



One hundred years of 'Smuggler's Haven'



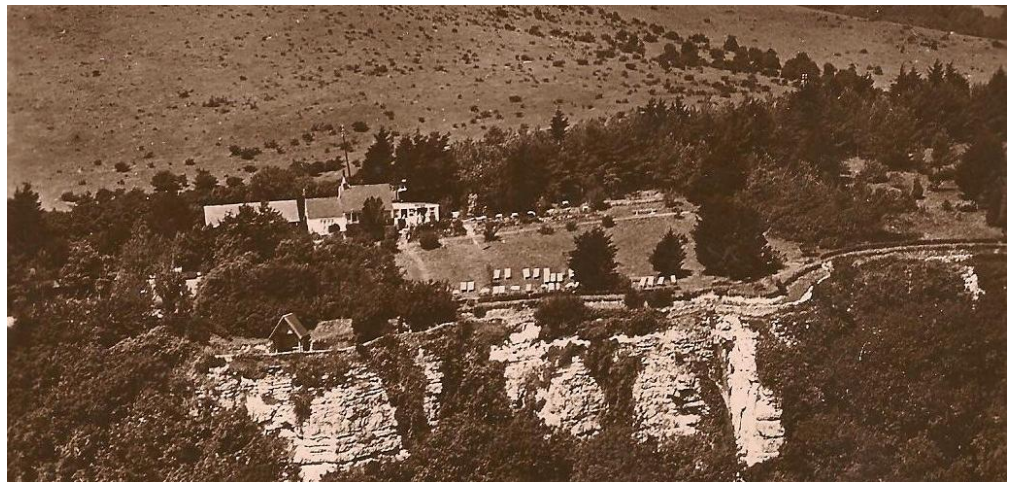
There cannot be many people who are unaware of the disastrous landslide in Bonchurch on December 10th 2023, which received nationwide coverage on TV & radio. The effect on properties in the area, especially the 'Smugglers Haven' Tea Gardens, was enormous.

The aerial photograph on the left, taken from drone footage, shows the extent of the landslide and, miraculously, the two main buildings – the tearoom and the living accommodation - still in place, albeit right on the edge! Unfortunately, the land on which the toilet building, a shipping container and a car stood, ended up some 70 feet down, as can be clearly seen. However, not so many people know a lot about the history of this business, so this article takes a look at 'Smugglers Haven' from the early 20th century to the present day.

There has been a tea garden in this part of the 'Landslip' for over 100 years, since before WW1, and it was a popular place for travellers walking through the Landslip between Shanklin and Ventnor to stop for refreshments, with a chance to relax on the large grass area in front of the buildings, so much more so in early days when public (and private) transport was more limited.

After the first World War, in 1919, Lewin Channing, who later became well-known for owning several catering businesses in the Ventnor and Luccombe area, took over the business with his wife Dorothy and they moved into the small cottage next door to the tearoom building. The business was then known as '*The Cloisters*', but in 1924 the Channings renamed it '*The Upper Landslip Tea Gardens*', after they opened another tea garden on Luccombe Common, nearer to Shanklin, which became '*The Lower Landslip Tea Gardens*'.

During WW2, both tea gardens were forced to close due to wartime restrictions on travel on the Island. After the war, in April 1946, the name of the 'upper' tea garden was changed to 'Smugglers Haven' and once again became a popular stopping place for people walking through the 'Landslip'. Especially popular were Channings' famous ice creams, hand-made on the premises by Lewin Channing.



The lower picture, taken from the air in the 1920s, gives some idea of the extensive grounds going right down to the (old) cliff edge with the many deck chairs laid out on the grassy slope, giving customers panoramic sea views over the English Channel while they enjoyed their drinks and cakes. There was also a small putting green at the eastern end of the property, next to the public car park. Sadly, this looks like the end of an era, as it is unlikely that 'Smugglers Haven' will ever open again.

Ventnor & District Local History Society: Colin Beavis – photos from social media and the author's collection.



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

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