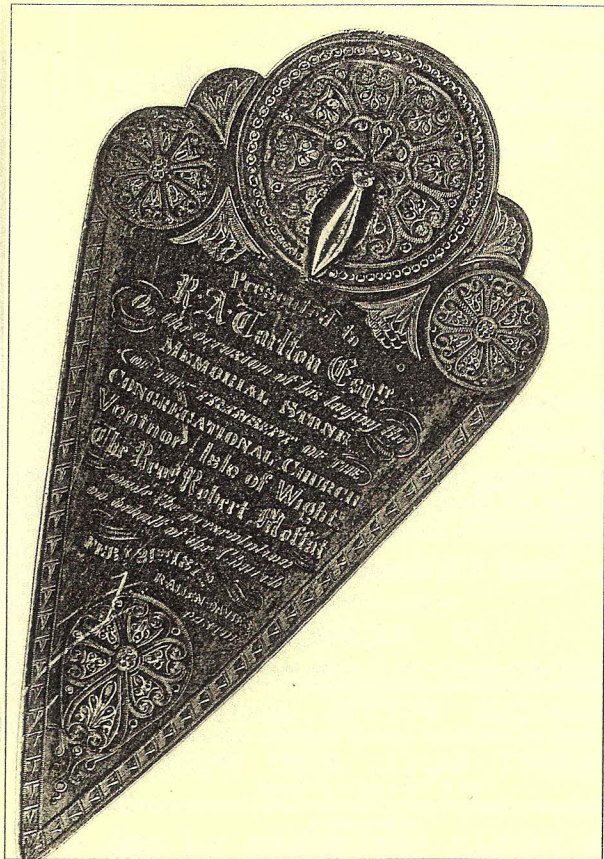
Another enquirer wanted photographs of Steephilldown Terrace and May Cottage, Pound Lane because her grandparents had lived there in the early 1900s. Fortunately I had both amongst my photo collection, and sent them to her together with street lists showing her grandparents' names. I quote from her reply which is typical of the many letters I receive. It is most rewarding. "Dear Fay - I really cannot thank you enough for the photos and extracts from your records. It has been such a thrill for me, and very moving, to be able to find out more about my grandmother and her family. You have given me such a gift....."

Some of the other queries which I have answered in the last few months have included one from Mr. H.J. Hoey, whose grandfather I found was Secretary of the Undercliff Cricket Club in the early 1880s. He suggested that to afford relief to a large number of men out of work at that time, they should help make a new cricket ground at Steephill. Mr. Hoey, who was also connected to the Corbould family, lived at Wollescote Lodge, Spring Hill and left Ventnor in 1886. H.J. Hoey is mentioned in "Over 105 Not Out," recently published by Ventnor Cricket Club, on sale at the Museum.

Plans and sale brochures from the Museum are invaluable in research. Together with photos, street lists, and adverts. from home, I made up a large package for Tony Bishop of Bristol, whose wife is the great, great, great grand-daughter of Clement Dear, a prominent businessman in the 19th Century with grocer's and butcher's shops at 5, 7 and 8 High Street. Clement was one of the Commissioners for Improving Ventnor in 1844.

Since I started documenting Ventnor's history some 50 years ago, taking it up again in the early 1980s, I have learnt so many names of former Ventnorians and it is a thrill to write or talk to their relatives, many of whom I have met at their request. Often we walk in the Cemetery or the Parish Churchyard where I can point out their family graves.

These are only just a few of nearly 50 enquiries since the end of March. Donations for my work so far this year have totalled about £280 for our funds. - Fay



Clement Dear's shops were next to the Medical Hall (Boots) and opposite (part of Paper Lines)

The flowers outside the Museum, kindly given to us by Fred and Olive Waterhouse look lovely - all the time.

**Attendance at our monthly meetings now averages around fifty which is excellent and very encouraging.**

We were saddened by the death of Mrs. Peggy Stagg, a former Treasurer

### OUTING TO NEWCLOSE FARM

This was very much enjoyed by the few members who took advantage of Brian Gardener's hospitality on a lovely afternoon in June. We were delighted that Brenda was able to join us. After walking around the extensive grounds, and having a ride in the Landrover to see the deer, tea was much enjoyed on the patio. Brian has invited us again next year - please do try and come.



VEN 74011  
Re The Isle of Wight Tar Macadam Co., Ltd.  
In Voluntary Liquidation under supervision.

## VENTNOR, ISLE OF WIGHT.

Particulars and Conditions of Sale  
together with a  
CATALOGUE  
of the  
**TAR MACADAM  
SITE AND PLANT**

including  
Important Freehold Building Sites,  
Valuable Modern Machinery, &c.,

2 Ruston Hornsby 34½-h.p. Diesel Engines, No. 2 Ransome Mixing  
Plant, 2 Crushing Machines, 3 320-gallon Tar Pots, Tar Pump,  
Screener with Elevator, 2 Cement-Block Making Machines, Steel  
Girders, Galvanised Iron Sheets and Tanks, Sundry Small Tools,  
Large New Safe by Withers, 5ft. Oak Roll-Top Desk, &c., &c.,

The Concrete Steel Girdered Factory with Corrugated Roof.

the total area being about

**9 ACRES,**

which will be offered for Sale by Auction, in one or more lots, by

**FRANCIS PITTIS AND SON**  
(Arthur H. Dockrill and Arthur D. Dockrill) in conjunction with  
**ALBERT BULL AND PORTER**  
(C. F. Baker and C. H. Dodds)

