



March's Bakery, Ventnor

During World War One, Brading businessman, Mr. A. A. Redstone, opened a bakery in Upper Ventnor, in Down Lane, opposite what is now Ventnor Social Club. He named it 'Lowtherville Bakery' and, as well as the public being able to purchase bread & cakes from the bakery itself, a shop was opened at 84 High Street (where Knights Court is now) for customers who lived down in the town. In 1927, due to failing health, Mr Redstone sold the business to Clement Harry March (known as 'Harry'). From then on it was known by locals as 'March's Bakery' - a name it retained even after moving to larger premises in the town. Officially, though, it was Harry March Ltd. The old bakehouse is still in existence in Down Lane, but now a private house. Around the corner, at 27, Newport Road (then No.1 Highfield), there was a baker's shop called Booths, which was taken over by March's as a retail outlet for the Upper Ventnor area.



As early as 1935 it became apparent that the current premises were far too small for the amount of trade that March's was doing so a decision was made to move to larger premises in the town. Plans were passed in 1938 and the new bakery, which was off the High Street through the archway next to Boots the Chemist, began production in 1939.



The retail shop at 84 High Street was retained, and a new shop, at 6 Church Street, was opened as a café and tea room, with the added feature of a direct connection with the bakery, (which was behind the shop via a rickety wooden staircase, straight down into the bakehouse - I remember it well!!). Number 6 Church Street became March's head office. It was situated between what is now Church Street Motorcycles and Scotts Barber shop. Later, the retail shop at 84 High Street was closed and a new shop was opened just down the road at number 76, where 'The Pit Stop Café is/was now.

After the Second World War, the March's empire grew considerably and, as well as the three Ventnor shops (Church Street, High Street and Newport Road) three more shops were opened: in Shanklin, Newport and Sandown. The Sandown shop, at 33 High Street, also had a Café. *(The advert on the right is from the Isle of Wight Mercury in 1948.)*

(known as 'Vin'). 'Vin' was a popular playing member of Ventnor Cricket Club – playing until he emigrated to South Africa at the age of 59. The business was sold on but, sadly, it ceased trading in the 1980s.

Harry March died in 1963 at the age of 91 and the business was taken over by his son Alan Vincent

Harry is buried in Ventnor cemetery along with his wife, Louise.



Ventnor & District Local History Society: Colin Beavis – photographs from the Society archives.



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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