

2019 Annual General Meeting

The Society's 2019 Annual General Meeting was held on 29 March in the Masonic Hall on Grove Road. The Chair, Leigh Geddes, reported on the Society's activities over the past year.

It had been a year of consolidation after a busy few years. The museum refurbishment was complete and in the upcoming year we would be working on upgrading the sales and front-of-house area.

The Society had had some real successes over the year: a wonderful Victorian Day during Ventnorville before Christmas; the annual Open Heritage Day; a series of popular talks over the winter at various venues including the Arts Club, attracting interestingly different audiences from our regular monthly talks; work with the Friends of Ventnor Library on digitising their archive of Daphne Carter's photographs; and providing the slide show for Carnival, along with our usual free opening during the week, with Thomas the Tank Engine running round the model railway track.

Les Matravers joined the Trustees in September and had set up the very popular Facebook group, which has brought

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A Farewell

Welcome to the April issue! This is the 40th V&DLHS newsletter since Fay Brown began producing them, followed by Lesley Telford and, in January 2016, by me. Sadly, this is the last issue I will be editing, as my new role as Secretary (again taking over from Lesley) means I won't have the time. It's been fulfilling and fun, and I hope you all have enjoyed reading the newsletters as much as I've enjoyed producing them.

As we have not yet found someone willing to take over the editorship, this will be the last issue for a while. We will skip the July issue, so the next one should be available at the Society meeting in October. But nothing is fixed: depending on how much time a new editor can give to the newsletter, we might go back to three or even two issues a year. So the publication dates may change.

Anyone interested in being the new editor should contact me at the e-mail address on page 4, or leave a message for me or Leigh Geddes in the Heritage Centre. All you need is enthusiasm, some editing or writing experience or talent and some minimal IT skills. We can provide the software – and I'm happy to work with the new editor on his or her first issue to 'show the ropes'. It's a great way of contributing to the Society and making new friends.

– Jeffrey Mazo

Museum Opening 2019: New Displays, Exhibits and Sales Area

The Heritage Museum opened for the summer season on Saturday 20 April. Besides a minor revamp of the sales and reception area (anticipating a major revamp to come!) and new window displays, this year's exhibits include:

Landscape Paintings of the Isle of Wight

A further selection of images from Robin McInnes's book on *Isle of Wight Landscape Art*. You can buy copies of Robin's beautifully illustrated book at the counter (£28).

Ventnor Mill

There was a mill on the cliff above the present Cascade for hundreds of years. It featured in many paintings, a symbol of rustic charm but also of the dramatic cliff scenery of the area. There is a fine model of the mill adjacent to the display.

'Once Upon a Time there were Trains'

Ventnor once had two railway stations. And for something like 100 years, trains were the primary means by which visitors arrived in the town. The main line came in via a long tunnel under St Boniface Down. It linked the resort with Ryde and the towns along the east side of the Island. The second line came from Newport and Merstone, terminating at a station behind Steephill Castle.



'Mayfair-by-the-Sea'

Over the Victorian age, parts of Ventnor took on shades of London's West End, perhaps best exemplified by the Royal Marine Hotel which became a haunt of the rich and the famous. It boasted a hydraulic elevator and a palm court. You can read all about Ventnor in this period in Michael Freeman's fascinating book *Victorians in Search of Winter Health*, available at the counter, priced £9.95.

Prehistory of the Undercliff

The Undercliff has a long history of human settlement. Flint tools have been found from the Stone Age, pottery and axes from the Bronze Age and there is also evidence of Roman and Saxon occupancy.

Clarendon Boarding House

Looking southwest from the top of Grove Road in Ventnor, the Clarendon was the area's premier boarding house. It had a strikingly cosmopolitan clientèle, including visitors from all over Europe, from America and from Australasia.

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Museum Opening 2019

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Victorian Shopping Paradise

Ventnor's principal streets in the nineteenth century offered the best shopping on the Island. They vied with London's West End for the quality of goods offered to customers, a reflection of the relative wealth of its visitor population.

A History of Ventnor Breweries

This is the story of brewing in Ventnor, beginning in 1840, at the very start of the resort's growth. There is a booklet to accompany the display, price £3.00.

The story of Olivia Parkes ('Britannia')

She lived for many years in a wooden hut on stilts on the foreshore at Myrtle Bay, just west of Ventnor. It had no running water and no sanitation. She became a source of fascination for visitors until forcibly re-housed in 1958.

Ventnor People

In its Victorian heyday, Ventnor and the surrounding villages had many famous residents and visitors, often from the worlds of literature, art and music. These included Myles Birket Foster, Elizabeth Sewell, Charles Dickens, Pearl Craigie, E.W. Cooke, Thomas Miles Richardson, J.M.W. Turner, Karl Marx and Ivan Turgenev.

