VENTNOR & DISTRICT LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

Newsletter 51 October 2026

INTRODUCTION

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Editor: Mick Pye

The summer in the museum is coming to an end. As usual, the museum has been visited by all sorts of interesting people. Many have their own memories of living in the area, whilst some are visiting a place that a relative has lived in and which has had an impact on them. This year, the museum volunteers have heard from visitors about Isle of Wight currencies dating back over a hundred years. One visitor whose relative served at RAF Ventnor offered memories of the war: raids across the town including strafing of civilians, bombing in North Street and around, and playing in the ruins of the houses! Other stories from visitors included information about the original opening of the laundry in the town.

If you, or somebody you know, have interesting memories, or knowledge of events in Ventnor past then please contact the museum. It can be recorded in oral, pictorial, or written form.

We wish you all the very best and thank you again for your support.





TRUSTEE NEWS

After the open meeting on the future of the Society held in May, as reported in the last newsletter, several volunteers came forward to help out in critical areas. Two new Trustees were co-opted on to the Governing Body at the last meeting at the end of August: Steve Milford, who has been appointed Treasurer, and Mike Perkins, who will be assisting Steve with the much of the traditional Treasurer role, including financial planning and day-to-day record keeping. We'll have fuller biographies and background information on both in the next newsletter. Welcome Steve and Mike!

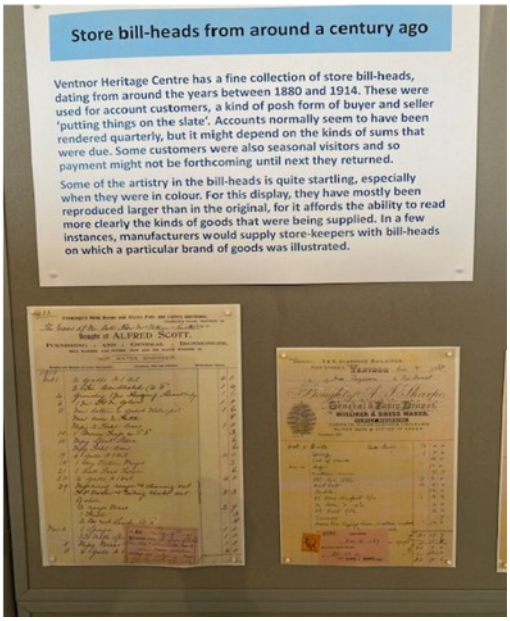
Now that the transition to the new Treasurer and finance process is complete, we are re-focusing on strategic planning – a "re-boot", if you will. A strategic planning group made up of me, Mike, VDLHS Secretary Sarah Kelly and new volunteer Kathryn Williams is working on a draft plan for discussion by the Trustees in the next few months. Kathryn has already taken on organising the speaker series for next year, as well as wider, integrated publicity and marketing for the Society and its activities. The speakers for the monthly meetings should now be announced well in advance and be more widely advertised and promoted. I look forward to reporting to members about all these steps in the next newsletter and in my annual report at the AGM in March next year.

Jeff Mazo, VDLHS Chair

HERITAGE CENTRE NEWS

We are happy to report that several welcome new volunteers have come to help out in the Heritage Centre and shop. We are always looking for new volunteer helpers. The work available includes Museum Steward – sort of an in-store assistant, selling goods as well as helping to welcome and show visitors around the museum. Other behind-the-scenes work is also available, whether it be helping to arrange the museum's collection or working on the computer. Even some cleaning work is available.

We would like to raise the profile of the Heritage Centre around the town and locality. More volunteers would help us to do this. Also, if you have any suggestions about how to raise our profile, we would only be too pleased to hear from you. Please contact me, Mick Pye, at the museum or through the website.

