

# **‘PARADISE LOST?’**

## **~ The Lost Buildings of the East Wight ~**

*Exploring the Reasons for Heritage Loss  
in the East Wight*



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**'Down to the Coast'**  
**Project: 'Lost Buildings**  
**of the East Wight'**

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**Figure i.1.:** *'East Cowes Castle, the Seat of John Nash'*. R. Ackermann. 1826.

**Front Cover Image:** *'Steephill Castle'* by H. P. F. Woodington. Lithograph. c.1840.



# **‘PARADISE LOST?’**

## **~ Lost Buildings of the East Wight ~**



**Figure i.2.:** *‘A Cottage at Newchurch’* by Helen Allingham RWS. Watercolour. c.1889. Believed to be the demolished Dyer’s Cottage Mrs Allingham’s highly detailed watercolours record many such rural buildings before they were demolished often as a result of neglect.



**Figure i.3.:** *'South-East View of a Watermill at Ventnor'* by Harriet Gouldsmith. Oil on Canvas. 1826. This painting by the prolific Royal Academy exhibitor, Mrs Gouldsmith, provides a detailed view of the Mill, which was Ventnor's earliest building; it was demolished in 1875.

Image courtesy of Christie's Images. Private Collection.



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**Figure i.4.:** *'St Boniface Cottage, Ventnor'* by John 'Warwick' Smith. 1799. Watercolour. This cottage orné was regarded as one of the most picturesque on the Island, being located at the foot of the Downs and overlooking the English Channel.

Image courtesy of John Spink.



# 1. Executive Summary

The East Wight occupies nearly half of the geographical area of the Isle of Wight, and its landscape is recognised for its tranquillity and scenic beauty, as well as for its vibrant tourism economy. The significance of the East Wight countryside and coast is demonstrated by the designation of over 80% of the landscape as an *'Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty'*, whilst part of the Undercliff coastline is also designated as *'Heritage Coast'*.

The marine influence of the East Wight environment is particularly strong, being surrounded by sea, with the English Channel to the south and to the east, and the Solent and Spithead to the north. The connection between this landscape and its geological past is emphasised by its topography, especially the central chalk downs, which terminate dramatically at Culver Cliff, the Southern Downs, and the remarkable landscape of the Isle of Wight Undercliff.

*'Down to the Coast'*, which has been supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF), through its Landscape Partnership Programme, is being delivered in the East Wight by the Isle of Wight Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Partnership (AONB Partnership). This new project is the third in the series that follows projects that have examined how historical imagery can inform us of the changing landscape as the East Wight AONB, as well as a study of the architecture of the East Wight and how architectural styles over the centuries have fitted within the natural landscape. This particular project entitled *'Paradise Lost? – The lost buildings of the East Wight'* explores the reasons for heritage loss across the East Wight, particularly over the last 100 years. The purpose of this project has been to research and understand the reasons for the loss of heritage, particularly historic houses, and to raise awareness amongst a wide range of stakeholders with the objective of avoiding any past mistakes and future losses. Alongside this report, awareness of the Island's lost built heritage will be explained through a major exhibition and an accompanying sixteen page non-technical booklet.

Many buildings of historic interest have been lost in the East Wight over the last 100 years, and their losses requires understanding and explanation. Certainly over 100 properties have disappeared for a range of reasons, including neglect, lack of interest, redevelopment, fire and landslip. This has been a source of genuine concern to both Island residents and visitors, and includes some of the most significant residential and other properties that would have been important features of the East Wight's built environment since the middle of the nineteenth century in particular.

The intention is that this report, which could not have been successfully completed without the excellent co-operation received from local heritage societies and heritage centres, together with Council officers and other interested residents, has reviewed some of the planning and social issues relating to property loss in the past and illustrates how their loss came about through a series of case study reports. In addition, school pupils have been offered a selection of buildings to research and to prepare short illustrated essays, and these are also included in this report.

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**Figure i.5. (above):** The elaborate gardens of Westfield Park at Ryde were developed from the 1960s, although the house itself remains.

**Figure i.6. (below):** The Royal National Hospital at Steephill shortly after its completion in 1868. It was demolished in 1969.



**THE ROYAL NATIONAL HOSPITAL FOR CONSUMPTION, UNDERCLIFF, VENTNOR, ISLE OF WIGHT.**  
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## 2. Introduction

The natural beauties of the Isle of Wight drew writers and artists in the late eighteenth century who wished to study and record its scenery and antiquities. Their travels, writings and artworks drew attention to the Isle of Wight amongst the aristocracy and the Island started to become fashionable. This was partially as a result of the ongoing French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars, which prevented the aristocracy from travelling abroad and led to a greater interest and exploration of the British landscapes. The health-giving properties of the sea air was a further factor in terms of the development of cottages ornés and marine villas in the nineteenth century on the Isle of Wight.

Visitors travelling to the Isle of Wight, who often arrived at Ryde, were able to view a range of ornate villas ranged along the Solent shoreline, *“such as those of Lord Spencer and the Duke of Buckingham, which looked out over the town, whilst Ryde House, the residence of George Player, the Italianate villa of J. Leacock, and the Tudor Gothic style castle of Lord Vernon, St Clare, were particularly prominent”* (Phillips-Birt, 1967<sup>1</sup>). These Gothic Revival mansions and smaller marine villas that dominated the coastal slopes of Ryde, contrasted with the Jacobean manor houses built of Island stone that could be found across the countryside of the East Wight, such as those at Arreton and Yaverland. Whilst the majority of these have stood the test of time, the town and country mansions built during the Victorian period in particular often had a limited life span.

Although these Victorian buildings were extremely well designed and constructed and contained considerable architectural detail, changing tastes over the next one hundred years led to the view that *“such properties were ugly, unsuited to changes in society, and architectural relics of the past”* (Stamp, 2010<sup>2</sup>). Many of the marine villas and country houses, dating from the early nineteenth century in particular, were bigger, more solidly built, more elaborate and complex and on the whole more lavishly furnished and decorated than those built in earlier centuries. *“Architects took inspiration from Italian classical designs or the Picturesque styles that had suitable historical and romantic associations, such as from the Elizabethan, Jacobean and Medieval periods”* (Stamp, 2010<sup>2</sup>).

The lifestyle enjoyed by those living in some of the Island’s great houses towards the end of the late nineteenth century and in the Edwardian period, changed drastically after the Great War when many of the sons and heirs of families were lost. *“As a result, many families found that their properties were difficult to manage and represented gloomy architectural relics that had no place in modern life”* (Stamp, 2010<sup>2</sup>). For those properties that continued to exist in their traditional manner after the First World War, a further blow was received when a number of them, such as East Cowes Castle, were requisitioned by the Army for the six years of the Second World War, and suffered considerably in terms of neglect and damage over that period. As some of the Island’s larger historic houses fell into decay, the 1950s and 1960s in particular became notorious for the period when properties were demolished and great estates cleared, to provide more suitable houses for modern day life.

This project reviews seventeen prominent historic buildings that have been lost for a range of reasons, including neglect, fire, and the effects of natural hazards such as coastal erosion and landslip. Whilst there are many other smaller residential properties and structures that have been lost over time, it is believed that the case studies selected have drawn out the key issues that allow us to gain an understanding of how the loss of some of the greatest properties in the East Wight came about in the past. It is hoped that, through this project, which has been supported by the very strong local heritage interest that now flourishes on the Island, and the interest of Island residents and visitors more widely, that lessons can be learned that will ensure that key heritage assets are protected sufficiently in the future.

## References

1. Phillips-Birt, D. 1967. *'Sham Castles of the Isle of Wight'*. Country Life Magazine. 28/12/1967. 1692.
2. Stamp, G., 2010. *'Lost Victorian Britain – How the Twentieth Century Destroyed the Nineteenth Century's Architectural Masterpieces'*. Aurum Press Ltd. London. ISBN: 978 1 78131 018 2.



**Figure 2.1.:** *'Shanklin Chine from the Sea'* by George Brannon. 1842. Steel Plate Engraving. Tower Cottage in the centre of the engraving was the cottage orné residence of General Viney and was located in a commanding position overlooking the Chine. This picturesque seaside residence features in many nineteenth century views. Its proximity to the cliff edge resulted in instability problems and necessitated its demolition in about 1925.



### 3. Lost Buildings of the East Wight – Case Studies

#### 3.1. East Cowes Castle

East Cowes Castle was the residence of the celebrated architect to George IV, John Nash, who began work on construction of an earlier version of the castle in about 1798. The property was gradually expanded by Nash, with a complex arrangement of towers and turrets that were built in the style of the period of King Edward VI. The Island engraver and author, George Brannon, wrote about East Cowes Castle in his *'Vectis Scenery'* in 1830 (four years after Brannon had been commissioned by Nash to produce a series of extra large engravings of his seat). *"East Cowes Castle, situated nearly on the brow of the hill directly overlooking the town, is more sheltered than Norris (its neighbour) and is distinguished by greater elegance and likeness of character, a most pleasing diversity in the form of its towers and is finished throughout with an extremely handsome detail. The west front is most beautiful; opening upon a bowling green terrace and looking through lengthened vistas which show by their gradual tints several distances that terminate in the sparkling bosom of the River Medina. Over the tufted foliage of the most elegant trees and pleasure grounds embrace a wide extent of prospect towards the interior of the Island; whilst the town and animated harbour of Cowes appear with particular advantage, assisted by the Solent Channel (seen here in the form of an extensive lake) and the retiring shores of the New Forest and Southampton Water"* (Brannon, 1830<sup>1</sup>).

*"The new conservatory is on a magnificent scale, and of a very grand design, constituting a most splendid improvement to the general imposing effect of this noble edifice. The grounds fall very favourably with very gentle undulations to the water, and are happily interspersed with several stately trees and flourishing plantations"* (Brannon, 1830<sup>1</sup>). Four years later the author, Thomas Barber, wrote in his *'Picturesque Illustrations of the Isle of Wight'* (Barber, 1834<sup>2</sup>) *"It seems to unite the features of the castellated mansion of a late date, with those of a Baronial stronghold of a much earlier period; we confess to have been little struck with the propriety of machicolated towers frowning over the elegances of domestic architecture"*.



**Figure 3.1.1.:** *'East Cowes Castle, the Seat of John Nash'* by William Daniell RA. Aquatint Engraving. 1823.





**Figure 3.1.2. (above):** *'East Cowes Castle from the West Cowes Road'* by George Brannon. 1826. This was one of six large engravings commissioned from Brannon by Nash in that year.

**Figure 3.1.3. (below):** *'East Cowes Castle'* in May 1824 by George Brannon showing the Octagon Room in the centre and the Long Conservatory.





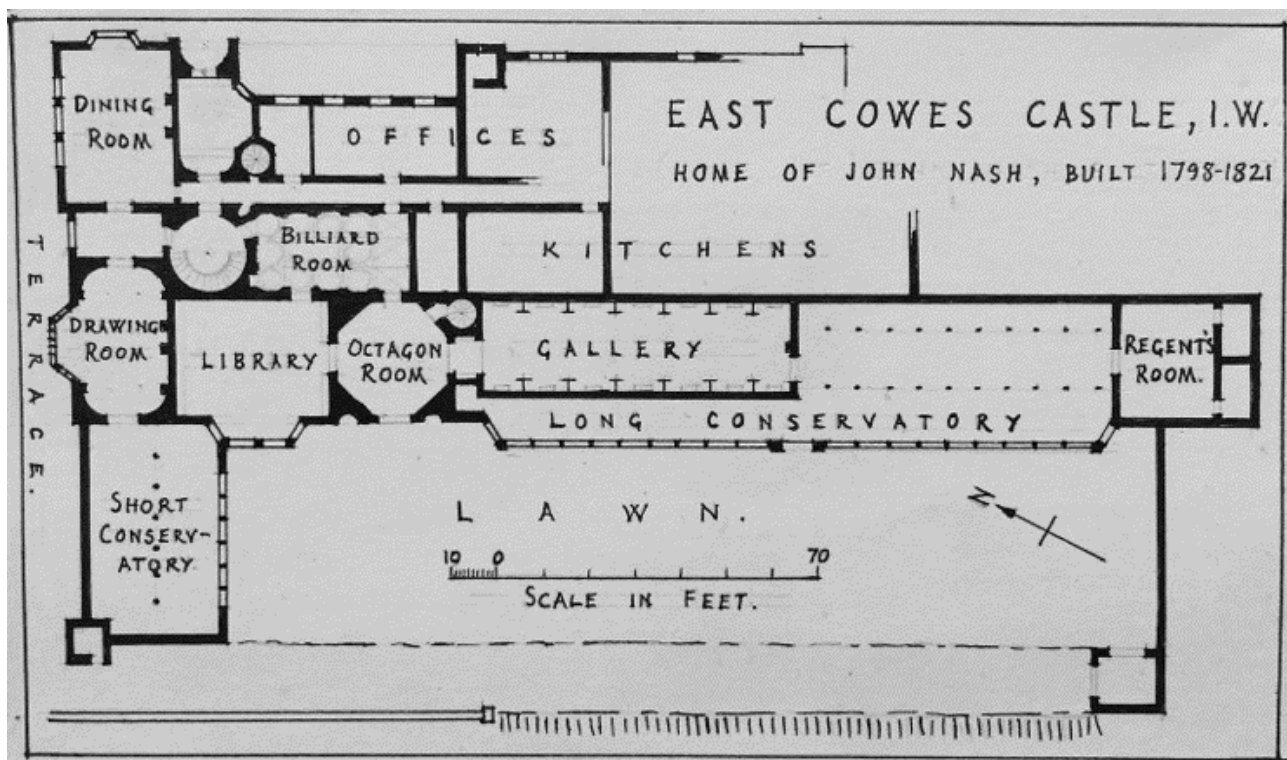


Figure 3.1.4. (above): A plan of East Cowes Castle showing the layout of the principal ground floor rooms.

Figure 3.1.5. (below): View of the library looking through the Octagon Room.



The extensive grounds of the castle had been laid out with the assistance of the celebrated landscape designer, Humphry Repton, who had also designed the gardens of the adjacent Norris Castle. The grounds had extended to an area of some 43 acres by 1842, but reached 74 acres in total by 1934.

After the death of John Nash, the property was sold to the Earl of Shannon, who added an entrance lodge at the southern end of the estate. It was then owned by a politician, George Tudor, before being acquired by Viscount Gort, whose family owned the estate until 1934. For the period of the Second World War East Cowes Castle was requisitioned by the War Office and, through this period of time, the condition of the building deteriorated considerably, with the occupants taking little care of the structure and invoking some considerable damage. Ongoing neglect led to the Castle finally being demolished in 1963. The only remaining relics are the castle's gatehouse, north lodge, and an original ice house. Over the next two decades the whole of the estate was gradually covered with housing. Estate roads winding through the former grounds crossed between Old Road, Newbarn Road, York Avenue and Castle Street, and were lined by rows of bungalows mainly constructed of reconstituted Island stone.

Following the death of Lady Eleanor Gort in 1933, the contents of the Castle were sold at auction by her executors, and the castle itself was sold the following year. In 1934 the castle was bought by Cowes Estates Limited, a development company, who maintained ownership up to the Second World War when the castle was requisitioned for use as a billet for British Canadian troops. By the mid-1940s the castle had deteriorated considerably, with its lead roofing and floorboards having been removed sometimes to repair local properties damaged as a result of enemy bombing. This led to further deterioration and ingress of water, such that, by 1951, it was proposed that the castle should be demolished (Sherfield, 1994<sup>3</sup>).

The remains of the estate were purchased by a private individual in 1958, who wished to use the site for holiday development and a golf course, which could have resulted in the castle itself being preserved. This application was refused and the site was sold to developers for housing.

The life of East Cowes Castle might have taken a different course after the death of John Nash if a major proposed speculative development, planned by George Eyre Brooks, had taken place. This scheme comprised the construction of numerous grand villas surrounding a botanic garden and bordered by York Avenue, Victoria Grove and Adelaide Grove, with an extension down to the waterfront. East Cowes Castle would have been a key feature of this development and, with Norris and the Queen's residence at Osborne House, would have made East Cowes a very fashionable location. In fact, the scheme was not a success and only a small number of the planned properties were built. The grandeur of the proposed scheme is illustrated in the lithographs and plan (see figures 3.1.6 and 3.1.7).

