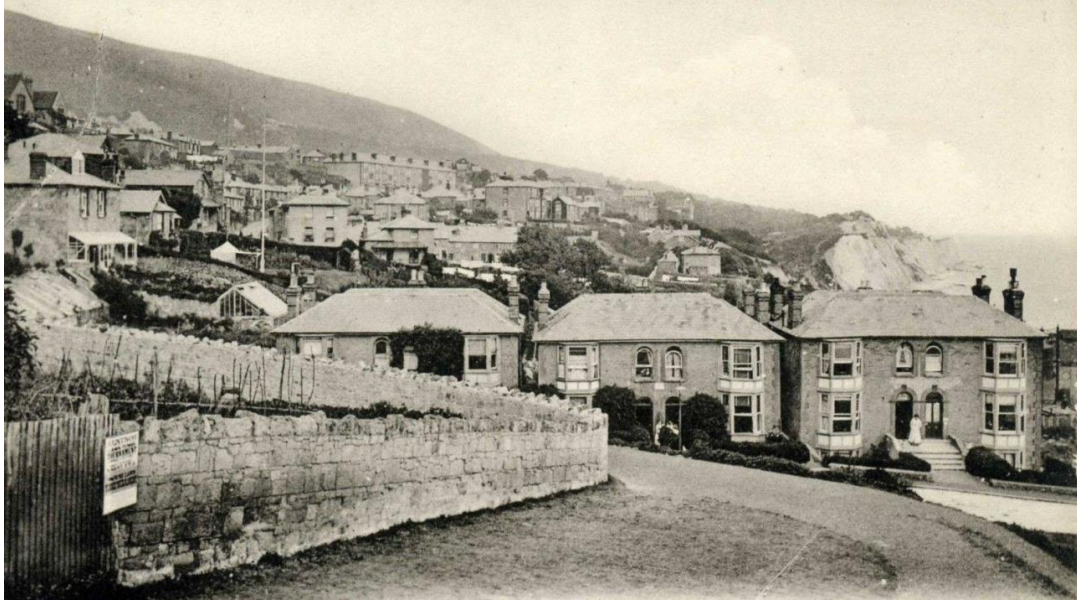




Buona Vista Villas



This unusual photograph, posted on our Facebook group recently, shows a bit of Ventnor now vanished. Buona Vista Villas were built in Buona Vista Road in the late 1880s, a row of six semi detached houses, leading down the hill towards the sea. The picture was taken around the turn of the century, and the photographer must have been standing on a path by what is now the seaward side of Dudley Road Car Park (which used to be Tennis Courts, as shown on the detail below from the 1939 OS map of the area). It was a close community, and some families lived there for many years; Thomas Bungay and his wife Amelia moved into No 2 soon after it was built, and Amelia was still there, a widow, in 1911. The woman standing at the front door of No 5, on the right of the picture, is probably Elizabeth Drake. She and her shoemaker husband Edward and their ten children lived there for many years, Elizabeth running a lodging house, and although by 1911 they had gone, their son Charles Drake, described on the census of that year as a *coachman, four in hand*, was living in the house next door, No 6, with his wife and five children.

In 1912 a visitor staying at 3 Buona Vista Villas, a boarding house run by widow Rose Robertson, sent a postcard to friends in London. The card shown below, was addressed, as these things often are, to the children of the family, with the lodgings marked on the photo in pen. It reads: *Dear Bert Harry and Gladys, Weather perfect. Lovely ever since we got here. We belong to the no-hat brigade. Min Short is here. I have just tied a letter to her collar and sent her with it to my sister on the cliffs. We are a few seconds from the water. You can see there are no more houses by the barrier. Hope you are all well. Love from M Martin*

The 1911 Census shows that Bert, Harry and Gladys Simpson were aged 15, 12 and 10, living at 20 Roden Street, in Holloway, with their postman father John and their mother Florence. We have no idea who 'M Martin' was (or indeed 'Min Short' - possibly a child - or a dog?). He or she may have been a London neighbour - Roden Street seems also to have been a place where people put down roots: when Bert died in 1975 he was still living at the same address. But Buona Vista Villas were wiped out in 1942 by bombs, probably dropped by planes attacking the radar station on the downs and getting rid of their load before returning across the Channel. Nothing now remains of the Villas but their view of the sea.