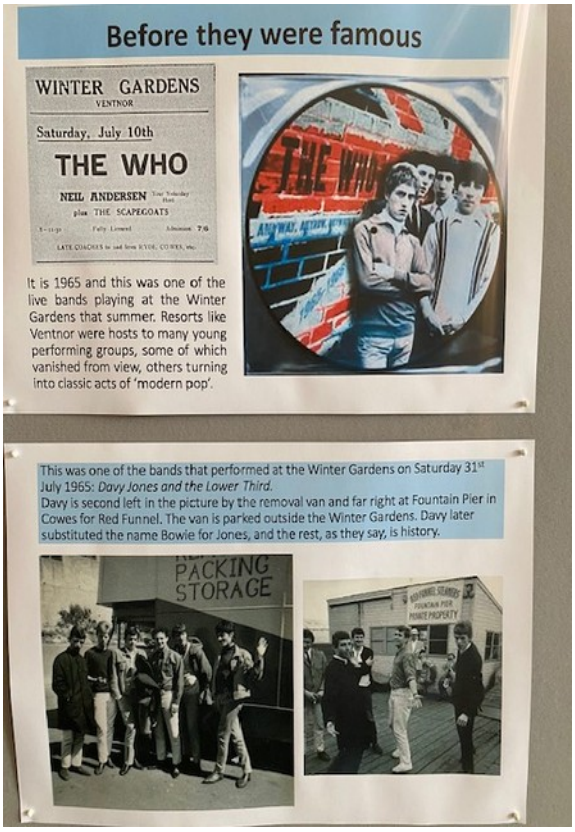


Visitors to the Museum have shown great interest in the story of Olivia Parkes, otherwise known as Britannia. The display outlining her life, along with the very impressive model of her shore hut, has been the subject of many a conversation. A similar degree of interest has been shown for the details of Kevin Garlick's life. His shoe

designs are widely known, and visitors have been very interested in the sewing machine and his other tools and equipment for making shoes.

A newer display explores the world of Ventnor shops. A range of old shop bill heads make interesting reading and has prompted much discussion especially amongst ‘old Ventnorians’.

The working models of Ventnor’s two train stations have, for many years, been of great interest. This year has been no different, with many visitors, including local people, showing surprise that such stations even existed. The main station on a Saturday was known to bring hundreds of tourists into the town, increasing the local population by, on occasions, around twenty per cent!



Further interest is raised by the display about the Winter Gardens which, for so long, was an important asset, well used by many of Ventnor’s community organizations, and schools. Of particular interest is the number of national and internationally known ‘stars’ who played at this town venue.

The displays are regularly changed so even regular visitors find something new to look at. Such a valuable resource for the townsfolk of Ventnor, and many thanks to those kind people who offer artefacts, and oral evidence of past events.

IN MEMORIAM: LYN WANNOP

It is with deep sadness that we have to announce the death of Lyn Wannop, one of our most long-standing and loyal volunteers.

Lyn was a true islander, brought up in Bonchurch, and attending schools there and in Ventnor. Consequently, she is well known to many local people outside of our volunteering circle.

She married John and moved to his farm in Brighstone where they brought up their family. She was a Loving Mum and Grandma, incredibly proud of her family and their achievements.

Lyn acted as a volunteer on front line duties at the Heritage Centre for many years. She returned after Covid to fill a regular Saturday morning slot, and was a font of knowledge on all

things Ventnor. Visitors to the Heritage Centre benefitted from her knowledge of past events, shops and other venues. She had been there!

She was an all-round lovely, kind lady, and it was my privilege to get to know her so well. We exchanged family news and often ‘set the world to rights’ during the three hour Saturday morning shift.

She will be deeply missed and we send our heartfelt thoughts and condolences to John, her daughters, grandchildren and to all her family and friends.

Rest in Peace my dear friend, we, and particularly I will miss you.

Brenda Jackson

DONATION IN MEMORY OF JANET GRIFFIN

The family of the late Janet Griffin have given a generous cash donation to the Society in her name, for which are very grateful. The Trustees hope to apply this to a specific project in Janet’s memory, and this will be announced in due course. Janet’s influence on the Society was immeasurable through her work as Trustee, Chair and head of our Review Committee. She is still much remembered and missed.

QUIZ NIGHT QUESTIONS

In January we held the first of what might be an annual series of Quiz Evenings. There were fifty questions in total, over five rounds: two general knowledge rounds, a “Pub Quiz” (questions about pubs), a picture round, and an obscure trivia round. In the last two Newsletters we gave the questions from the first two rounds. Now we present the questions from round 3, the “Pub Quiz”. Answers at the end of the Newsletter.

1. The Walmer Castle was on the corner of which two streets?
2. The Hole in the Wall was on the corner of which two streets?
3. Where was the New Inn?
4. Where was the Albion Tavern?
5. Where was the Rising Sun Tavern?
6. Where was the Yarborough Inn?
7. What was the connection between the Blenheim and the Mill Bay?
8. Which is older, the White Lion in Niton or the White Horse in Whitwell?
9. Which pub did Mark Norman own, but never mention in his diaries?
10. Which modern pub was owned by the Appuldurcombe Estate, and takes its name from the Worsley family arms?