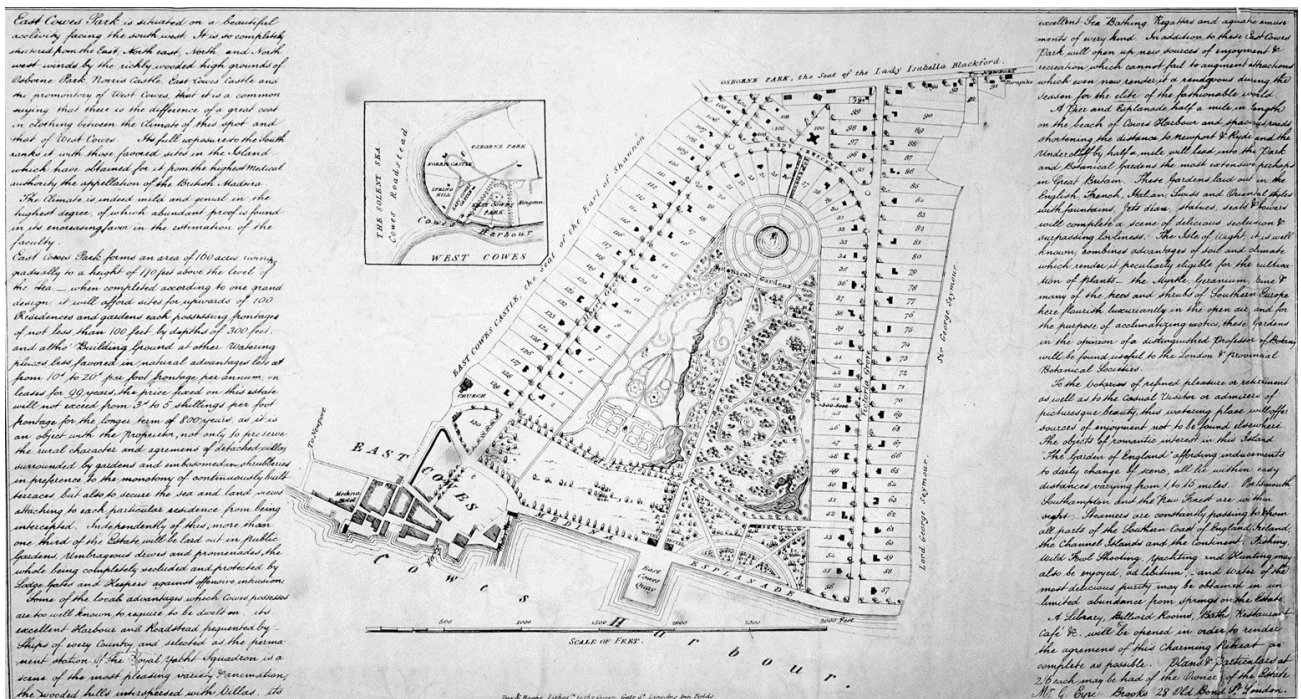
Writing of this proposed scheme, which was called 'East Cowes Park', in 1853 George Brannon said "*East Cowes park is the title of an extensive building speculation commenced a few years back when the formerly open cultivated fields between Osborne and East Cowes amounting to some 160 acres, were laid out to suitable lots for the purpose of erecting about 100 detached mansions and villas in every style; each to be surrounded by ornamental shrubberies, and so arranged that an interesting sea view would be open to all. To render it worthy of public patronage, no expense was spared by spirited projectors; excellent roads were made, extending above two miles, and edged on either side by a footpath, flower border and neat iron palisade. Handsome gateway entrances were erected and a large botanic garden, with other attractive improvements, were contemplated and partly effected. Several spacious houses were soon built but we regret to say, very little has since been done towards completing the original comprehensive design, and notwithstanding the advantages arising from the proximity to the Royal residence, the place does not take anything like what was at first expected*" (Brannon, 1858<sup>4</sup>).





**Figure 3.1.6. (above):** A lithograph from the prospectus for ‘East Cowes Park’ showing the ambitious layout with East Cowes Castle prominently placed on the right.

**Figure 3.1.7. (below):** Plan of the proposed 'East Cowes Park' Estate showing the layout of the plots. Only about fifteen of the plots were developed with large Victorian villas; ten of these have since been demolished and the sites redeveloped.







**Figure 3.1.8. (above):** View of East Cowes Castle in 1949 showing its dilapidated condition after the Second World War.

**Figure 3.1.9. (below):** The Castle shortly before its demolition.





**Figure 3.1.10. (above):** South Gate Lodge prior to its demolition in 1964,



**Figure 3.1.11. (left):** The state of the interior in the 1950s.

The passage of time and the changes of ownership and then particularly in the twentieth century with the requisitioning of the castle for the war period and changing tastes with respect to Victorian architecture, these factors led to the eventual demise of the building. Such Victorian mansions seemed useless and irrelevant to many people after the rigours of the Second World War, when reinstating and developing industry and restoring housing after wartime bomb damage were the priorities.



### 3.2. Fernhill, Wootton Bridge

Fernhill was a Gothic style residence constructed in the late eighteenth century for Sir Thomas Orde-Powlett, who was Governor of the Isle of Wight. On account of its prominent position at the top of the hill above Wootton Creek, Fernhill appears in many artworks and engravings by artists dating from the early nineteenth century. Brannon, writing in 1930, described the house in the following way; *“the house is spacious; its style of building light and extremely picturesque, resembling a modern Gothic church in its general outline, and adorned with a lofty prospect tower. It stands at the edge of a steeply sloping lawn, which is interspersed with trees; on the north screened by thriving plantations, and on the east terminated by Fishbourne Creek or the Wootton River which forms at high tide an ample sheet of water”* (Brannon, 1830<sup>1</sup>).

The height of the tower was such that it offered outstanding views over the grounds and the surrounding countryside, including distant views towards the Solent. In the early nineteenth century, the grounds were acknowledged as being as some of the finest to be found on the Isle of Wight. Although Fernhill changed hands a number of times in the nineteenth century, the Sanders family owned the property for over forty years up until 1862 and, later, it was owned by the Brodie family until 1933. At this point the property was purchased and divided into flats and was eventually destroyed by fire on the 18<sup>th</sup> June 1938.

Although part of the Fernhill site has been developed, some of the grounds now form a camp site. The original entrance to Fernhill House still exists, as does the ice house.

The fire which destroyed Fernhill on the 9<sup>th</sup> June 1938 resulted from an unfortunate accident. It appears that the fire started at the southern end of the building, and resulted from roofing materials, which had been already heated by the sun, being ignited by a spark from a bonfire made by workmen engaged in clearing timber from the grounds. Insufficient ladders and lack of water meant that the fire quickly spread, destroying the whole of the building (Wootton Bridge Historical, 2017<sup>5</sup>).



Figure 3.2.1.: ‘Fernhill, Wootton’ by George Brannon. 1822. Copperplate engraving.

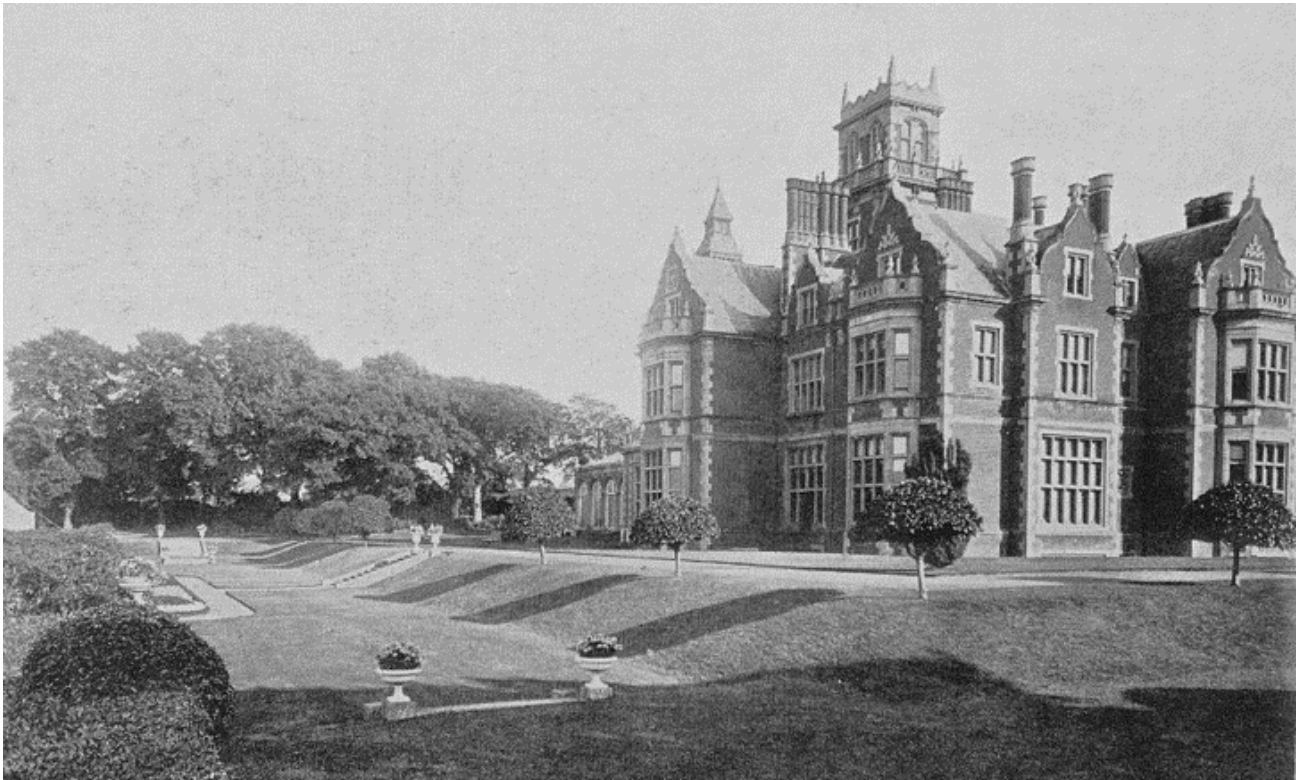




**Figure 3.2.2.:** *'Fernhill'* by Charles Tomkins. Watercolour. 1809. Tomkins' detailed view from the east side of Wootton Creek shows the extensive landscaped grounds and how the property dominated the landscape.

### 3.3. Appley Towers, Ryde

Appley Towers was a substantial brick-built mansion constructed in the Jacobean and Dutch Revival styles. It was developed on the site of an earlier marine villa, which was located in an elevated position, looking out towards Spithead. Appley Towers and the estate were purchased by Sir William Hutt in 1872, being part of the old Appley estate, which had belonged to his father, Mr Richard Hutt. He improved and added to the house before it passed to his widow in 1882 and thereon through the family. *"In the 1870s, not only was the house extensively enlarged and remodelled and the gardens re-landscaped, but a folly was constructed on the shore below the property in the form of a small castellated tower with battlements and an external staircase"* (Jacob, 1905<sup>6</sup>).



**Figure 3.3.1. (above):** *'The grandeur of Appley Towers in 1905'.* Its grounds extended down to the shore and included a castellated folly (Appley Tower) and a pier.



**Figure 3.3.2. (left):** The drawing room was elaborately decorated and filled with fine furniture such as the Pietra Dura table in the foreground.



The estate also had an orangery, a substantial conservatory and an aviary, whilst kitchen gardens and glasshouses were located on the southern side of Appley Road. "A neo-Jacobean brick gabled lodge to Appley Towers still remains abutting Appley Road to the west of the site of the main residence" (Lloyd & Pevsner, 2006<sup>7</sup>). A pier was constructed for the estate in the early 1870s but was demolished by 1911 when increased siltation made the structure unusable.



**Figure 3.3.3. (above):** the handsome orangery. **Figure 3.3.4. (below):** the garden terrace and Italian fountain. The grounds were filled with sculptures and ornaments of stone and terracotta.





**Figure 3.3.5.:** Appley Towers shortly before its demolition in 1959.

After the Second World War, the condition of the property had deteriorated considerably and the grounds seaward of the house adjacent to the shore were acquired by the former Ryde Borough Council. The property itself was demolished in 1959 and the whole of the site was laid out for residential mainly bungalow development. The history of the building and its fate is similar to that of East Cowes Castle, where there was a lack of interest at the time in Victorian architecture and the will to convert such a substantial building for use as residential accommodation or for other purposes.



### 3.4. St Clare, Ryde

St Clare, which was located just to the east of Appley Towers, was the marine residence of Colonel Francis Vernon-Harcourt. It was built as a castellated mansion very much in the manner of East Cowes Castle; the whole building had very much a Tudor Gothic style. The Island author and engraver, George Brannon, described the property in the following way in his publication *'Vectis Scenery'*; *"St Clare is a very beautiful villa of considerable dimensions, adorned with a lofty tower, and displaying all the picturesque variety and elegant likeness of the Gothic taste. The amenity of its situation is scarcely surpassed by any of the other sites along this charming quarter of the Island. It is a short distance from the shore to which the ground gently slopes, and affords from under the outspread arms of magnificent trees by which it is happily environed, a view of all the highly interesting marine scenery peculiar to the vicinity of Ryde"* (Brannon, 1830<sup>1</sup>).

The property was built by Ryde developer, Thomas Dashwood, who played a leading role in the town between 1829 and 1860. He was responsible not only for the construction of St Clare but also other important Island buildings, including Brigstocke Terrace, the Market House and Town Hall in Ryde, St Thomas' and Holy Trinity Churches in Ryde and St Catherine's Lighthouse at Niton. St Clare was demolished after the Second World War when the site was developed as a holiday camp. None of the existing structure remains.



**Figure 3.4.1.:** The garden front of St Clare near Ryde engraved by Thomas Barber in 1834. The grandeur of the castle is shown to best advantage in this view.





**Figure 3.4.2.:** This lithograph of St Clare published in 1858 by James Briddon shows how the grounds have been improved and laid out more formally.

### 3.5. Savoy Hotel, Sandown

The Savoy Hotel at Sandown occupied a prominent site close to the Esplanade and beach. The property was constructed at the end of the nineteenth century and was one of a number of mid-to-late Victorian hotels serving the expanding holiday industry at Sandown.

With the general national decline of seaside tourism, the hotel closed and was later converted into flats. The fabric of the building gradually deteriorated and, in 2011, a serious fire broke out in the already derelict building. In 2015 permission was granted for redevelopment of the site as flats and the building was subsequently demolished.

The story of the Savoy hotel is typical of numerous Victorian seaside buildings that, if maintained, could have been converted suitably into serviceable residential accommodation but the deterioration of the fabric reached such an extent that demolition was the only answer.



**Figure 3.5.1.:** The Savoy Hotel, Sandown in its heyday c.1910. The grand façade with its projecting bays offering most guests a sea view was typical of late Victorian hotel architecture on the Island.



### 3.6. Sandown Fort

Sandown Fort or Sandham Castle is one of numerous fortifications constructed during the reign of King Henry VIII to protect the Isle of Wight and the Hampshire coast from French attack in 1545. Sandown beach was regarded as a particularly vulnerable location for enemy attack and, as a result, the castle was constructed close to the shore. Closer to Sandown a series of earthwork redoubts were also constructed to provide improved defence for the beach itself. The original Sandham Castle was lost as a result of coastal erosion, and the remains of the structure were demolished in 1631.

A new fortification, Sandown Fort, replaced the original structure, it was located further inland; *“the possible remains of the original castle may be visible along the shoreline at very low tide”* (Cantwell & Sprack, Undated<sup>8</sup>). The replacement fort also became vulnerable to coastal erosion, as evidenced in the watercolour drawing by the topographical artist, John Nixon, in 1788 and the later detailed engravings by Richard Livesay showing the fort on the occasion of the review of the Isle of Wight Volunteers in 1798.

The remains of Sandown Fort were demolished and replaced with the granite fort which was built in the 1860s as part of Lord Palmerston’s improvements to coastal defences against potential attack by the French. The loss of the historic forts at Sandown illustrates the impact of the natural hazard of coastal erosion on property and infrastructure around the Island’s coast, which has been a significant cause of the loss of historic properties, particularly since the early nineteenth century.



**Figure 3.6.1.:** This watercolour of Sandown Fort by John Nixon, which was painted in 1788, shows the proximity of the wall to the sea cliff and its vulnerability to undermining by the sea.

