



## VENTNOR & DISTRICT LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

### Myrtle Bay – a postcard tale

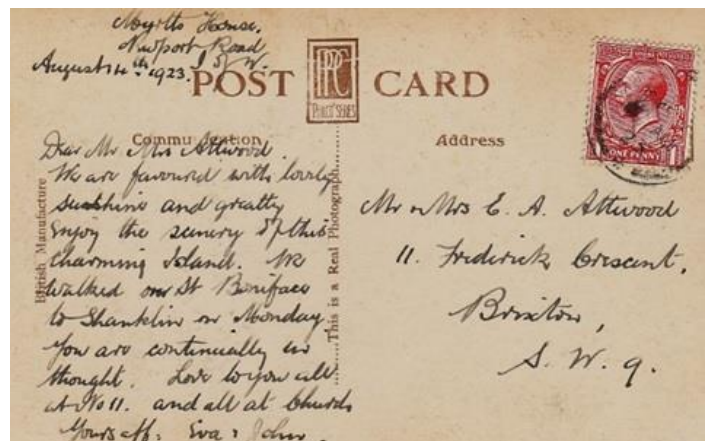


Few people today know of Myrtle Bay, for it appears on hardly any maps. But one hundred years ago, it figured enough in common knowledge to justify a postcard of its own. This particular one was sent in August 1923 to a household living on Frederick Crescent, Brixton, London SW9, quite a smart address in its day. The couple who sent it (Eva and John) were spending a holiday in Ventnor, much enjoying the sunshine and the scenery. Coincidentally, they were lodging at Myrtle House on Ocean View Road and hence, perhaps, the choice of postcard

view. Many people today have no idea where Myrtle Bay is found. They may, however, know that it is where Britannia's Hut stood on the high-water mark. For thirty years, this was the home of Olivia Parkes, a well-known local recluse. You can just make out the Hut in this picture. The site was some 400 metres west of Undercliff House (now the Spyglass Inn). Walking on the western cliffs today, you pass the Ventnor sign inscribed in the hillslope, pass the concrete rain shelter, and as the footpath rises, Myrtle Bay is to your immediate left. There were once steps to the beach here.

Myrtle House was one of many properties in the Undercliff to be called after the sweet-scented evergreen shrub traditionally regarded as an emblem of love. The property still stands (now called Myrtle Villa) and is a surprisingly spacious 4-bedroom dwelling, faced in flint. For years it functioned as a lodging house, both for local people and for visitors.

In 1891, Lucy Tosdevin was the housekeeper and among the lodgers were John Gray and his wife Ann, and Alfred Tonkin. Gray was an iron and brass founder while Tonkin was a Bible Christian minister. In the 20th Century, the tenancy of the property was for some time held by Mr J Gallop at an annual rental of between £26 and £29.12s.0d. The property owner was plainly a rentier investor, who also owned Denver, the house next door. This kind of ownership was common in Ventnor right up to 1945.



Michael Freeman, [Ventnor & District Local History Society](http://Ventnor & District Local History Society), the postcard images kindly provided by Bob Trowbridge. You can read the fascinating story of Britannia in a new book by Michael Freeman and Robert Trowbridge, available at Ventnor Heritage Centre.



Ventnor & District Local History Society is a registered charity, run and managed by volunteers, working to preserve and record the history of our area and make it available to the public through publications, events, talks and exhibitions in the Ventnor Heritage Centre. For more information please see our website: [www.ventnorheritage.org.uk](http://www.ventnorheritage.org.uk)