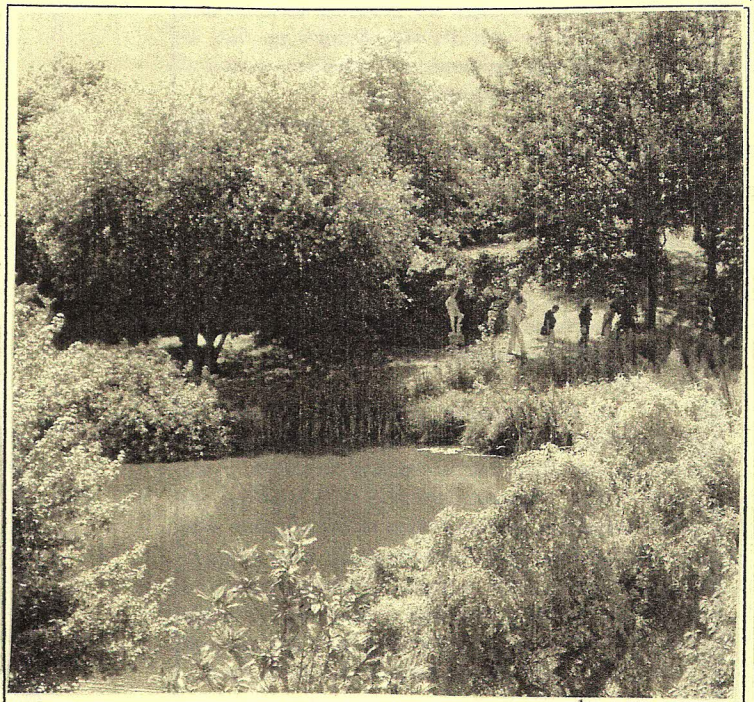
on the premises,  
**ON FRIDAY SEPTEMBER 3rd, 1926,**  
at 2 o'clock precisely.

Plans may be inspected at the Auctioneers' Offices.

Particulars and Conditions of Sale may be obtained of

A. E. HOOK, Esq., Chartered Accountant, Receiver and Liquidator,  
Newport and Ryde; of  
MESSRS. BUCKELL & DREW, Solicitors, Newport and Ventnor; of  
ALBERT BULL & PORTER, Auctioneers, Shanklin & Ventnor; or of  
FRANCIS PITTIS & SON, Auctioneers, Newport, Shanklin, Ryde,  
and Ventnor.

## OUTING TO NEWCLOSE FARM



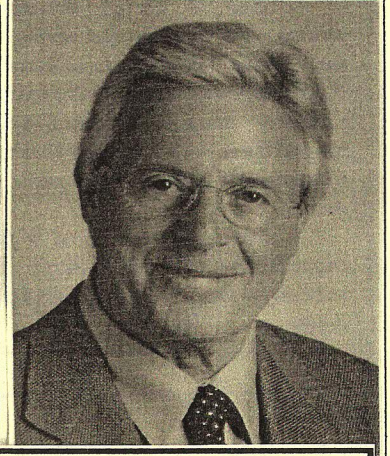
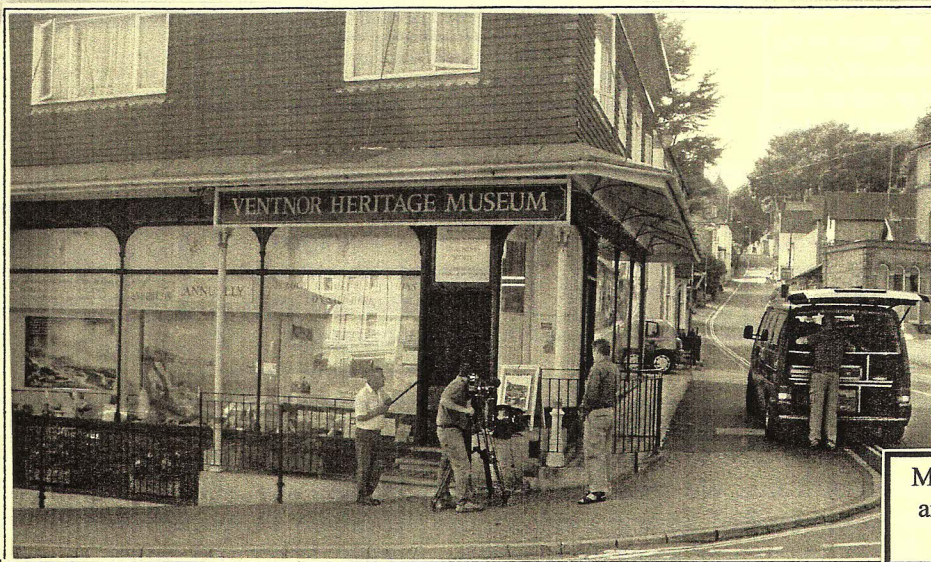
2006

*The programme for next year has been  
arranged. Annual subscriptions (£5) will be  
due in January. Membership in 2005 was the  
highest for a long time..*

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

## THE ANTIQUES ROADSHOW

The Museum was actively concerned with the making of "The Antiques Roadshow" at Ventnor earlier this month. A few weeks ago Mark Ashton, the Director, contacted Fay who arranged with Graham a convenient time for him to visit and learn some of Ventnor's history and look at photographs. He picked certain subjects to do with Ventnor's past and then chose some two dozen pictures he liked from those shown him by Graham. The day before the Winter Gardens recording, along came the cameramen, with Mark and Michael Aspel, who showed an interest in the work of the Museum. The weather for the two days of filming was particularly good, which was most fortunate and the team spent time filming on St. Boniface Downs, where we all know the views are fantastic. The filming of our photographs took place just outside the Museum as it was a better light. The following day the Winter Gardens was packed with people bringing items of all descriptions for valuation.. We all look forward to the actual transmission of the Show.



Michael Aspel visited the Museum  
and asked how many people were  
concerned in its work