Image courtesy of the Trustees of Carisbrooke Castle Museum.



**Figure 3.6.2.:** This aquatint engraving shows the review of the Isle of Wight Volunteers at Sandown in 1798. Engraved ten years after the view by Nixon, the cliff edge appears to have eroded back to the seaward face of the fort itself.



### 3.7. Knighton Gorges Manor, near Newchurch

Knighton Manor, in the hamlet of Knighton near Newchurch, was an Elizabethan-Tudor style Island stone manor house of substantial proportions. Dating back to the thirteenth century, the manor was extensively improved and altered over time.

This account of the manor house in 1796 described it in the following way; *“the manor house had descended through a long line of ancestry from a distant period of time. The Gothic character of its original architecture was still preserved in the latticed windows, adorned with carved divisions and pillars of stonework. Several pointed terminations also, in the construction of the roof, according to the customs of our forefathers, corresponded with the general features of the building. One end of the house was entirely clothed with thick foliage of an immense ivy, which climbed beyond customary limits, and embraced a lofty chimney up to its very summit. The large and venerable mansion commands an extensive prospect over a countryside that is very much lower than the house. Viewed from below it exhibits its picturesque site deeply embosomed in well-timbered woods, which rise on the east and west sides in steep acclivities to a height almost equal to the downs behind”* (Wyndham, 1796<sup>9</sup>).

The house is no longer in existence and all that remains are the two stone gateposts. The property was burnt and demolished in 1821 by George Maurice Bisset in order to prevent his daughter inheriting it after she married a clergyman without Bisset’s consent. In its heyday, the manor house was visited by Sir Henry Englefield, who provided a detailed description and engraving of the manor in his *‘Antiquities of the Isle of Wight’* (Englefield, 1816<sup>10</sup>). The house was a favourite haunt of the fashionable society of artists, writers and administrators, including Sir Richard Worsley or Appuldurcombe, Captain of the Isle of Wight, whose wife’s association with Bisset which resulted in scandal and disgrace.



**Figure 3.7.1.:** Knighton Manor was located in a hollow immediately south of the central chalk downs at the foot of Knighton Shute. The manor can be seen shrouded by trees (centre right) in this engraving by S. Barth & J. King in 1813.





**Figure 3.7.2.:** This detailed copperplate engraving produced by Sir Henry Englefield in 1816 is one of the very few images of the Manor that provide a detailed impression of its grandeur and situation.



### 3.8. Tower Cottage, Shanklin

Tower Cottage was a cottage orné residence constructed in about 1825, close to the head of Shanklin Chine, on its northern side. A prominent feature of the cottage was its circular tower which faced the Chine and which was surmounted with a spire. Numerous engravings of Shanklin Chine viewed from the sea show Tower Cottage in its prominent location at the head of the Chine. Tower Cottage was one of several cottage orné buildings located in Shanklin and along the adjoining Undercliff coast, the style of which had been made fashionable by the Regency architect, John Nash, who lived at East Cowes Castle.

For many years, the head of the Chine was dominated by this ornate thatched residence, which had been constructed for General Viney. However, it became unstable early in the twentieth century and had to be demolished. The close proximity of the building to the steep sided site of the Chine and the loading of the building were no doubt the factors that resulted in its loss. No part of the building remains today, although the gardens are in public ownership.



**Figure 3.8.1.:** This view by E. W. Cooke, engraved in 1858, shows the location of Tower Cottage near the head of Shanklin Chine.



**Figure 3.8.2.:** A photograph of the ivy-clad and thatched Tower Cottage in about 1900.





**Figure 3.8.3.:** This extensive view of Shanklin Chine from the sea was engraved by William Carpenter in about 1856. Here Tower Cottage is shown with a spire on the top of its tower; this may have been removed later to reduce loading on the building.

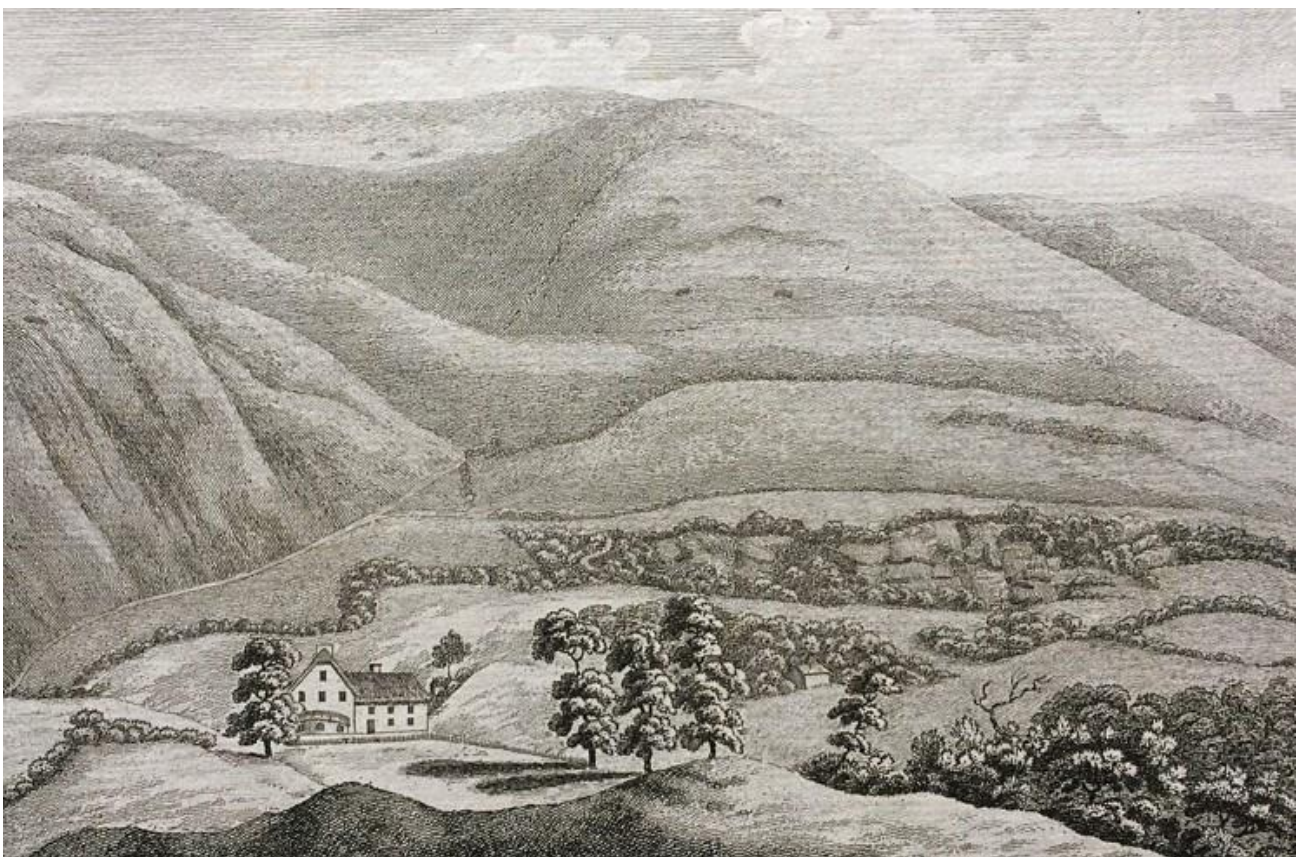


### 3.9. St Boniface Cottage, near Ventnor

St Boniface Cottage was a charming thatched cottage orné residence, which was originally constructed by Colonel Hill in about 1760. As one of few properties owned by gentlemen on the south-east coast of the Isle of Wight at that time, the cottage was described and illustrated in most of the key topographical books (Hassall, 1790<sup>11</sup>; Wyndham, 1793<sup>9</sup>; Tomkins, 1796<sup>12</sup>; Cooke, 1808<sup>13</sup>).

St Boniface Cottage eventually passed to the granddaughter of Colonel Hill, who married the Reverend James White in 1829. The property was located at the foot of Leeson Hill, the main road into Ventnor, on land opposite the former St Boniface Primary School. St Boniface Cottage later became known as St Boniface House following the substitution of slates for thatch and the loss of many of the trees which surrounded it when it was first built. *"It is the only house in this part of Ventnor/Bonchurch that can lay any claim to antiquity"* (Whitehead, 1911<sup>14</sup>).

Hassall, writing in 1790, said; *"it is so retired that it might almost be styled a hermitage; and at the same time it boasts of all that nature can bestow"* (Hassall, 1790<sup>11</sup>). Later Thomas Pennant said *'St Boniface Cottage is an elegant little building under the most precipitous rocks. We were introduced into it, and met with a most polite reception from Mrs Hill, the lady of Colonel Hill the owner who made this most sequestered spot a frequent and long abode'* (Pennant, 1804<sup>15</sup>). It is understood that the property was demolished by the owner in about 1912 following a dispute with the Council over the amount of rates payable on the property.



**Figure 3.9.1.:** This early copperplate engraving from Worsley's *'History of the Isle of Wight'* (1781) shows the isolated location of St Boniface Cottage at the foot of Bonchurch Downs.





**Figure 3.9.2.:** 'St Boniface Cottage' in 1809 by the watercolourist artist, Charles Tomkins. Tomkins had first visited the Cottage in 1796 when he was writing his two volume *Tour of the Isle of Wight*. The winding path leading up the southern face of the down behind the property was replaced in the 1860s by Leeson Road, which became the main road from Ventnor to Shanklin.





**Figure 3.9.3. (above):** This early coloured engraving of St Boniface Cottage was produced in about 1815. It compared with the rather detailed copperplate engraving of the cottage (**Figure 3.9.4. below**) that appeared in George Brannon's '*Vectis Scenery*' from the 1820s.







**Figure 3.9.5. (above) and Figure 3.9.6. (below)** show two views of St Boniface Cottage in about 1900, a decade before its demolition.





### 3.10. Ventnor Mill

Ventnor Mill was one of the earliest buildings to be constructed in this locality and existed when Ventnor was just a hamlet long before its period of rapid Victorian development and expansion. Albin, writing in 1795, said; *“we should not overlook the small village of Ventnor, near the south shore of this parish (i.e. Newchurch) between Steephill and Bonchurch, the little cove of which is so well known for its very romantic scenery and cascade of fine water. After this last has served to turn a corn wheel, it falls upon the beach”* (Albin, 1795<sup>16</sup>). The mill has been particularly well illustrated over time, including a fine engraving by Brannon in 1821 and an oil painting exhibited at the Royal Academy by Harriet Gouldsmith in 1828 (see Figure 3.10.3).

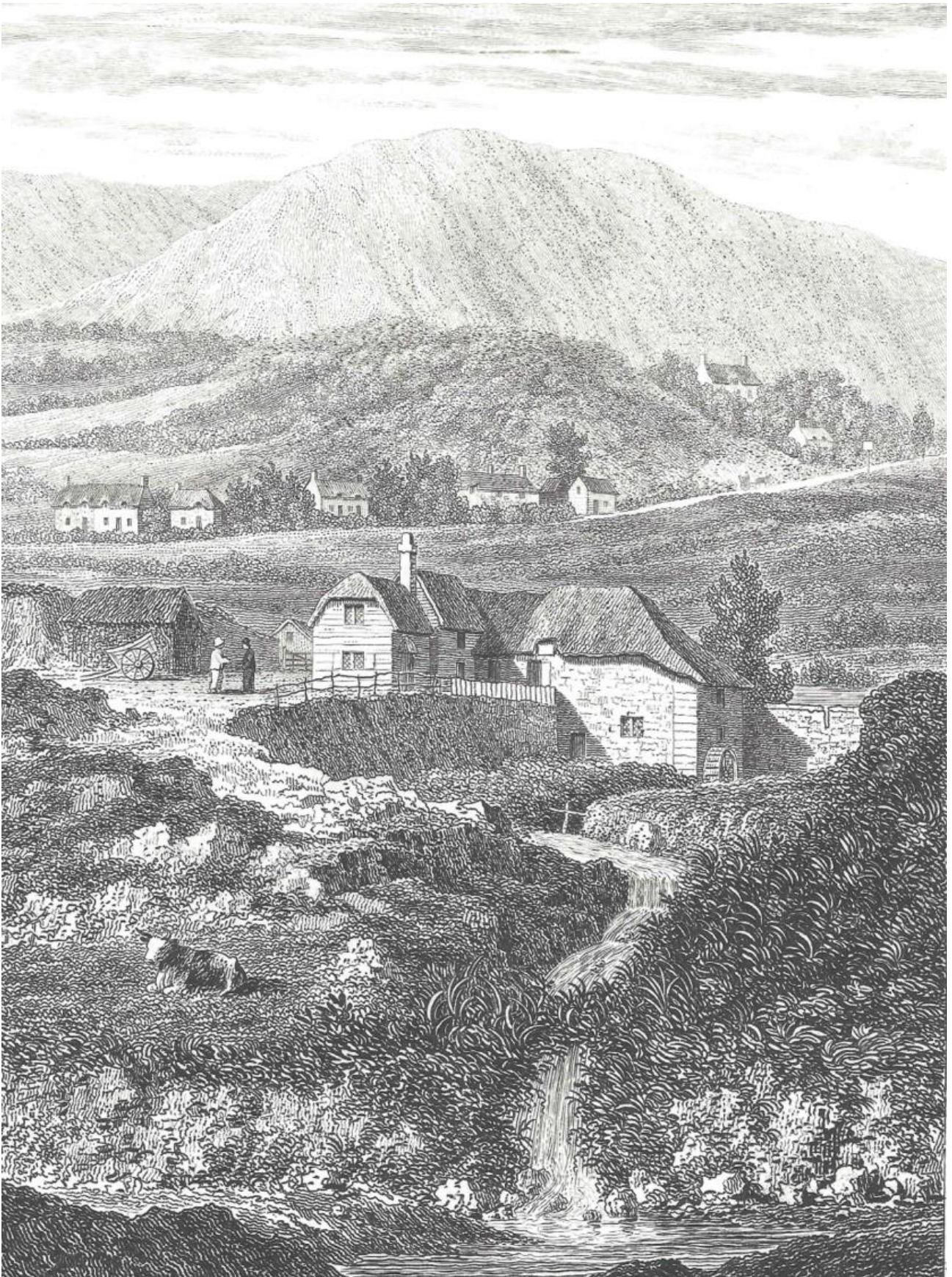
Ventnor Cove and the mill presented a striking feature when viewed from the shore in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. George Cooke, writing in 1808, said; *“that the coastal scenery of this cove, or bay, rivals perhaps any other part of the Island, the mill and waterfall, with a range of fisherman’s huts on the shore and busy sea with the boats, forms a lively and gratifying picture”* (Cooke, 1808<sup>13</sup>).

Ventnor Mill had probably been in existence for some centuries, the water power conferring a considerable monetary value upon the premises. It is probably the mill referred to in the Feudal Aid in the reign of Edward III (1327) listed as ‘Vellata de Wathe’. The main source of the stream supplying the mill was in a one acre field named Mill Hill, detached from the rest of the holding. After passing through other properties, the stream entered the mill mead and garden of two and a half acres, finally flowing onto Mill Bottom of one acre and thence the shore, where its waters tumbled into the sea by a succession of cascades. The road down to the shore adjacent to the mill was known as Mill Street, before its name was changed to Pier Street. The thatched mill was rebuilt after a serious fire in 1848 but the building was eventually demolished in 1875.



**Figure 3.10.1.:** An early aquatint engraving of Ventnor Mill (c.1790) showing its location at the head of the cascade stream that turned the wheel of this corn mill.