'It used to be like this' – the memoir of George Haynes

This remarkable man, born at Castlehaven, Niton Undercliff, in 1906, has left us an extraordinary account of another life-world. Here you will find little in the way

of consumerism, just a tale of everyday living, combining hard work and drudgery on the one hand and the joy of simple pastimes and pleasures on the other. There is a new publication to accompany the exhibition, available from the counter, priced £4.00.

A Godshill Life

Joy Draper was born in 1907 and lived in Godshill all her life. This exhibition uses family photographs and her own words to recall details of family life in the village during WWI, and how, after leaving school when she was thirteen, she went into service at the Old Vicarage, working as a parlour maid there for ten years before her marriage.

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us a wider audience and a new way to swap stories and images from all over the world from people who live here or used to long ago.

This coming year will be the 130th anniversary of Ventnor Carnival and Eloise from the Carnival Committee has been researching our collection for a joint project to produce a series of illustrated booklets to celebrate the anniversary.

In the coming year there are also plans for new window displays and refurbishing the model railway.

The Trustees continue to plan for the next five years, with the broad aims of managing the Society as efficiently and transparently as possible; building and supporting a strong volunteer team; keeping our income stable and finding ways to increase it; caring for our collection and developing it further; and developing and widening our audience. We want Ventnor and District Local History Society and its Museum to become better known, both here and in the wider world.

It was proposed by the Trustees that membership should be increased from £10 to £12 from January 2020, and this was agreed by members.

After the formal business Yvonne Hardy showed a video narrated by Cliff Michelmores entitled "England's Island in the Sun". It was made in the 1960s, possibly for the Tourist Board. It was interesting to see how the Island has changed and how busy the beaches were in those days.

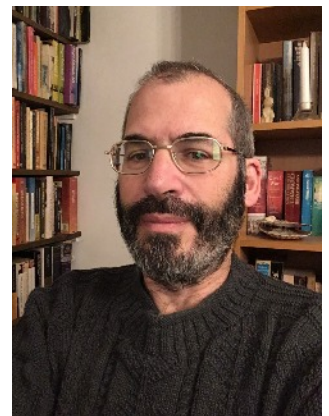
Election of Trustees and Officers

Linda Chester, Margaret Davidson, Leigh Geddes, Janet Griffin, Yvonne Hardy, Wendy Marshall, Les Matravers, Anne Mundell and Lesley Telford were re-elected as Trustees, and John Carter and Jeffrey Mazo were elected as new Trustees. Leigh Geddes, Janet Griffin and Yvonne Hardy were re-elected as Chair, Deputy Chair and Treasurer respectively, and Jeffrey Mazo was elected as Secretary, replacing Lesley Telford who had chosen to step down.

Upcoming Society Meetings and Speakers

31 May	Delian Backhouse-Fry – 'The Archaeology of the Undercliff'
28 June	John Medland – 'The Island in the Domesday Book'
26 July	Donna Needham – 'Around the Island in 115(ish) Churches'
27 September	Brian Greening – 'Island Life 100 Years Ago'
25 October	Andy Butler – Title to be confirmed
29 November	Mark Earp – 'Queen Victoria on the IOW. Tales of the Expected and Unexpected'

All meetings to be held at 7:30pm in the Masonic Hall, Grove Road, Ventnor



Left to Right: John Carter, Les Matravers, Jeffrey Mazo

Meet the New Trustees

John Carter

John and his wife moved from Waterlooville to the Island in 2005 and settled in the Undercliff. He currently manages the IT and accounts system for Brading Haven Yacht Club and has been the Treasurer of Friends of Ventnor Library for several years, contributing largely to their ongoing project of recording and publishing the late Daphne Carter's archive of local photographs.

John was employed by the Post Office Research Station in North London where he worked on the Telstar satellite system. Later, he developed satellite flight equipment for the General Electric Company. In 1970 GEC moved him to Portsmouth where he worked on military and civil communications, meteorological and remote sensing space systems.

While living in Waterlooville, near Portsmouth, John sourced funding for and organised the restoration of a neglected woodland. He brings to the Society his experience of project management, finance management and bid-writing.

Les Matravers

Les was born in Solihull, West Midlands and has spent much of her life there. She spent 15 years working in the Civil Service, initially with the Department of Health and Social Security and eventually with the Inspectorate Office as inspector and supervisor.

After an eight-year break to raise her family, Les returned to college, studying IT and British Sign Language. After initial teacher training she taught part-time in further education, gaining full teaching qualification at University of Central England, and Maths-specific qualifications at Warwick University. Les lectured in Maths in further education until 2014 when she took early retirement, moving to East Cowes and renovating a property there before moving to Ventnor where she has lived for 18 months. Les is very interested in Victorian local history and has set up and manages our Facebook group. She brings to the Society excellent IT, office, communication and teamwork skills, and family history awareness.

