



Dorcas Barnett



Ventnor Carnival has been going since 1889 and is recognised as the second-oldest carnival in the country (after Ryde). There hasn't been a carnival every year, for various reasons, but the staging of any carnival is only possible with the organisation and dedication of a group of volunteers.

This article is about Dorcas Barnett, who older residents will remember as one of the driving forces that made Ventnor Carnival, in the years following WW2, one of the best on the Island,. The picture above, shows Dorcas with Skimbo White in Ventnor Park, along with Bob Monkhouse, who opened the Carnival that year. (*In those days, with the Shanklin Theatre and the Sandown Pavilion holding popular Summer Shows featuring many well-known celebrities, it was traditional for that week's star performer to open Island Carnivals*).

Dorcas Molly Morris was born on November 12th 1920 in Lowtherville Road to Harry and Lizzie Morris. They already had a son, Reginald, born in 1916, who, by the way, went on to found Niton Bakery, which had a shop in Ventnor High Street. Dorcas attended Lowtherville National School (St Margaret's) in Lowtherville Road, almost opposite where she lived, and then the National School in Albert Street, and Ventnor Secondary School (now St Catherines College) in St. Boniface Road. After leaving school, she worked in Woolworth's in Regent Street, Shanklin, until WW2 broke out. During the early part of the war, she worked on the land as part of the 'Dig for Victory' campaign. In her twenties, she worked at J.W.C.Gill's butchers on Ventnor High Street where she met her husband, Ray. They married on February 27th 1943 in St. Catherine's Church, Ventnor, and went on to have two children, Colin & Karen.

Although not living in Ventnor after her marriage, Dorcas became involved with the running of our Carnival, after their children grew up. She joined the Committee and after nine years she was elected Vice-Chairman. She had a big influence in the running of some of the best Carnivals that Ventnor had ever seen, featuring famous performers such as the bands of the United States Airforce, the Royal Marines and the Women's Royal Airforce. In 1975 she was made Chairman of the Carnival Committee, a position she held until her retirement from the role in 1989.

Apart from her role on the Carnival committee, and apart from being Ventnor-born, Dorcas had another connection with Ventnor – Barnett's Pork Butchers in the High Street opposite the bottom of Spring Hill. This was one of the several Barnett's butcher's shops on the Island set up by Dorcas's husband Ray, in the late 1980s. Dorcas died in 2015 aged 95. Her contribution to many Ventnor Carnivals will never be forgotten.

Ventnor & District Local History Society: Colin Beavis – photograph 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.

www.ventnorheritage.org.uk / telephone 855407