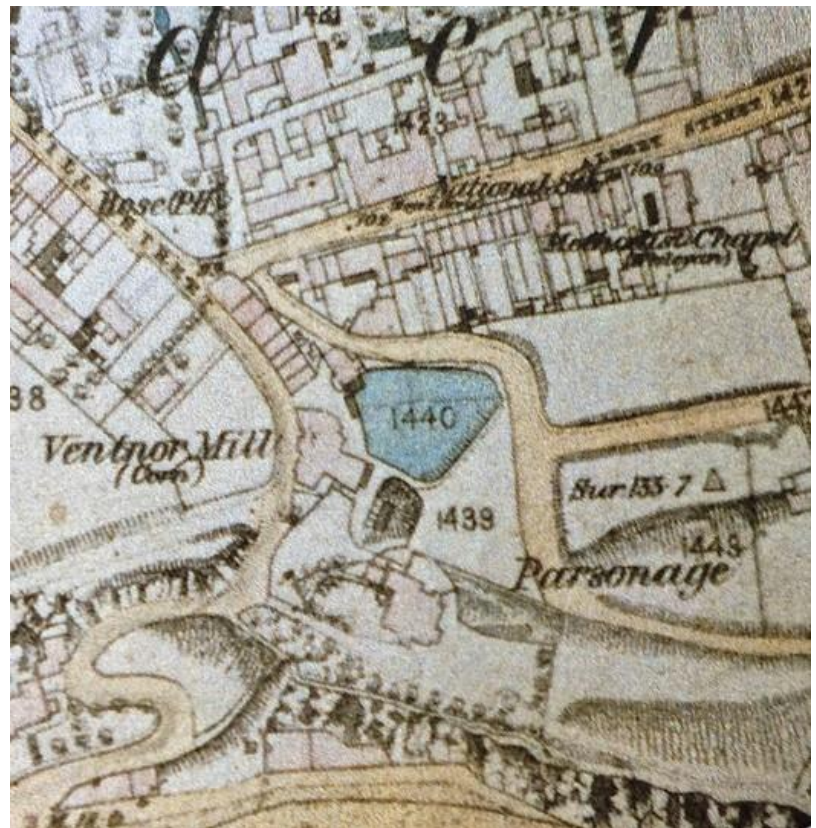
**Figure 3.10.2.:** *'A Bird's-Eye View of the Village of Ventnor'* in 1821 by George Brannon illustrates the picturesque beauty of this location a decade before the village started to develop as a health resort.





**Figure 3.10.3. (above):** Harriet Gouldsmith's 1826 oil painting shows the Mill from the south (seaward) side. The mill wheel can be seen on the right with the winding path leading down to the foreshore in the foreground.

**Figure 3.10.4. (right):** This abstract from the early Ordnance Survey map shows the position of the mill, and its mill pond on the location now occupied by Alexandra Gardens. Ventnor Parsonage (Case Study 3.11) can be seen close to the mill on its south-east side.



### 3.11. Ventnor Parsonage

Ventnor Parsonage was a large stone mansion constructed on a ledge of Greensand to the east of and adjacent to Ventnor Cascade. It was constructed with the financial assistance of John Hambrough of Steephill Castle, who also provided funding for the construction of St Catherine's Church. The building of the Parsonage, used stone excavated from the site on which the Royal Marine Hotel stood in Belgrave Road. The parsonage was a distinctive feature of Ventnor seafront throughout the Victorian period, and was well illustrated in many engravings by Brannon, Westall, Carrick, Hicks and others.

Ventnor Parsonage was demolished in 1935 to make way for the Winter Gardens, an Art Deco pavilion based on the designs of the De La Warre Pavilion at Bexhill-on-Sea in Sussex. Towards the end of its life, the parsonage had been purchased by the former Ventnor Urban District Council in 1929, and was refurbished for public use. The ground floor rooms were converted for reading, games and music and the upper floors as a refreshment area, whilst open-air band concerts and dances were held on the lawns. There was some opposition to the demolition of the Parsonage at the time, and the provision of the new Art Deco Winter Gardens building contrasting with the more traditional Victorian architecture surrounded it, would no doubt have engendered significant discussion.



**Figure 3.11.1.:** *'Ventnor from a Hill above the Cove'* by William Westall (1842) shows the prominently located mansion on a terrace overlooking the shore. At this time the Esplanade had not been developed with only the turreted 'St Augustine' on the Cascade path and the Bathing House (now Spyglass Inn) in the distance.





**Figure 3.11.2. (above):** *'Ventnor from the Eastern Cliffs'* by George Elgar Hicks engraved in 1849 and showing the Parsonage. In the space of a few years the town and Esplanade has developed considerably.

**Figure 3.11.3. (below):** This fine view by Robert Carrick looks up at the Parsonage from the shore. After the building was destroyed by fire it was replaced by the Art Deco-style Winter Gardens.



### 3.12. The Royal Marine Hotel, Ventnor

The Royal Marine Hotel in Belgrave Road, Ventnor was a substantial Victorian stone building that occupied a narrow site at the eastern end of the road. There is a wealth of artistic and photographic imagery which provides us with a detailed picture of the hotel during the Victorian/Edwardian periods. In particular, two watercolours by William Gray Snr. (1868) and William Gray Jnr. (1876) show views of the property before and after its extension.

At the time, the Royal Marine Hotel was the most important hotel in the town, and its elegance is obvious from the artworks that used to hang in the hotel and from photographs and contemporary accounts (e.g. Morgan Richards, 1908<sup>19</sup>). On the opposite side of the road to the hotel, near the top of Esplanade Road, stood a Gothic Revival-style folly tower and, with the hotel, this was destroyed by enemy action in 1943. The building was very badly damaged as a result of the bombing and occupants of the hotel were treated at the former Royal National Hospital at Steephill. The site of the hotel was cleared and a row of marine residences were constructed in the 1950s.



**Figure 3.12.1.:** An image of the Royal Marine Hotel in Belgrave Road, Ventnor, from a watercolour by William Gray (c.1870s). The grandeur of the hotel is reflected in the ornate Entrance Hall.





**Figure 3.12.1.:** The Royal Marine Hotel in 1868 in this highly detailed watercolour by William Gray. The view looks westwards towards the Royal Hotel, whilst a Gothic-style folly is situated at the junction with Esplanade Road. The carriage in front of the hotel is 'The Rocket', which conveyed guests from Shanklin Station to Ventnor prior to the opening of Ventnor Station.





**Figure 3.12.2.:** This watercolour by William Gray Jnr. was painted in 1876 after the height of the hotel was increased and looks north-eastwards towards the town and St Boniface Down. The structure was destroyed by bombing in 1943. Ventnor suffered from several bombing raids including enemy aircraft disposing of any remaining bombs on their return journey across the Channel.



### 3.13. Steephill Castle

Steephill is a hamlet near Ventnor, situated on the Undercliff coast, and was previously the location of a substantial castle-style mansion, Steephill Castle, which was demolished to allow the construction of residential development in the 1960s.

The original site of Steephill Castle was occupied by a cottage orné-style property belonging to the Governor of the Isle of Wight, the Hon. Hans Stanley. His cottage was described by many of the early travellers passing along the scenic Undercliff in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. On his death the Steephill Estate was acquired by Wilbraham Tollemache. Following his death in 1821 the site was acquired by the wealthy John Hambrough in 1828, and it was he who constructed Steephill Castle between 1833 and 1835. The Castle is reputed to have cost £250,000 to build in 1835, a huge sum at the time but Mr Hambrough became blind and never saw the completed building.

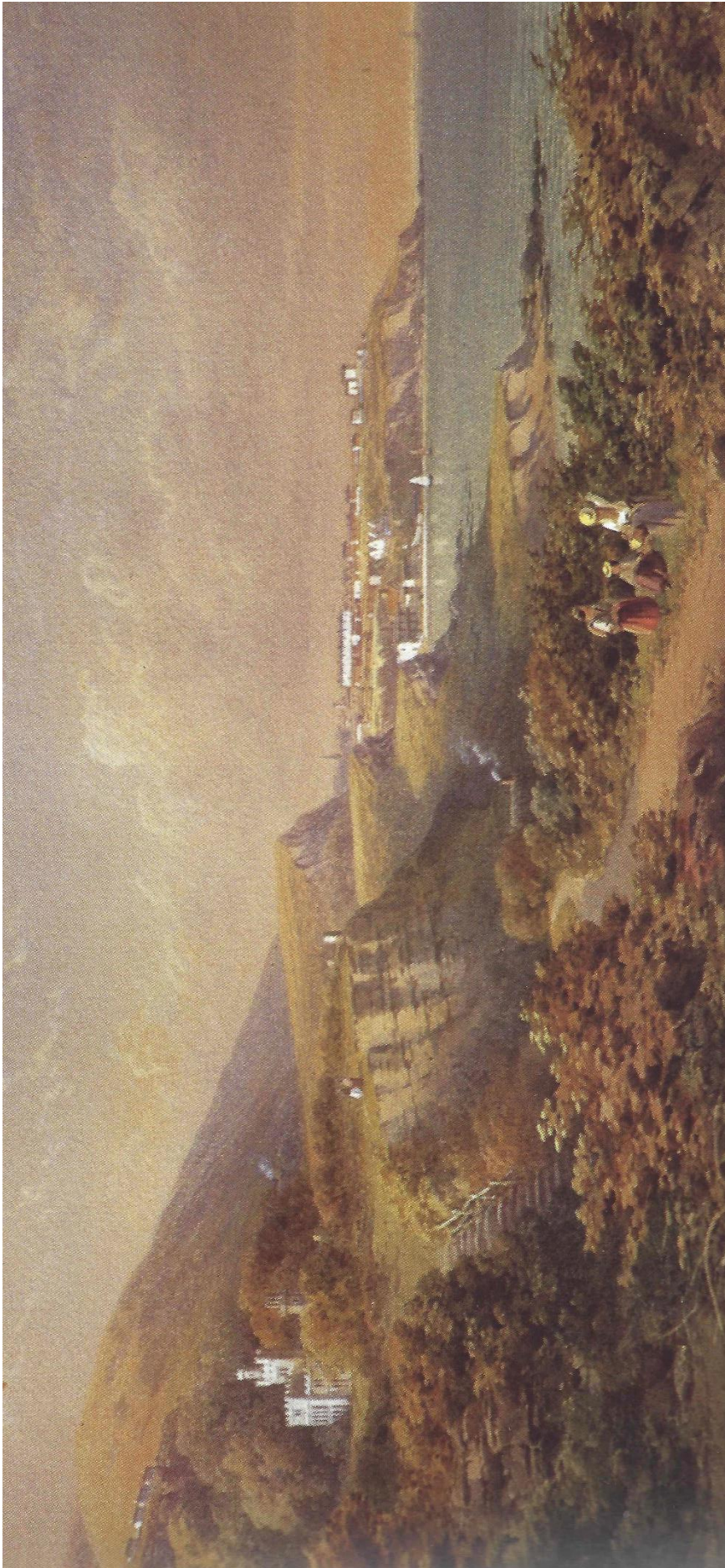
Steephill Castle was illustrated by almost all the topographical artists making tours along the south coast of the Island, and by engravers who illustrated topographical books, notably George Brannon. It was Hambrough who had funded the construction of St Catherine's Church in Ventnor and the Parsonage (see Case Study 3.11). After Hambrough, Steephill Castle was acquired by an American businessman, John Morgan Richards, who acquired the property in 1903. Morgan Richards commissioned a publication entitled '*Steephill Castle, Ventnor, Isle of Wight*' which was written and illustrated by John B. Marsh (Marsh, 1907<sup>18</sup>). This book provides a detailed account of the building, together with numerous photographs of the exterior, the interior and the grounds. Further information is provided in a publication by Morgan Richards entitled '*Almost Fairyland*' (Morgan Richards, 1911<sup>19</sup>).



**Figure 3.13.1.:** '*The Southern Coast of the Isle of Wight*' in a steel plate engraving by George Brannon, published in 1843. The view shows how the Castle dominated the landscape of the coastal zone at Steephill with the '*Marine Villa*' of Earl Yarborough in the foreground (left) and Captain Pelham's Cottage (now Lisle Combe) in the centre; Ventnor can be seen in the distance.







**Figure 3.13.3.:** This very detailed watercolour entitled '*Young Blackberry Gatherers at Steephill*' by William Gray, painted in about 1855 shows the landscape at Steephill particularly well. The Castle had been built between 1833-35 and the whiteness of the fresh building stone is still apparent, hence its name at the time; '*The White Castle*'.



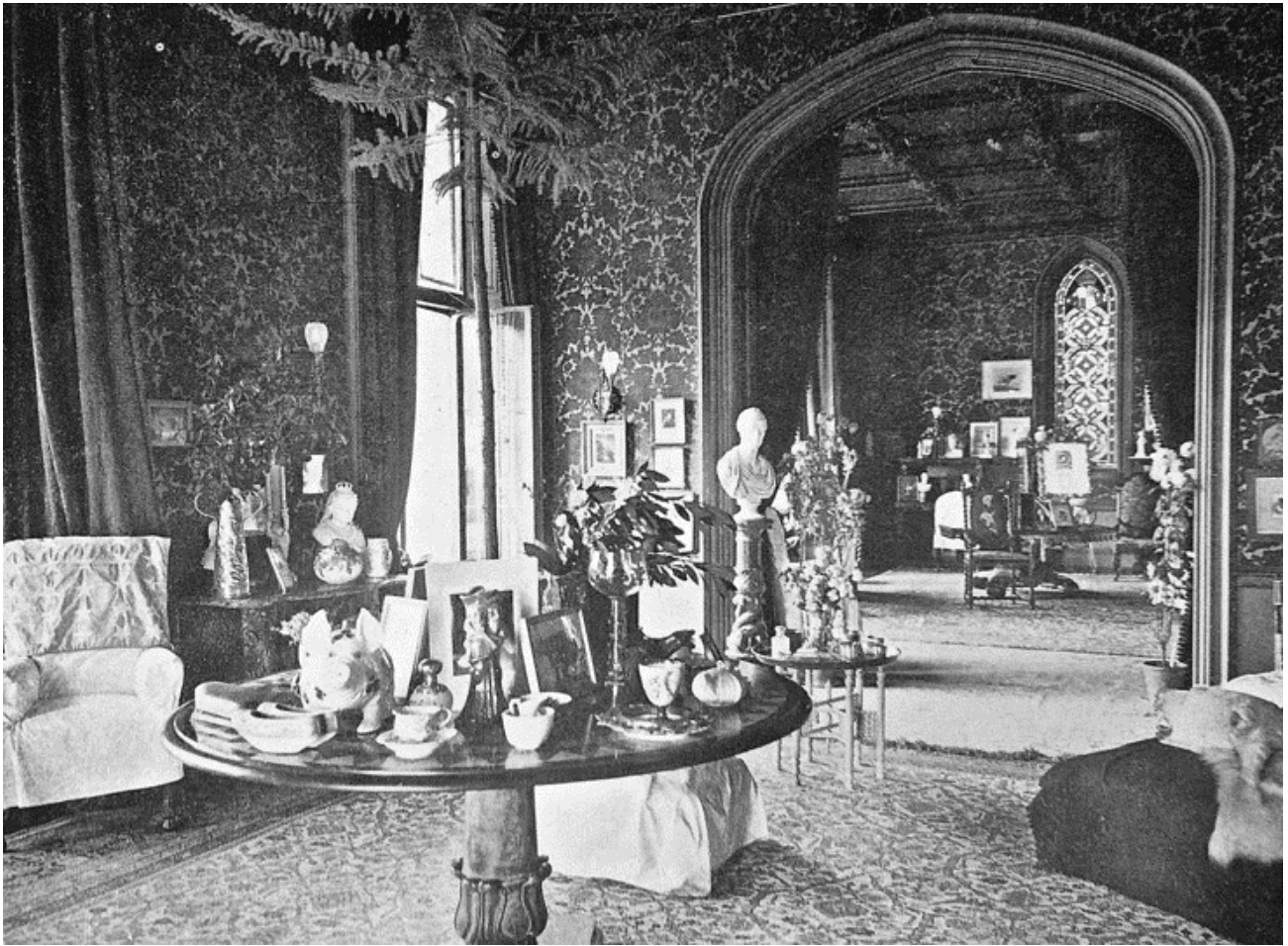


**Figure 3.13.4. (above):** This close view of the west-facing front of the Castle was engraved by George Brannon in 1833, actually during the period of its construction. The flag tower allowed extensive views along the Undercliff.

**Figure 3.13.5. (below):** This fine steel engraving by William Westall ARA produced in 1838 shows the view of the Castle from Steephill Road when approaching towards Ventnor.