Jeffrey Mazo

While studying for his PhD in Medieval Scandinavian Studies and Folklore ("basically about about the Vikings") in Los Angeles, Jeff did postgraduate research in Iceland in 1984, when he met his wife Georgina, who was also doing postgraduate work there. They came to live in the UK, together founding Hisarlik Press, a small academic publisher covering among other subjects the local history of Georgina's native East End of London.

Jeff has most recently worked as an strategic affairs analyst for the International Institute for Strategic Studies, a London-based think tank. His specialism was climate change and he authored two books, including *Climate Conflict: how global warming threatens security and what to do about it*. Jeff and Georgina settled in Ventnor six years ago and he continues to consult part-time.

Jeff has been elected as Secretary of Ventnor Heritage Centre and is stepping down as editor of the Newsletter. He offers project management skills, local history research, experience of academic publishing and production techniques.

– Richard Downing

Local History Walk

As part of the Isle of Wight Walking Festival, on 12 May Richard Downing will be leading a circular walk covering Ventnor's Health Heritage 1830–1900, visiting key sites in Ventnor's development as a Victorian health resort, discussing the climate, the health of the nation, medicine, sanatoria, hospitals and doctors.

The walk starts at 10:30am at the Hygeia mosaic on the Esplanade pumping station. It is 2.5 miles and lasts 2 hours 30 minutes. A voluntary donation of £3 will go to Ventnor Heritage Charities.

Space is limited. To register for the walk go to <https://isleofwightwalkingfestival.co.uk/walks/ventnors-health-heritage-1830-1900/>. If you have specific questions about this walk or arrangements on the day of the walk contact Richard Downing on 07870 357413.

Society Talk: The Most Painted Place

On 25 January Professor Robin McInnes spoke on 'The Most Painted Place: Bonchurch and the Isle School of Artists'. Between 1800 and 1900 over a thousand paintings of the coastline along the Undercliff were exhibited, 670 of which were of the area from Shanklin Chine to Steephill Cove. Robin presented a selection of the paintings showing how Ventnor began as a small fishing cove to how it was in the 1930s.

An exhibition about the artists and their work is planned for the Ventnor Botanic Gardens beginning 1 June 2019.

Society Talk: At Home with the Spartali Family

On 28 February Susan Weeks spoke on the family of Michael and Euphrosyne Spartali, who owned Sandford House in the 1800s. Michael (1818–1914) was a second-generation Greek immigrant, from a family of bankers and importers of commodities and textiles. They spent summers at Sandford House and at Rylstone Manor, now Rylstone Gardens.

Michael and Euphrosyne's daughter Marie modelled for artist Dante Gabriel Rossetti and photographer Juliet Margaret Cameron. She married William Stillman and had four children. She was an artist in her own right and a prolific watercolourist.



Marie Spartali Stillman (1844–1927) by Dante Gabriel Rossetti, 1869. Source: Wikimedia Commons.

Recent articles from the Society published in the *South Wight Chronicle*

If you have a subject that you think would make an interesting story, please do let us know. The articles published since the last newsletter include:

- “‘Golden Oldies’ – Recollections of Ventnor from the *Mercury*’, Michael Freeman, *SWC*, no. 1408, 31/1/19, p. 12.
- ‘Kathleen Riddick – Orchestral Conductor’, *SWC*, Lesley Telford, no. 1409, 7/2/19, p. 12.
- ‘The Lowtherville Story’, Colin Beavis, *SWC*, no. 1410, 14/2/19, p. 12.
- ‘The Ventnor Observation Tower’, Lesley Telford, *SWC*, no. 1411, 21/2/19, p. 12.
- ‘Ventnor Landmarks and Landslides’, Lesley Telford, *SWC*, no. 1412, 28/2/19, p. 12.
- ‘Elizabeth Thompson: *I Awoke this Morning and Found Myself Famous*’, Lesley Telford, *SWC*, no. 1413, 7/3/19, p. 12.
- ‘On Ventnor Pier’, Lesley Telford, *SWC*, no. 1414, 14/3/19, p. 12.
- ‘Spring Hill in the 1920s’, Michael Freeman, *SWC*, 21/3/19, no. 1415, p. 12.
- ‘From Grand Pavilion to Gaiety 1 – Films, Dances and Roller Skating’, Lesley Telford, *SWC*, no. 1416, 28/3/19, p. 12.
- ‘From Grand Pavilion to Gaiety 1 – Rifle Range and Dodgem Cars’, Lesley Telford, *SWC*, no. 1417, 4/4/19, p. 12.
- ‘Ventnor Central – Once the Bible Christian Chapel’, Lesley Telford, *SWC*, no. 1418, 11/4/19, p. 12.
- ‘Pietro (Pete) Cortesi’, Colin Beavis, *SWC*, no. 1419, 18/4/19, p. 12.
- ‘From Florist to Calves Foot Jelly’, Evelyn Knowles, *SWC*, no. 1420, 25/4/19, p. 12.