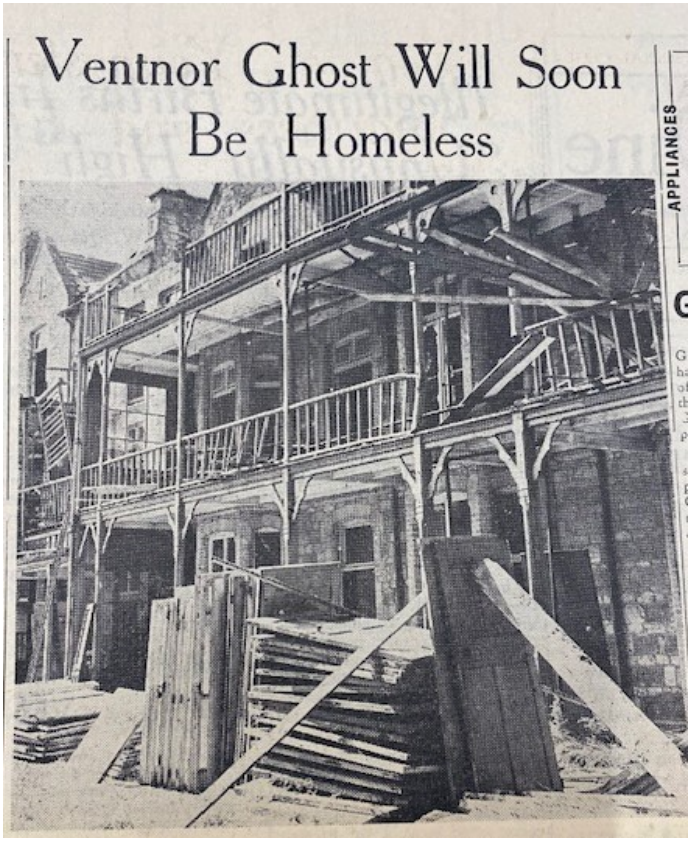
STORIES FROM THE PAST

The *Mercury* dated October 31st, 1969 contained, as usual, many interesting stories about the Island, and Ventnor, being the home of the paper, received extensive coverage. A former Ventnor resident, Mr. Clive Mackness, had been an employee of Southern Electricity. He was reported as having moved to Australia where he had married and settled in Sydney. He also became a director and general manager of a large firm, Dulmison Pty, Ltd. On his way to Britain, he had flown via South Africa where he was looking to open a branch. Whilst there, he had met another Ventnorian, Mr Vin March. Such stories remind us that Ventnorians were travelling the world with fond memories of the town and its people.

The paper goes on to report that 676 holidaymakers had visited St Catherine's Church between May and September in that year. Some came from Australia, Bermuda, Trinidad, America, France, Sweden and Germany.

On a lower note, the paper reported that 1,209 people were out of work across the island. This equated to 3.4% of the population. Today the rate for over-16s is estimated at 3.6% (UK Area Stats).

It was also reported that Ventnor Town Council had voted against the fluoridation of water. Councillor Miss Saunders pointed out that the World Health Organisation was in favour of fluoridation, stating that 'there are no ill-effects..., nothing but good'. Miss Barbara Bliss of Hudson Bay, Ventnor, finished her letter by stating that, 'had it not occured to the Councillors that by preventing dental decay there is an economy to the taxpayers' pocket in reducing the work for the N.H.S. dentists - an over-loaded service'.


Ventnor Ghost Will Soon Be Homeless

APPLIANCES

Times often don't change, do they! The next story reinforces this; the Town Council recommending no parking at any time in places such as Tulse Hill, Victoria Street, Madeira Road Grove Road and Saint Catherine's Street, amongst others. No waiting restrictions were recommended for Spring Hill, Clarence Road, Alpine and Belle Vue Road. It finished the article by stating that some recommendations dated back to November 1968, which had not been implemented for 'reasons of economy'.

On a better note the St Boniface Women's Institute had coincided its monthly meeting with the Autumn Flower Show. 'Attractive exhibits' had been judged, and there was also a talk by Miss L. Bennett entitled 'In

praise of gardens and flowers', which included readings of poetry and prose. Arrangements were made to visit St. Swithin's School along with members of the Wroxall WI.

Finally, it was reported that the Royal Hotel had committed to spending over £50,000 during the winter on expansion and improvements. This was in addition to the swimming pool that had opened in 1966. Planning and licensing permission was being sought for a Cellar Club - the 'first of its kind in Ventnor', offering disco music, dancing and live entertainment. Many readers will remember nights spent in that place!

Photograph showing the start of the demolition of the internationally known National Hospital, in what is now the Botanic Gardens. (1969)

PUB QUIZ ANSWERS

1. West Street and South Street.
2. Market Street and Pound Lane.
3. Hillside Hotel/House, Mitchell Avenue.
4. Albert Street (next to the National School).
5. 34 Mitchell Avenue, later the Railway Hotel and now Sun Lodge.
6. Nettlecombe Lane, Whitwell.
7. They were both owned by James Corbould, then by the Ventnor Brewery, then by Burts Brewery.
8. The White Lion.
9. The Volunteer, Victoria Street.
10. The Griffin, Godshill.

October Meeting

Just a reminder: the next members' meeting and talk is at 7:30pm on Friday 30 October at the Masonic Hall on Grove Road. The speaker is our old friend Mark Earp and the topic, on Island pub history, is "Murders, Mystery and Manifestations".