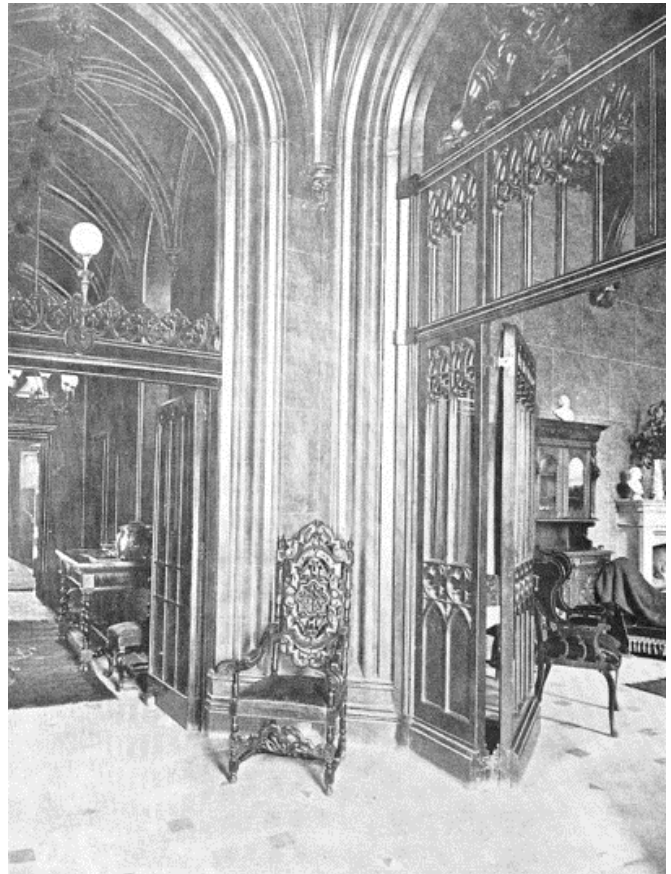






**Figure 3.13.6. (above):** This view shows the drawing room with its richly patterned wallpaper and filled with ornaments and looks through to The Empress Room, which was named after the Empress of Austria who stayed there in 1874.

**Figure 3.13.7. (right):** The richly panelled entrance hall, with its heavy oak furniture.



After the death of Morgan Richards, and after the First World War, the Castle was used as a hotel and, later, as a school during the Second World War. By the late 1950s the upkeep and modernisation required saw the building deteriorate considerably, and the property was demolished in 1963 to make way for residential development. Steephill Castle, sometimes described as the *'Queen of the Undercliff'* was a striking landmark building but, like St Clare near Ryde and East Cowes Castle, such architecture had been out of favour for several decades and was not regarded as either particularly old or particularly important architecturally; this led to the auction of the contents and the loss of the building.

The grounds of Steephill Castle, which were extensive and extended down towards the coast and westwards along the Undercliff along the north side of Steephill Road, were exceptionally fine. Joseph Paxton, the famous horticulturalist, said; *"I have travelled from Stockholm to Constantinople but nowhere have I seen finer gardens than those of Steephill Castle"* (McInnes, 2005<sup>20</sup>). Some of the properties within the former castle estate still retain architectural and garden features relating to the former castle.



**Figure 3.13.8.:** Demolition of the entrance gateway to the Castle in 1963.



### 3.14. The Royal National Hospital, Steephill

The 'National Cottage Hospital for Consumption and Diseases of the Chest on the Separate Principle' was conceived in 1867, constructed from 1868 and opened in 1869. It was closed on the 15<sup>th</sup> April 1964 by which time its name had changed to the 'Royal National Hospital for Diseases of the Chest' (Laidlaw, 1990<sup>21</sup>).

The Royal National Hospital was an impressive building which extended for nearly a quarter of a mile, adjacent to the main Steephill Road to the west of Ventnor. The southern aspect of the building was quite different from the road frontage in that all the residential blocks (or 'cottages' as they were known), had balconies allowing the patients to enjoy the Undercliff sunshine. On the landward side of the Undercliff Drive there were working gardens with glasshouses and piggeries. The main hospital gardens were beautifully landscaped with walks, separate areas being allocated in Victorian and Edwardian times for male and female patients. Running through the middle of the grounds were areas of fruit trees, as well as the building maintenance shops and the kitchen garden.

Following the virtual conquest of tuberculosis, the number of patients at the Royal National Hospital had declined steadily over the years, and the decision was eventually made, in spring 1960, that the hospital should be closed with the following announcement: *"the Minister has now considered the recommendations made him by the Wessex Regional Hospital Board that the Royal National Hospital, Ventnor, should be closed when satisfactory alternative provision has been made to meet the hospital needs of patients from the Isle of Wight suffering from tuberculosis. He is satisfied that, with the fall that has taken place in the demand for hospital treatment for tuberculosis, the retention of the Royal National Hospital for its original purpose can no longer be justified, and that other satisfactory arrangements can be made for tuberculosis patients resident in the Island"* (Ventnor Mercury, 1960<sup>22</sup>).

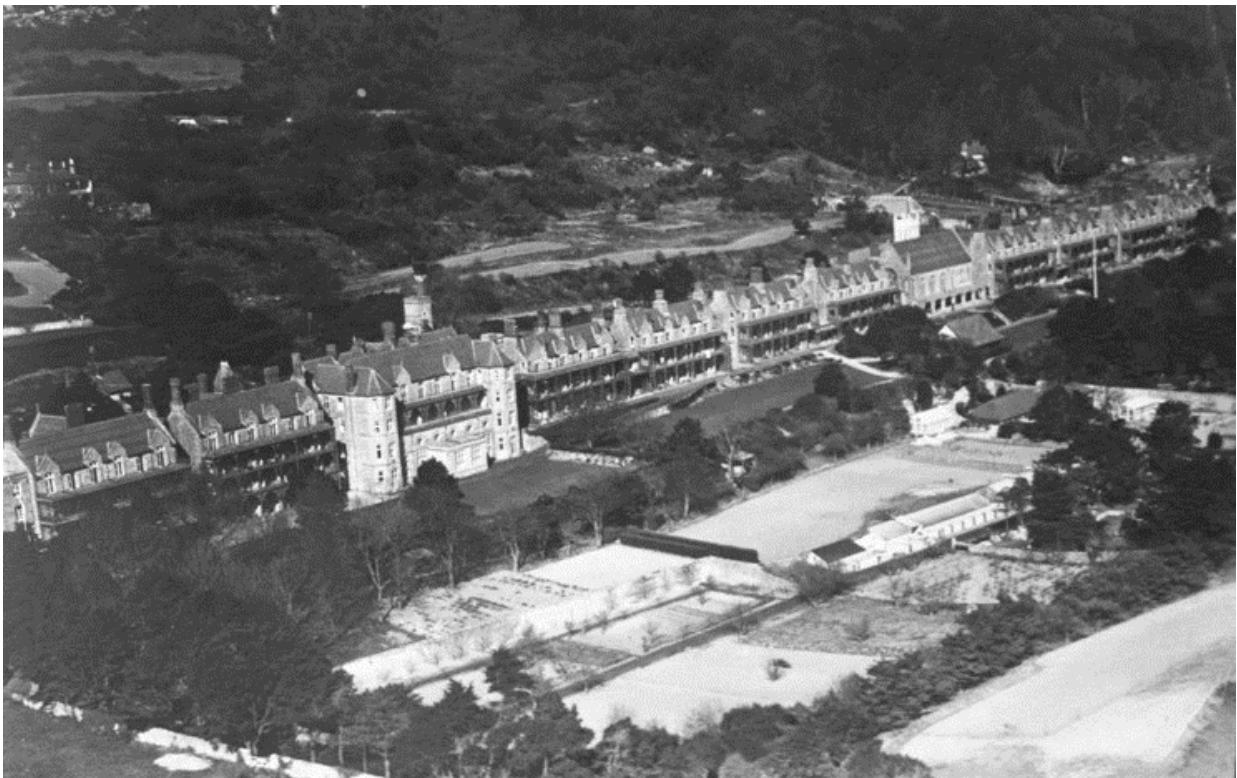


**Figure 3.14.1.:** Princess Louisa laying the foundation stone for the second pair of 'Cottages' at the Royal National Hospital, Steephill in 1871. The founder, Dr Arthur Hill Hassall, promoted the concept of cottages to avoid cross-infection, and each patient had their own seaward-facing bedroom.



**Figure 3.14.2. (above):** The Royal National Hospital in about 1880; the quarter mile long building treated over 100,000 patients from across the British Isles during its ninety-six year life.

**Figure 3.14.3. (below):** An aerial view of the hospital with the extensive kitchen gardens in the foreground. St Luke's Chapel towards the right included fine decorations and stained glass by the Pre-Raphaelites.







**Figure 3.14.4. (above):** Recovering patients undertaking heavy grade work in the grounds as part of their treatment.

**Figure 3.14.5. (below):** The hospital viewed from the south-west showing its sheltered position within the Steephill Undercliff.





**Figure 3.14.6. (top left):** St Luke's Chapel, which included fine stained glass by Ford Madox-Brown, William Morris, Edward Burne-Jones and Reynolds-Stephens was demolished, although some of the more important windows were saved and installed in St Lawrence Parish Church thanks to the efforts of The Undercliff Society and The Victorian Society.

**Figure 3.14.7 (top right):** A fete on the lawns in front of the hospital in about 1958. Some of the patients look on from their bedroom balconies.

**Figure 3.14.8. (bottom):** Patients taking tea on the Ladies Lawn in about 1920.



*"He has considered the various suggestions that have been put forward that the premises should be adapted for other hospital uses including the suggestion that it should be used jointly by the County Council for old people and by the hospital service for chronic sick and other non-acute cases. It is not considered practicable to maintain the hospital as a national centre for the treatment of particular types of patients, in view of the development of local regional services that has taken place and the general shortening for the length of stay in hospital".*

*"A deputation from the County Council and other Island bodies has met the Parliamentary Secretary and put forward their views. It seems to the Minister that there has been sufficient time and opportunity for all parties to make their views fully known to him, and he does not, therefore, think that a Public Inquiry would serve any useful purpose in bringing new facts or considerations to light. He has, therefore, decided to accept the recommendation of the Regional Hospital Board that the hospital should be closed, and alternative arrangements have been made to provide for Island tuberculosis patients. The Council's interest in this property will be borne in mind in the event of it being disposed of" McInnes, 2005<sup>20</sup>).*

The Island MP, Mark Woodnutt, felt that to turn the RNH into a teachers' training college would be more beneficial to Ventnor and the Island than to retain the building as a hospital. By 1964 arrangements for closure of the RNH had been confirmed. The hospital closed finally, after ninety six years, on 3<sup>rd</sup> May 1964. The service of Thanksgiving for the work of the hospital and its staff in the fight against chest diseases was held in the hospital chapel on 15<sup>th</sup> April 1964. By then no arrangements had been made for its sale, or its future use. Ventnor Urban District Council fought to obtain a use, preferably educational, which could maintain use of the building as soon as its life as a hospital was over.

Letters were submitted to Alderman Mark Woodnutt MP and the Ministry regarding the Council's request that the RNH be sold to the Council by private Treaty. But because of the interest in the sale and government policy that all prospective purchasers should be given an equal opportunity, the Minister felt the views of the Planning Authority should be obtained before a decision was taken on the method of disposal. The Council agreed; *"that the Planning Committee be informed that if possible the building should be used for an educational purpose; and the Ministry and Planning Committee be urgently requested to give their decisions without delay before the end of April"*.

Three years later a decision on the future of the hospital sites remained unresolved. The Ministry of Health had not yet had any opinion from the Ministry of Housing and Local Government about alternative uses for the land, which was surplus to requirements. A public local Inquiry was held on 21<sup>st</sup> February 1967 at Ventnor. Until the decision was announced, his Ministry could do nothing about disposing of the land because it could not seek a purchaser or place a value on it without knowing who could use it and for what purpose. The Ministry had a property which could not, by reason of restrictive governance, be used for anything other than hospital purposes and which, by reason of the operation of planning law, could only be used for a purpose such as an institution, for which there was no demand in this particular case.

The dilemma facing the government was that the value of any property depends on use which can be made of it, and since there was no market in hospitals it followed that, in order to establish the value of a property, the vendor must endeavour to seek permission to use it for a purpose for which there is a market, for example residential development.

The Minister of Housing and Local Government stated he would not allow the twenty seven acres on the south side of the Undercliff Drive to be used for holiday purposes, so this ruled out a holiday camp. Neither would the Minister give permission for the six acres of land on the north side of the road to be used for housing development.

The Minister's decision left the way open for Ventnor Urban District Council to acquire the site. It was envisaged that eventually part of the building might be used for a new cottage hospital with several good glasshouses, and the remainder as a sports ground (including football pitch), car park and an open space for

public use. By the autumn of 1968 an Island Committee was formed to investigate the possibility of establishing a Botanic Garden but, although the Royal National Hospital at Steephill was mentioned as a possible site, it was agreed that it was, as yet, too early to decide. Although the site was badly overgrown, there still existed the original very fine 'tropical' garden, which would form an excellent start to an eventual botanic garden.

Mr H. Lanfear, horticultural advisor to the Isle of Wight County Council, said the scheme was an admirable project. *"Such a garden should be an all-weather attraction and, therefore, the provision of glasshouses would be essential"*. Mr R. N. Willis-Fleming, President of the Isle of Wight Branch of the National Farmers' Union, said the idea had the interest of the Island MP, the Royal Horticultural Society and Kew Gardens, as well as many residents and horticultural associations on the Island.

The Committee set out to discuss the finance of the project, together with other ideas, and to put aims on paper, with the idea of forming a Society comprised Mrs Zink, Mr Lanfear, Mr W. A. Chandler, Mr J. Hoare, and representatives of Niton Horticultural Society, the Isle of Wight Horticultural Society and the Isle of Wight Natural History and Archaeological Society.

Ventnor and District Council finally received notification from the Ministry of Housing and Local Government that their application for grant for the purchase of the Royal National Hospital had been approved in May 1969. The Council agreed that the thirty seven acre site should be purchased and a breakdown of costs was as follows: cost of Acquisition £20,400, less government grants of £13,860, leaving £6,540 to be found. The cost of demolition and restoration of the derelict ground was estimated at £3,000, less a government grant of £2,250, leaving £750 to be found, and the clearance of the land by direct labour would cost a further £7,000. The Council agreed to apply for a loan from the Ministry of Housing and Local Government for the outstanding sum of £14,290. By July 1969 demolition was well underway; the work being undertaken by Treloras, a Gosport firm of demolition contractors.

In September 1970, Ventnor Urban District Council approved further works comprising construction of paths and rose beds for a central rose garden, a pool and fountain in the rose garden, mains water and electricity supplies and planting. Messrs. Hillier of Winchester donated shrubs and plants and some of these were used on an experimental basis. If they failed to grow, Mr Hillier had stated his company would either replace them or, alternatively, substitute a hardier species. Ventnor architects, Gilbert and Hobson, prepared plans for the conversion of the old workshop buildings for use as a restaurant and craft centre.

The closure of the Royal National Hospital was a very sad occasion for all those who worked there and indeed for relatives of patients who had died at the hospital or indeed who were cured. Various proposals for re-use of the building and the site were discussed, but, sadly, none came to fruition and the property was eventually demolished. At the time people were concerned the building might be 'infected' and eventually the site was totally cleared. This included the chapel with its wonderful array of ornaments and artefacts. Luckily, some of these were subsequently recovered, whilst the magnificent windows by the Pre-Raphaelite artists, Burne-Jones, Reynold Stephens and Ford Maddox Brown, were saved and installed in the parish church at St Lawrence, eventually being consecrated in the presence of the Queen Mother. Another window went to Frank James' Hospital at East Cowes, but one or two smaller windows, various marble fixtures and fittings were sold in the auction of the hospital contents and found their way to Old Park Hotel and into other private homes. A number of the brass plaques that used to be on the walls of the chapel, together with the cast iron footpath name plates, were discovered in a shed in the Botanic Garden in 1992 and, with the assistance of Simon Goodenough, the Curator, they were reinstated in appropriate locations within the garden.

The campaign to ensure that the landscape grounds at the former Royal National Hospital were not subject to commercial or residential development can be largely attributed to the Undercliff Society, which was founded for that purpose. The campaigning spirit of Mrs Doreen Aldred, the St Lawrence Post Mistress Founder of the Undercliff Society, together with the enlightened thinking of Councillor Van Thal and others, helped ensure the preservation of the former hospital gardens. The efforts of the Victorian Society were also



instrumental in helping to ensure that the superb Pre-Raphaelite stained glass windows from the chapel were suitably installed in St Lawrence Parish Church.

