



## Buona Vista Road rubbish tip

In December 1903, a man and his horse had an incredible escape when they fell down a 70-foot cliff whilst disposing of a load of refuse. Wallace Lowe, aged 19, a general carrier's assistant, was throwing the rubbish over the brow of the cliff at Buona Vista Road when the horse moved backwards. Miraculously, Mr. Lowe and the horse escaped with serious cuts and bruises, but the van containing the rubbish broke to pieces. In the image below, showing Ventnor Gas Works, you can make out the cliff in question above the circular tank.



In current times, when rubbish disposal is highly organized by the local authority, it is worth pausing to consider how rubbish was disposed of one hundred or one hundred and fifty years ago. In many coastal towns, just tipping it over cliffs was a common practice, much as mining waste in coalfield areas of the North-East was regularly tipped in this way. Nor was it uncommon for households to accumulate rubbish within their own yards or gardens. Sometimes it even ended up buried there.

But Buona Vista Road was so-named because here was a beautiful view of the sea and shore. In the early 1880s, three sets of semi-detached villas were built on its eastern side that were variously let to residents and to visitors. The road led to paths on the Devonshire Terrace cliff which were used by thousands during the season. The road was, in fact, a long-established thoroughfare,



for it features on Ventnor's earliest maps. However, nobody appeared to have any responsibility for it. The road was ill-kept and untidy for years. Ventnor Local Board did not regard it as in any way their responsibility. That was arguably down to the owners of abutting property, but they did not oblige. This was the wider context in which it had long been common practice for rubbish to be brought down the road and tipped over the cliff edge. The road thus continued its tawdry appearance. Eventually, in June 1890, the Local Board agreed to start to repair and light the road, but this did

not eradicate the practice of tipping rubbish. The dump seems to have become ingrained in folk memory. *The Isle of Wight Mercury* recorded in some dismay in July 1927 that tipping was continuing, for example. Then, in the 1939-45 war, the middle of the three pairs of villas took a direct hit from a German bomber one day in April 1944, with the two adjacent pairs of villas effectively rendered uninhabitable through blast damage. After the war, gangs of Irish navvies were employed across the Island to clear bomb sites, but for some reason there was a delay in tackling Buona Vista Road. The upshot was that tipping carried on, both over the cliff and at the bomb site itself. It was not until 1956 that the local Council took steps to level the whole site and, eventually, cover it with soil.

*Ventnor & District Local History Society*: Michael Freeman, from files in Ventnor Heritage Centre, with help from Bob Trowbridge, whose dad, Ken Trowbridge, has acute memories of Buona Vista Road. As a teenager, he served as a police messenger in Ventnor during the war.



Ventnor & District Local History Society is a registered charity, working to preserve and record the history of our area and make it available to the public in the Ventnor Heritage Centre.

The Society and Heritage Centre are run and managed by volunteers.

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