



A picture to send the shivers down your spine and not a scene that has been experienced in the town for at least 10 years. Towards the end of the first week in January 1985, Ventnor suffered the heaviest snowfall on the Island and this was followed by a week of sub-zero temperatures. The corner of High Street and Victoria Street turned into an ice rink one Saturday morning, with a double-decker bus skidding and crashing into the shop on the corner. A little later at the same spot, a lorry lost control and mounted the pavement, demolishing the railings there. It seems that the gritters had not yet been round. Witnesses described the road as a solid sheet of ice. Nor was this anything new, for in the early 1970s several cars and a motorcycle had come off on the same bend in like circumstances.

As temperatures recovered somewhat in the following week, businesses and households had to cope with burst pipes. At Westfield Holiday Centre, a pipe running through the roof of Westfield's ballroom burst, sending thousands of gallons through the ceiling and on to the maplewood dance floor and also damaging snooker tables. At the Littledene Hotel, another burst pipe in the roof space saw water pouring down through three floors of the 135-year-old building, eventually bringing down lathe and plaster ceilings, in turn ruining carpets and furnishings. The hotel had undergone a full refitting over recent years, a process that would have to be started all over again.

The damaged shopfront on the corner of High Street and Victoria Street belonged to Parlour Antiques, run by Mr. Neil Gibbs. It was a severe blow to what was a newly-established business. The shop had previously been a hairdressing salon and the owner of that business recorded that a car had crashed into the shopfront one day in the summer of 1983. Altogether, it was a dangerous corner, whatever the weather.

*Ventnor & District Local History Society*: Michael Freeman. The photo forms part of the late Fay Brown's collection in the Heritage Centre, but it was taken not by Fay herself, but instead by Tom Rogers.



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.

[www.ventnorheritage.org.uk](http://www.ventnorheritage.org.uk) / telephone 855407