To many people it seems unthinkable that a building of the grandeur of the Royal National Hospital with its historical associations, including the ornately decorated chapel, would not have been preserved at least in part today. Like some of the other grand buildings that have been discussed previously, Victorian architecture was out of favour in the 1960s and was not deemed particularly worthy of saving. Strenuous efforts had been made by all parties to find a use for the hospital, but its scale and the need for substantial upgrading made it extremely difficult to find an alternative use. It seems now, looking back, that it would have been most appropriate to have at least retained the chapel in memory of the patients and staff who worked at the hospital and to form perhaps a visitors' centre within the newly created Botanic Garden.



**Figure 3.14.9.:** The demolition of the hospital took place in 1969. This made way for the Ventnor Botanic Garden, which has become recognised as one of the finest in the United Kingdom.

### 3.15. St Lawrence Hall

St Lawrence Hall was a substantial stone-built residence located on the north side of Undercliff Drive, to the west of Steephill, and designed by Major Theodore Ridley Saunders, the Ventnor architect, for a Captain Fisher. The design of the house was that of the style of a French chateau and it was constructed in 1886 by Ventnor Builders, Henry Ingram & Sons. The property was first known as 'Inglewood' and, later, became known as St Lawrence Hall.

The extensive grounds of St Lawrence Hall extended back from the main road to the rear escarpment of the Undercliff, and included gardens, tennis court and Pelham Woods. The house and grounds hosted many public events and a later resident, Admiral Jellicoe, famous for his part in the Battle of Jutland in the First World War, lived there during his retirement. St Lawrence Hall estate was sold in 1925, but during the Second World War the hall was empty and looked after by a caretaker. After the war the hall was adapted for use as a hotel but was totally destroyed by a serious fire in 1951.



**Figure 3.15.1. (left):** St Lawrence Hall in about 1930.



**Figure 3.15.2. (right):** The Hall after the devastating fire in 1951.



### 3.16. The Royal Sandrock Hotel, Niton Undercliff

The Royal Sandrock Hotel was constructed in the 1790s and was described and illustrated by numerous writers and artists in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. On account of its picturesque location and its value as a stopping-off point for those travelling along the south coast of the Isle of Wight, along the relatively undeveloped Undercliff, its use as a hotel proved particularly popular. The charming landscape grounds, south facing and overlooking the English Channel, were a particularly attractive feature of the property. The importance of the Sandrock Hotel was improved still further by the discovery of a mineral chalybeate spring of iron impregnated water in 1808 by the Newport surgeon, Thomas Waterworth. The young Princess Victoria, aged 15, stayed there with her mother, the Duchess of Kent, in 1833.

As increasing numbers of visitors travelled along the south coast of the Island, the Sandrock became an important stopping-off point for horse-drawn coaches on the round the Island circular route, passing from Ventnor along the Undercliff towards Blackgang and Freshwater. The publications by Dr Lanprière in 1829, and Sir James Clark in 1830, who both described the beneficial effects of the Undercliff climate for health led even more visitors to the location and to the Sandrock Hotel. The hotel continued to flourish in the nineteenth century when important Victorians stayed there, including Rudyard Kipling in 1891. In 1902 Marconi spent some time in the hotel whilst conducting his radio experiments at Knowles Farm, at the cottage now called Marconi Cottage near St Catherine's Point.

The great cliff fall from Gore Cliff at Windy Corner in July 1928 severed the road between the Sandrock Hotel and Blackgang and, in the early 1930s, a new road was constructed from Niton, over St Catherine's Down to Blackgang, thus avoiding the hotel and that part of the Niton Undercliff.

The hotel declined in importance gradually after the Second World War but was frequented by loyal customers through the 1960s and 1970s, until the building was seriously damaged by fire on 1<sup>st</sup> October 1984. This led to the demolition of this historic building, which had played an important part in the history of the Niton Undercliff.



**Figure 3.16.1.:** The Sandrock Hotel engraved by George Brannon in June 1827.



**Figure 3.16.2.:** The Royal Sandrock Hotel was one of the historic inns of the Undercliff, being a popular base for Victorian visitors who wished to explore the magnificent scenery of the area. It was built in 1790 as a small inn but was extended by the provision of two wings at each end to cope with extra visitors in 1812.

It received its royal patronage when Princess (later Queen) Victoria, aged 15, stayed there with her mother, the Duchess of Kent. Whilst staying there Princess Victoria took the waters at the nearby Sandrock Chalybeate Spring. It is believed that the beauty of the Island in general, and the Undercliff in particular, encouraged Victoria to settle on the Island at Osborne near East Cowes in later years.

By 1875 the Sandrock had become rundown and then it was bought by a Mr Hyde, who refurbished it. Marconi, who carried out early wireless transmissions from nearby Knowles Farm, stayed at the Sandrock in 1902. The hotel suffered a blow in 1928 when the Old Undercliff Road, which passed nearby, was closed by a landslide and traffic was diverted away onto Blackgang New Road to the north. Sadly, the Sandrock Hotel was destroyed by fire in September 1984.



### 3.17. Southview, Blackgang

Southview was one of a number of properties located on the coastal slopes between Niton and Blackgang.

Today these seem unlikely locations for the development of Victorian residences. Thomas Mudie writing in 1838 said; *“a wealthy gentleman of the Treasury was contracted with a builder to erect a picturesque villa for him at Blackgang at a cost of £5,000 on the spot of Pitlands (the site of a major landslide in 1799). Some derangement in that gentleman’s affairs occurred in the meantime and so did the loss of the house. The fate of this site should have given some warning to those who erected villas near Blackgang Chine and for those who thought these may appear to be founded on rock appearances are not to be depended on”*. This sound advice was ignored and the community of Blackgang developed between 1800 and 1860, human influences, including excavations and inadequate drainage arrangements, assisted in speeding up nature’s processes, resulting in the loss of virtually all of the properties over the intervening period. Southview was a handsome Italianate-style villa that dated from about 1850. It was well-illustrated by the artist, Susan Kirkpatrick, in the 1860s and was also photographed on account of its picturesque location below Gore Cliff.

Like many of the properties between Niton and Blackgang, they were gradually cut off through a series of cliff falls and landslides that occurred particularly since 1928 when the great cliff fall at Windy Corner closed that section of the Undercliff Road, between Niton and Blackgang. A further major landslide in 1974 prevented vehicular access from the Blackgang (western) side and ongoing ground movements, particularly after prolonged wet periods such as in 1994, led to the collapse of the building combined with the effects of coastal erosion and undermining at the foot of the cliff. Although some relics of the coach house and other outbuildings remained for a while, the main property was lost as a result of coastal erosion and ground instability.



**Figure 3.17.1.:** A highly detailed watercolour of ‘Southview’ by Susan Kirkpatrick. c.1864.





**Figure 3.17.2. (above):** A watercolour of the Undercliff to the east of Blackgang by Susan Kirkpatrick (c.1864) showing 'Southview' within its landscaped grounds.

**Figure 3.17.3. (below):** This photograph, taken in about 1875, shows little change from the watercolour above.



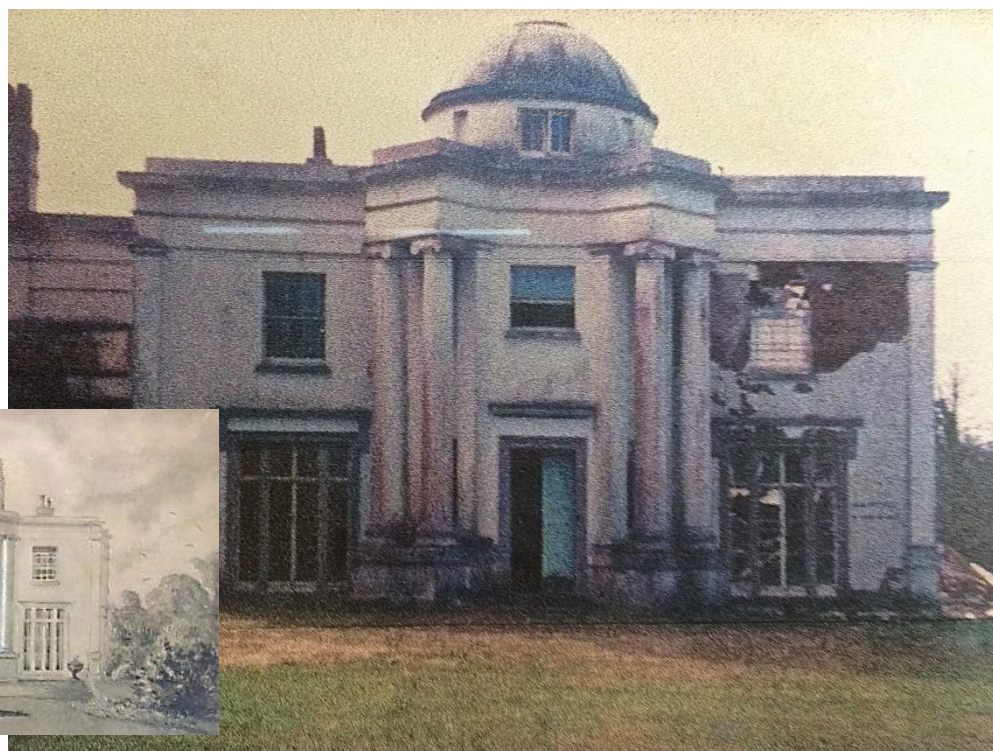


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**Figure 3.17.4.:** Hillgrove, Bembridge showing its very dilapidated condition.

**Figure 3.17.5. (below):** Hillgrove in its heyday.





### 3.18. Additional Examples of Lost East Wight Heritage



**Figure 3.18.1.:** *'Newport Villa, York Avenue, East Cowes'* was one of the *'Botanic Garden'* scheme villas. It was demolished to make way for residential development.



**Figure 3.18.2.:** *'Wootton Bridge'* engraved by George Brannon in 1834. The mill was demolished in 1962. At the summit of the hill Fernhill can be seen; the villa was destroyed by fire in 1938.



**Figure 3.18.3.** shows a further view of Wootton Mill in an engraving by S. Barth & J. King (1813).





**Figure 3.18.4.:** This photograph shows 'Hazelwood', which stood in Ashey Road, Ryde. It was built in 1873 as a holiday home for young gentlemen. The property was severely bomb damaged in the Second World War and the site was redeveloped in the 1950s.



**Figure 3.18.5.:** An engraving of 'Ryde' by William Westall (1838) shows the Pier Hotel, which stood opposite the bottom of Union Street. The hotel was demolished in the 1930s to allow road improvements. In Westall's view the Esplanade terminated in a slipway.



**Figure 3.18.6.:** This view of Ryde Esplanade, taken in about 1900, also shows the Pier Hotel.





**Figure 3.18.7.:** The grand façade of the Pier Hotel, Pier Road, Seaview, which was demolished in 1973 to make way for redevelopment.



**Figure 3.18.8.:** A watercolour of Seagrove Bay, Seaview, in about 1926 by Alfred Robert Quinton. Most of the row of Edwardian seaside villas have been demolished and redeveloped as a result of slope instability.



**Figure 3.18.9.:** 'Bembridge Station and the Spithead Hotel' in 1882. The hotel was demolished in 1989 for residential development.





**Figure 3.18.10.:** The Savoy Hotel, Sandown, saw a gradual deterioration of its fabric before being severely damaged by fire in 2011. The hotel was demolished for redevelopment in 2015.



**Figure 3.18.11.:** The Art Deco style Rivoli Cinema in Sandown was built in 1885 but converted in 1921 with a seating capacity of 700. Despite a campaign to save it, the Council approved demolition on structural grounds in 2015.

**Figures 3.18.12. & 3.18.13. (below)** Rosecliff Court near Luccombe Chine became unstable as a result of leakage from a reservoir above and was demolished. The house was used as a holiday centre until the Second World War.





**Figure 3.18.14.:** Village Road, Bonchurch, in about 1900. The picturesque thatched cottages on the left were demolished to widen the road, although (on the right) Smuggler's Cottage remains.



**Figure 3.18.15.:** This view of Ventnor from the west was taken in about 1900. The large villa on the left, La Falaise, and Milanese Villa next to it, were demolished after instability damage in 1957.

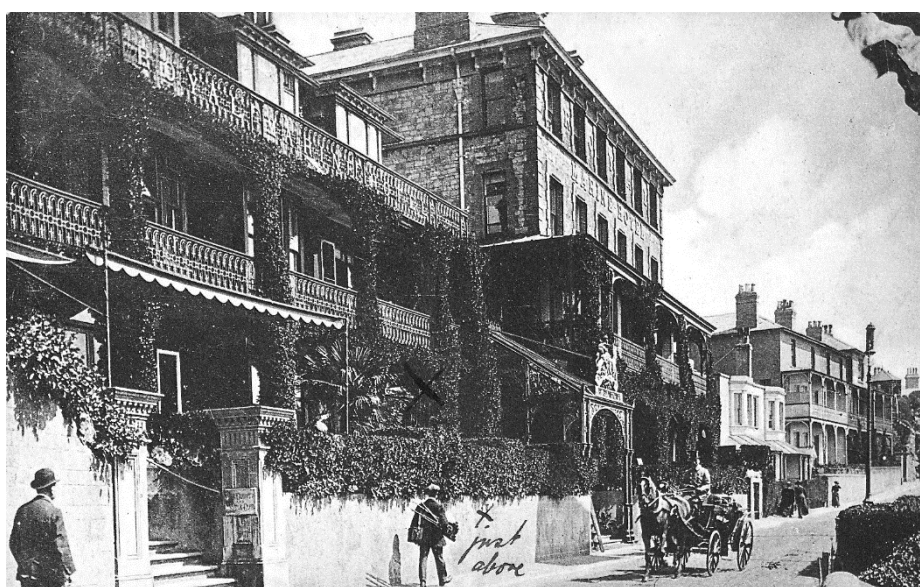


**Figure 3.18.16.:** This photograph of Ventnor from the pier shows the town in c.1910. The Metropole and Beach Hotels on the Esplanade were both demolished and their sites redeveloped, whilst the Royal Marine Hotel (behind and above) in Belgrave Road was bombed in 1943. The pier was demolished in 1993 for safety reasons.

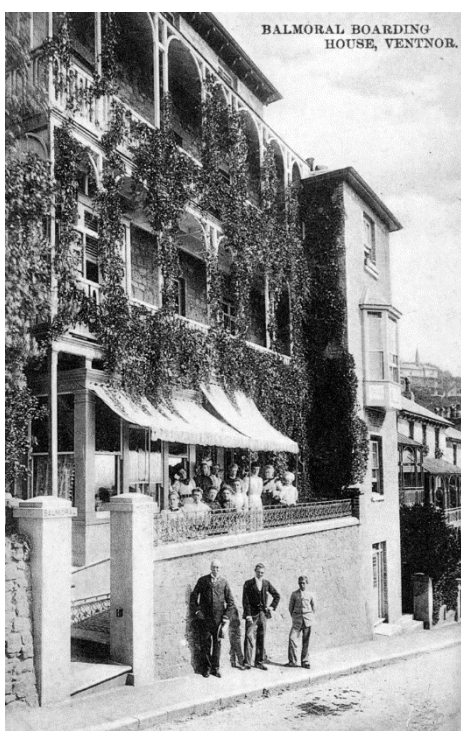




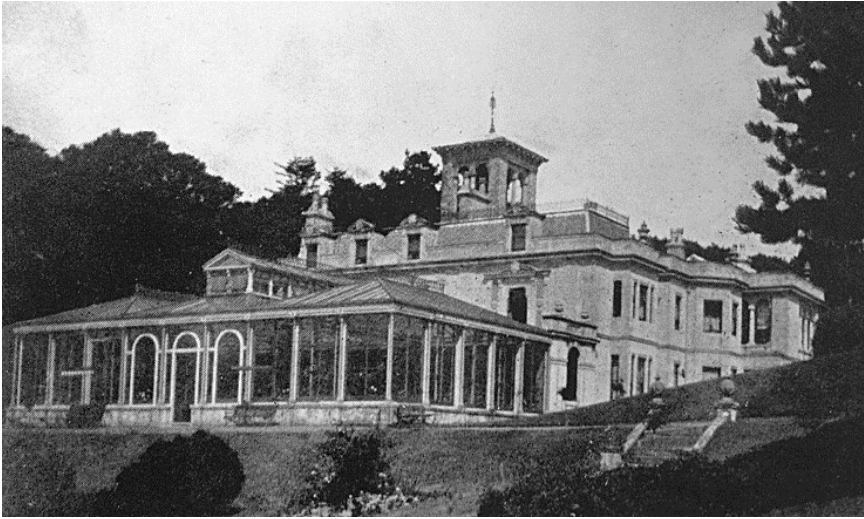
**Figure 3.18.17.:** The fabric of the six storey Metropole Hotel on Ventnor Esplanade deteriorated to such an extent that, by 2003, plans were put forward for redevelopment of the site. Subsequently, a large block of flats was erected in its place, whilst the elegant villa adjacent to it remains.



**Figure 3.18.18.:** This old postcard shows the elegant Royal Marine Hotel in Belgrave Road, Ventnor, in 1910. The hotel and adjacent buildings were bombed in 1943 and the site was subsequently redeveloped.



**Figure 3.18.19.:** The Balmoral Hotel in Bath Road, Ventnor, was one of a number of properties in the area that were affected by ground movement following the extremely heavy rainfall in the winter of 1960/61, the wettest ever recorded. The hotel had to be demolished as a result.



**Figure 3.18.20.:** Situated at the bottom of Barrack Shute at Niton, the Undercliff Hotel (formerly Puckwell House) opened in 1918. It was used as headquarters for the local Army and RAF units in the War and was destroyed by a German bomb on 1<sup>st</sup> June 1943.



**Figure 3.18.21.:** 'Sandrock Spring Cottage' at Blackgang was an elegant chalet style property located to the south-east of Blackgang Chine. Coastal erosion and slope instability led to the collapse of the property and the adjacent public highway in March 1978.



**Figure 3.18.22.:** This rare Brannon engraving shows the villa development that took place at Blackgang from the mid-nineteenth century. All the villa properties and coastal land on which they were built has been lost to coastal erosion and instability since then.



## 4. Analysis and Discussion

The preceding chapters of this report have illustrated the wide range of building types that have been lost, particularly since the beginning of the twentieth century. On account of the massive impact on the Isle of Wight's development patterns and architecture, particularly during the reign of Queen Victoria, it is perhaps unsurprising that many of the lost buildings that are described in this report date from the nineteenth century.

One of the main reasons that contributed to the demise and subsequent loss of many Victorian buildings was because of their perception by the public. *"In the early twentieth century, the word 'Victorian' was often essentially a term of abuse; it stood for all that was stuffy, heavy and overladen with ornament" (Laver, 1966<sup>1</sup>). "Although there has been, for half a century or more, a serious historical reappraisal of the achievements of the Victorians, and we are conscious today of our continuing debt to them, the prejudice still lingers. It has been particularly strong, and destructive, when applied to their architecture" (Stamp, 2010<sup>2</sup>). For much of the twentieth century, only the creations of the great Victorian engineers, such as Brunel, were admired for their scale and practicality, whilst architectural works were dismissed, often in derogatory terms. Writing in the 1950s, Sir John Betjeman recalled that *"Victorian was associated in the minds of architects who had been brought up in the Arts and Crafts tradition of the 1900s, with hard and unsympathetic imitation of Gothic and vulgar things like conservatories, stations and hotels, which were not considered within the realms of art at all"* (Betjeman, 1960<sup>3</sup>).*

These views were echoed by Sir Nikolas Pevsner, who was second chairman of the Victorian Society and who complained in 1963 *"as far as the knowledge and appreciation of architecture goes, the Victorian Age is the most neglected of all ages. The situation is strikingly contrary to that in literature, music and painting. For the time being the fact remains that the layman, including most architects and most architectural historians, just have not got the information available to pass any worthwhile judgments on Victorian architecture"* (Pevsner, 1963<sup>4</sup>).

The impacts of the Great War resulted in *"an enormous gulf opening up between the late Victorians and Edwardians and their children, the generation that reached maturity between the World Wars. To them, often their parents were grotesque caricatures of stuffiness and hypocrisy, for whom there was scant sympathy. The whole Victorian Age came to be seen as dark and oppressive, and once sinister and ludicrous, and there was a violent reaction against its legacy in favour of a clean, uncluttered modernity. And the buildings left behind by the Victorians, so prominent, so solid, so confident, so extraordinary became the targets of particularly virulent abuse"* (Stamp, 2010<sup>2</sup>).

By the end of the Second World War, a number of writers and historians were starting to take much greater interest in Victorian architecture and highlighted some of its particular merits. John Betjeman became identified with a sentimental affection for all things Victorian, and he contributed an essay on Victorian architecture, which was published in 1952. Later, both through his poetry and his newspaper articles, these proved to be influential in terms of changing some public opinion. This interest was further heightened by Nikolas Pevsner, who, in 1951, presented a series of four BBC radio programmes about Victorian architecture.

Despite an increasing interest, Victorian architecture, particularly in the 1950s, was at considerable risk of destruction. This was partly as a result of prejudice held by both the architectural profession and a range of decision-makers across the public and private sectors. The merits of Victorian architecture was further highlighted by the historian, Mark Girouard, who said *"Victorian buildings were superbly solid, often still in mint condition and mostly used for purposes to which they had been built. So much of the built environment, not least working public buildings, government departments and town halls, university colleges, schools, railway stations and churches were all products of the Victorian Age, but many have become victims of wartime bomb damage or neglect, whilst their owners and families were serving the country during both World Wars"* (Girouard, 1971<sup>5</sup>).

In the 1950s a prejudice against Victorian architecture became more widely held, and the case for maintaining such buildings was not helped because many of these had become neglected and rundown through lack of maintenance during the War period. Often the public wished to see the past left behind in favour of modern, cleaner architectural styles which looked forward rather than to the past.

Although there had been this marked change in attitude by the architectural profession and the wider public, some architectural historians recognised the need for something to be done to halt the destruction of Victorian architecture. *"A new society was needed to fight for the best buildings of the Victorians, just as the Georgian Group (or The Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings) had been established in 1937 in response to the steady attrition of Georgian architecture in London, and the unjustifiable loss of so many grand 'private palaces' - the aristocratic town houses of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The Georgian Group was, in fact, prepared to fight for fine classical buildings dating from after 1837, but the Gothic Revival also needed a defender. The result was the foundation of the Victorian Society in 1958"* (Stamp, 2010<sup>2</sup>). The prime movers of this initiative included Sir John Betjeman, the Countess of Rosse, Sir Nikolas Pevsner, the architect Mark Girouard, and other leading architects, including Sir Hugh Casson.

On the Isle of Wight, as elsewhere across the United Kingdom, country houses were often the most elaborate and expensive examples of Victorian architecture. During the latter part of Queen Victoria's reign, such properties continued to be constructed and were often larger, more solidly built, more elaborate and complex, and often more lavishly furnished and decorated than those in earlier centuries. *"They were planned for an ordered way of life, with immense care taken to ensure the different classes and sexes did not come into contact and that kitchen smells would not reach the dining room. Technical improvements including plumbing, lighting and services made them more comfortable by contemporary standards and more efficient than in the past. Seldom can so much money and such exhaustive study have produced a group of buildings that, as private houses, became so soon and painfully obsolete. Remarkably few big Victorian country houses are still privately lived in and this is largely thanks to the English system of private education that so many remain in existence at all"* (Girouard, 1971<sup>3</sup>).

The nature of these properties on the Isle of Wight, as much as elsewhere across the country, was seen as rambling, confused and of mediocre architectural quality. They were regarded as replicas of earlier architectural styles, including Italian Classical, Elizabethan, Jacobean and Medieval. *"The Great War, with the slaughter of so many sons and heirs, began to undermine the stability of many country houses. Victorian houses, in particular, began to seem too large, unsuited to changing social and economic conditions and, as tastes changed, simply hideous. Conceived by so many of their patrons as the backdrop to happy family life and rural improvement, for most of the 20<sup>th</sup> century such buildings were regarded as gloomy architectural relics of the feudal cast that had no place in modern life"* (Stamp, 2010<sup>2</sup>).

Many country houses, such as East Cowes Castle, never recovered from being requisitioned in the Second World War and were never lived in again. Others, such as Appley Towers, St Clare and Steephill Castle, were demolished to make way for residential development. The loss of so many significant Victorian buildings on the Isle of Wight, particularly during the middle of the twentieth century, is not, therefore, a unique Island problem but more a matter of public taste that prevailed across the country at that time. After the Second World War, large properties, often in poor condition, did not seem relevant to those who had suffered during the War years and who wanted an improved quality of life for themselves and for their families.

It has been shown that, in the eastern half of the Isle of Wight, whilst the traditional Island stone manor houses and farmhouses were often well maintained, Victorian properties were much less so. Despite the architectural quality and substance of many Victorian buildings, which could have been sub-divided or used for other purposes, there was not the will at the time to adapt them for such uses. As a result, through lack of maintenance, their fabric deteriorated to such an extent that demolition was the only solution, whilst others caught fire and their sites were often densely redeveloped.



Although the human impact on Victorian architecture has been described in some depth, natural processes have also taken their toll with a significant number of coastal villas being lost as a result of both coastal erosion and ground instability. This is certainly the case around the coastline between Shanklin and Blackgang where marine erosion and ground instability, often encouraged by inadequate drainage, has led to the loss of properties such as Rosecliff Court at Luccombe, La Falaise and other properties adjacent to Bath Road and Ventnor Esplanade in 1960/61, Beauchamp at Niton in 2001, and coastal villas between Niton and Blackgang in the mid-twentieth century.

## 5. Heritage Support

The heritage of the built environment on the Isle of Wight benefits from protection provided by organisations at both national and local levels. Nationally, English Heritage has traditionally provided advice and guidance to support the protection and management of heritage assets. However, in April 2015 English Heritage separated into two organisations; the English Heritage Charity, which cares for the National Heritage Collection and more than 400 historic places and their collections, and Historic England, the public body that looks after England's historic environment and helps people understand, value and care for historic locations.

The National Trust, formerly the 'National Trust for Places of Historic Interest or Natural Beauty', is a conservation charity that works to preserve and protect historic places and spaces for everyone. The Trust was founded in 1895 and given statutory powers, starting with the National Trust Act in 1907. Its sites in the East Wight include Bembridge Windmill and Bembridge Fort, as well as extensive coastal landholdings.

The Victorian Society ([www.victoriansociety.org.uk/](http://www.victoriansociety.org.uk/)) is a UK charity and the national authority on Victorian and Edwardian architecture built between 1837 and 1914 in England and Wales. Founded in 1937, the Society has saved numerous landmark Victorian buildings across the United Kingdom and was influential in the preservation of the Pre-Raphaelite stain glass windows from the Royal National Hospital at Steephill.

On the Isle of Wight itself there are a wide range of heritage organisations who are active both in terms of the operation of historical societies and in the management of heritage centres. The Isle of Wight Society, for example, was formed in 1969 as an amenity society. Its key objectives are to stimulate public interest in the Isle of Wight, to promote high standards of planning and architecture in or affecting the Island, and to secure the preservation, protection, development and improvement of features of historical public interest on the Island. Like many of the Island's heritage societies, the Isle of Wight Society holds meetings, lectures and exhibitions, publishes papers, reports and other literature, as well as hosting an annual conservation award for buildings that have been conserved or restored, and for new architecture in keeping with the character of the Island.

Full details of over seventeen Island museums and heritage attractions and over twenty heritage societies are provided on the Isle of Wight History Centre website (<http://www.iwhistory.org.uk/heritageorganisations/>).

Historic England maintains its 'Heritage At Risk' Register, which is updated annually. Sites in the East Wight contained in the 'At Risk Register' include the Grade I Listed Norris Castle at East Cowes, remains of the old Quarr Abbey at Fishbourne near Ryde, the Church of All Saints at Godshell, eight other East Wight churches, as well as two archaeological sites (see <https://contact.historicengland.org.uk/images-books/...registers/se-har-register2017.pdf/>).

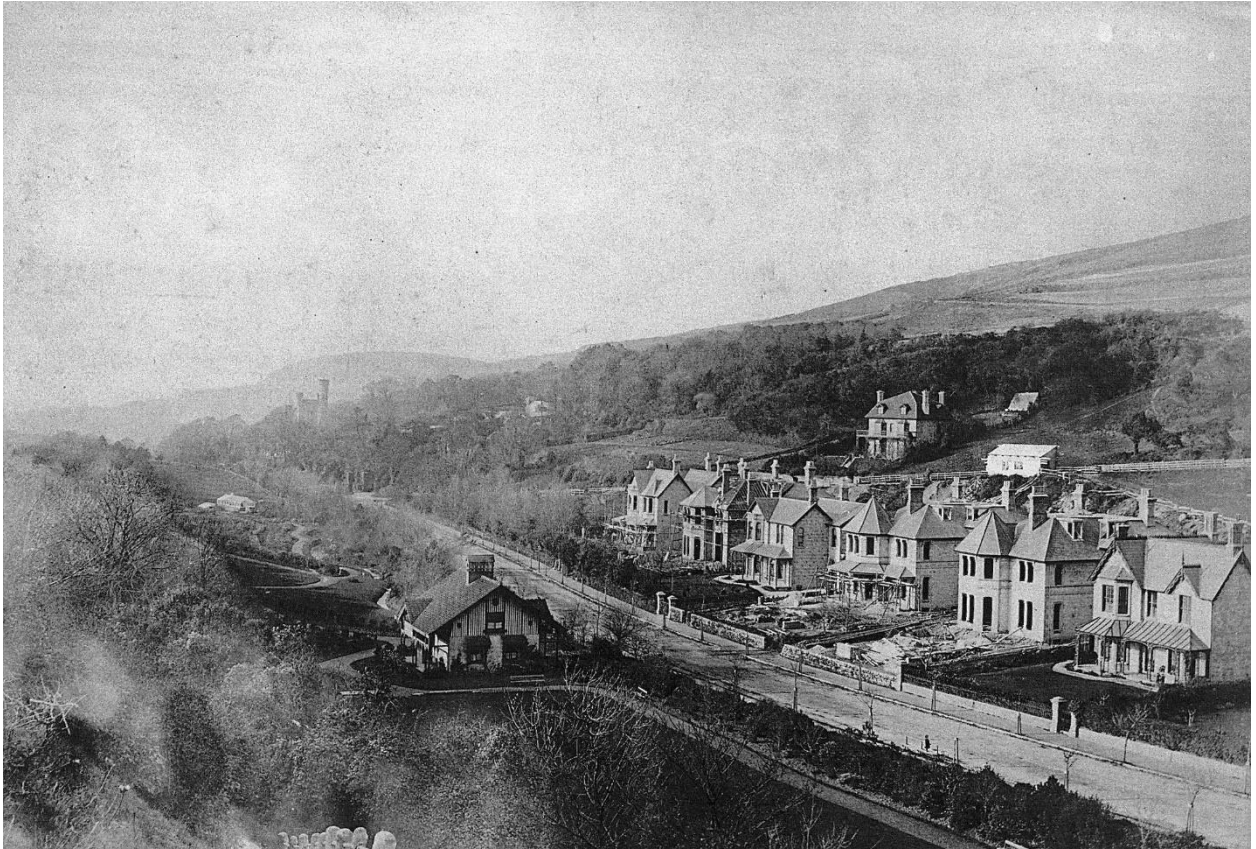
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## 6. Conclusions

1. The East Wight has a very rich architectural heritage extending from the Medieval period to the present day with almost all architectural styles being represented. The East Wight AONB contains fine examples of traditional Island stone and brick manor houses and other farm buildings whilst the coastal towns include many Georgian, Regency, Victorian and Edwardian villas as well as grand avenues.
2. The loss of historic buildings in the East Wight has related largely to late eighteenth century, Victorian mansions and Edwardian mansions, hotels, smaller residences and some structures. The traditional manor houses built of Island stone in the rural East Wight have been rarely lost although some stone farmhouses and rural cottages were demolished as a result of neglect and decay.
3. The destruction of the many historic houses in particular on the Isle of Wight was not a unique Island problem but was typical of the situation across Great Britain as a whole. Their loss was a result of several factors including the perception by the public, architects and planners that Victorian architecture was not particularly old, of little architectural merit and irrelevant to society at that time.
4. The loss of many sons and heirs and estate staff in the two World Wars, the requisitioning of some country houses by the army and lack of maintenance during the war years all contributed to the deterioration of Island mansions leaving some almost beyond repair.
5. After both World Wars new generations sought styles of properties that were more manageable, designed and constructed on cleaner lines and that were quite different from those homes of their parents and grand-parents.
6. The dis-affection by many with Victorian architecture often meant that few people objected to the demolition of larger properties and the construction of modern housing on their sites.
7. The gradual decline in the traditional seaside holiday on the Isle of Wight resulted in a surplus of Victorian hotels, which then often were adapted for other uses often leading to the decline in their fabric. Lack of maintenance of houses in multiple occupation by landlords contributed to the demise of some larger residences.
8. The marine environment has taken a toll on coastal properties and other assets such as piers and pavilions, which suffered from insufficient maintenance over the decades and this contributed to their eventual loss. A number of properties were seriously damaged or totally destroyed as a result of enemy bombing during the Second World War.
9. The physical nature of the Isle of Wight's coastline, which is affected by significant coastal erosion and land instability has led to the loss of over one hundred buildings over the last century including numerous coastal mansions and marine villas.
10. Significant efforts were made in the past to try and secure future uses for some historic buildings such as the Royal National Hospital at Steephill but despite this none of the structure was saved (except for its Pre-Raphaelite stained glass).
11. Nationally, English Heritage, Historic England, the Victorian Society and on the Island alongside the Council, the Isle of Wight Society together with numerous local heritage groups all provide a strong voice for the protection of cultural heritage.
12. Interest and awareness of the Island's built heritage has been raised significantly through a wide range of local publications, society meetings, the opening of heritage centres and illustrated lectures





**Figure 6.1. (above):** The development of Park Avenue, Ventnor, in the 1860s; one of several grand avenues in the East Wight coastal towns.

**Figure 6.2. (below):** St John's Park, Ryde, before its development. A lithograph by Thomas Carpenter, c.1848.

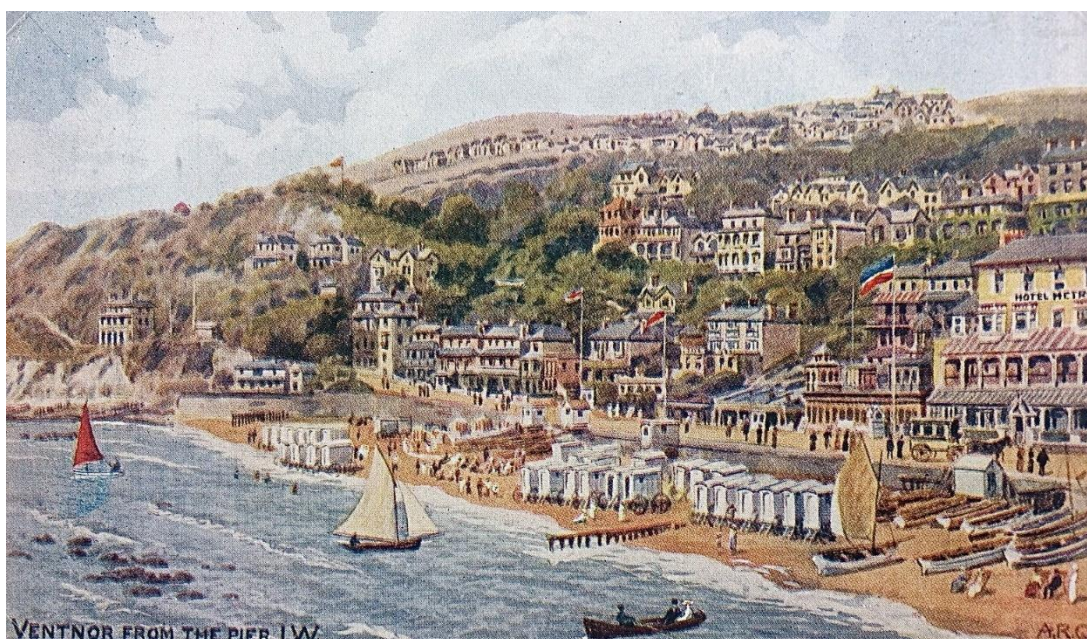




## 7. Recommendations

1. The East Wight has a rich architectural heritage; details of Listed Buildings are maintained within the IW Historic Environment Record (HER). This valuable information resource is maintained by the Isle of Wight Archaeological and Historic Environment Service.
2. Local government on the Isle of Wight fulfils a key role in terms of setting conservation policies, protection of heritage and enforcement and should be strongly supported.
3. The Isle of Wight has a particularly rich resource of historical images (paintings, watercolours, prints and old photographs), which illustrate changes that have affected our towns and villages since the late eighteenth centuries. Such images form a valuable resource in terms of supporting Conservation Area studies and Character Assessments as well as for consultations over planning applications and their evaluation.
4. Despite the losses highlighted in this report the last twenty years has also seen large numbers of substantial coastal residences and marine villas being carefully restored particularly in Ryde and through the Undercliff; this is particularly welcomed.
5. The Victorian era saw grand avenues of villas being laid out, for example at Easthill in Ryde, the Broadway at Sandown, Victoria Avenue at Shanklin and Park Avenue in Ventnor. Any further intrusion of new developments within these avenues should be avoided wherever possible.
6. A particular strength in support of the Isle of Wight's cultural heritage is its numerous conservation societies and heritage centres together with their active membership. They should be congratulated on the very important role that they fulfil in terms of awareness raising amongst both residents and visitors as well as for school pupils. The contributions of these organisations to this report are gratefully acknowledged.

Professor Robin McInnes OBE FICE FGS FRGS FRSA  
April 2018



**Figure 7.1.:** *'Ventnor from the Sea'* by Alfred Robert Quinton, c.1920. Such detailed coastal views show changes in development patterns through the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.



## Appendix 1. Schools Illustrated Essays

### The Royal Marine Hotel, Ventnor

Jennifer Jennings

*Many important buildings in the East Wight have been lost over the last 100 years. The reason for their losses require explanation. At least thirty buildings – private houses, castles, hotels, hospitals, or cottages that would now be regarded as being of architectural or historic importance have disappeared and this project will explain The Royal Marine Hotel's story.*

*I am writing my essay on the Royal Marine Hotel that was once situated on Belgrave Road in Ventnor. The hotel attracted many rich and famous guests and was one of the finest of its kind in the area. Guests such as King Edward VII and many other royals and important people of the era visited the hotel. In this essay I will be explaining why such an important, prestigious and significant building was ever lost and if it was around today would the current laws and regulations protect it like it should have been protected all of those years ago?*



*The Royal Marine Hotel from a painting in about 1876*

*It was built in 1839 by Barnabas Wild, who was also the owner of the Crab and Lobster, as a gift for his daughter. His daughter died at the age of 22 and Barnabas died at the age of 90 in 1875. After his death it was passed to William Bush and his family who were soon joined by William Mew*

Judd. Lord Lytton wrote one of his books 'The house and the Haunters' while staying there. The fact that even Winston Churchill stayed there gives a slight indication of just how exclusive it really was. Many tourists were attracted to staying there because of its fabulous sea views and stunning undisturbed scenery and landscape. It was very popular with tourists from cities because of how peaceful and rural it was in comparison to the smoky industrial cities of the era. It mainly stayed unchanged throughout the time that it remained a hotel with only a few extensions added over the years. One of the interesting things about the hotel was that it had separate kitchens and a special tramway had to be built to transport food from the kitchens to the hotel. In 1890 the hotel was worth around £30, 000 and the limited company they had created had been valued at £50 000, at this period of time this was a huge amount of money and the family running it were immensely rich for the time. However it closed in 1937 after 20 or more years of a steady decline in custom and the assets were sold although the hotel itself would not sell at auction. Miss Elen Judd held the licence for the hotel in 1938 but was never the official licence holder. During the Second World War in 1940 and then again in 1943 it was bombed by enemy planes, the buildings and the damage was 'incapable of repair'. In 1955 the licence was taken away from the hotel and it was said that it had been wrongly renewed for many years. It was transferred to the Redcliff Hotel at Shanklin. After this the building had many different uses, the west side was made into a Masonic Lodge and in 1964 the ground floor was used by St John's ambulance headquarters. However, sadly after all of its fine history it was demolished. After it was demolished the site became very untidy and overgrown. It was then brought by a developer and now there are houses in the location with amazing scenery and sea views that the hotel once had. It is interesting to think about if the hotel was around today would it be saved and preserved like it should have been all those years ago? Now they have certain laws and regulations to ensure important buildings are not lost. One of these is the fact that we now have strict planning permission regulations, which mean that if you want to demolish or change a building you have to ask the local council first. This means that important buildings are more likely to be protected.



*Another thing that protects old buildings is that if a building is of a certain age or has a particular historical importance then it is 'Listed' which protects it from things like building extensions or demolitions. There are certain grades of listings, which reflect on how important the buildings are and hence how much work is allowed to be done to them.*



***A view of the hotel in about 1915***

*Also there are organisations such as English Heritage and the National Trust that protect and open these buildings to the public for everybody to enjoy. I think that this is very important because it gives everyday people the opportunity to learn about England's interesting and important history.*

*In my opinion such an iconic and important building should have never been lost. I feel that it should have been protected and opened to the public because of its historical importance. I also think that younger generations could have benefited from learning about the Victorian era and how much our society has moved on from then in many different ways. However I am glad that we, as a country, have learned from our mistakes and have put certain rules and regulations in place to protect buildings and so that these sorts of things will never happen again in the future.*

***Jennifer Jennings***

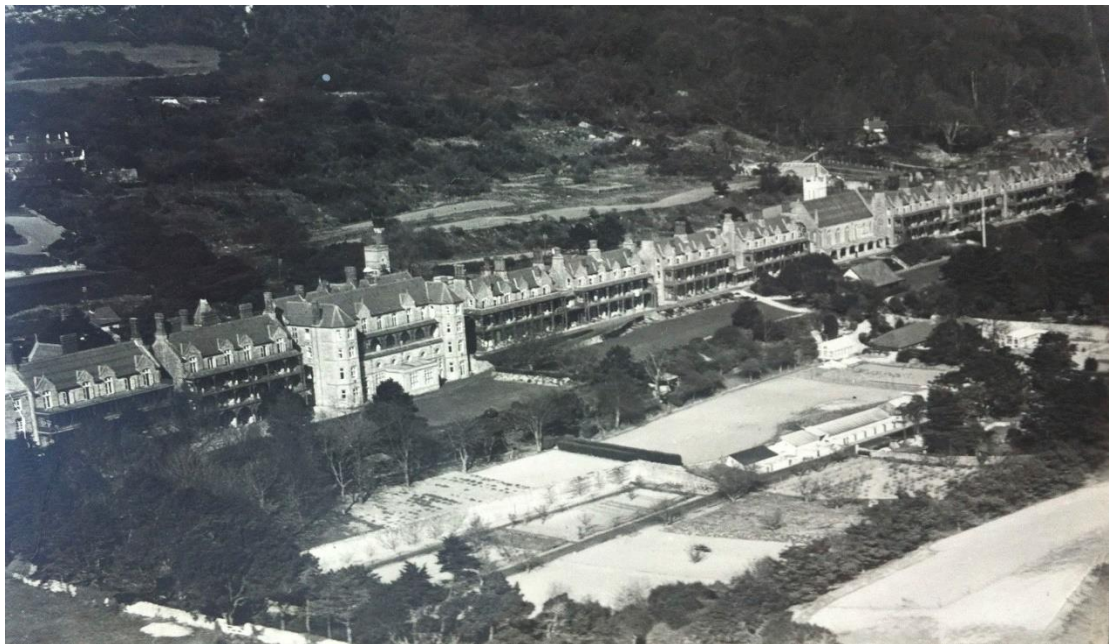
# The Royal National Hospital

Marianne Roper

Many important buildings on the Isle of Wight have been lost over the last 100 years. The reasons for their losses requiring an explanation. At least thirty Buildings have been lost including private houses, castles, hotels, hospitals and the cottages that would now be regarded as architectural or historic importance. I have decided to look at why the Royal National Hospital no longer exists.

The Royal National Hospital was located in Ventnor, it was built for the treatment of TB (tuberculosis) formally known as consumption, and diseases of the chest. It opened in 1867 and was founded by Arthur Hill Hassell who had also suffered from TB a few years before. The buildings consisted of eleven separate cottages each six stories high and all together consisted of one hundred and thirty separate rooms in total.

In 1947 the treatment for TB improved with the use of streptomycin antibiotic and the paramino-salicylic acid drug. This was experimental to start with, with good results once they found the right doses. Also they had surgical treatment as an option to remove the diseased part of the lung. This resulted in better treatment of TB. The buildings layout was changed to make more room for the surgery. There was a loss of beds and these were changed to theatre, recovery rooms and one x-ray room.



**An aerial view of the Royal National Hospital in about 1900.**





**A view of the hospital from the south-east shortly after it was completed.**

The drug isoniazid was introduced. The combination of the three drugs reduced the need for surgery and decreased the amount of time needed to stay at the hospital. This resulted in the waiting list vanishing; there were many empty beds in the hospital. The hospital was opened up to non-TB chest patients to fill the empty beds. By 1958 a large number of beds were not required by island residents so they took patients in from the mainland and London. Some of the empty beds were used as overflow from Ryde Hospital's post-operative patients and Whitecroft Hospital.

In April 1964 the last remaining patients were transferred to St Mary's Hospital, Newport. The hospital now remained empty. It was considered for a change of use to a research lab or a complete modernisation. Both of which were never undertaken. One major reason for this was that the boilers that heated and supplied the kitchen were beyond repair and buried in the basement of the hospital, which was not easy to reach.



**A summer fair at the Hospital in the 1950s**

After the hospital closed a grammar school considered transferring to the site and they considered opening a police college but the building was thought unsuitable for both.

After closure of the hospital, Ventnor Council took over the grounds and building and decided to give the stained glass windows from the hospital chapel to St Lawrence Parish Church. Gradually the gardens were overrun by weeds and bindweed and other weeds invaded the building. The council decided to knock the building down and make it into gardens for everyone to enjoy, now known as Ventnor Botanical Garden. This amazing Victorian historic building was important to the development of medical treatment for TB. Due to this success it was no longer required and that is why this historic building was lost.

I am familiar with the Botanical Garden having spent hours there with my parents and grandparents. I have many great memories of the garden here including picnics, beautiful flowers and learning to ride my bike. I have now learnt through this project a significant historical background to the garden.

Marianne Roper



# Steephill Castle

Jack Davison



*Many important buildings on the Isle of Wight have been lost over the last 100 years. The reasons for their losses require an explanation. At least thirty buildings have been lost including private houses, castles, hotels, hospitals and the cottages that would now be regarded of architectural or historic importance. I have decided to look at why Steephill Castle no longer exists.*

*Steephill's first owner was Wilbraham Tollemache, who constructed a cottage on the future site of Steephill Castle. It was his favourite residence until his death in 1821, after which the estate was sold in 1828 to John Hambrough, who built Steephill Castle in 1835 on the site of The Cottage. He decided to take advantage of the views over the English Channel and construct a daring building to rival all others of its type. In 1836 Harborough paid for the construction of St Catherine's Church, in Ventnor. Sadly Hambrough didn't get to see the finished castle as he went blind a year before construction finished. The next owner was John Morgan*

*Richards an American businessman who bought it in 1901. His daughter, the novelist Pearl Mary Teresa Craigie lived nearby at Craigie Lodge, St Lawrence writing a number of her works there. The castle was auctioned in 1919 after his death in World War 1 and was bought as a hotel by the Friendly Hotel Organisation with a period as a school during WW2.*



The Castle on completion 1835



Steephill Castle painted by William Gray in 1855

*In 1958 fire safety became an issue because of stricter rules and the upkeep became more expensive. Therefore, in 1959 a demolition order was obtained and the castle was torn down two weeks later and the estate was redeveloped with bungalows.*



*I think it was a shame Steephill was demolished as it would have been an English heritage site and a tourist attraction and would have been an amazing day out. To destroy it was clearly a mistake and the views have been spoiled now.*

*All that remains of the castle is pictures and stories that have been passed down through the generations. In today's mind-set we would all have done everything we could to preserve the castle's high profile image.*

*However, you can't change the past and we will never know even if they hadn't ripped down the castle if it would still be here today.*

Jack Davison



An engraving of the Castle by George Brannon in 1833

## **KNIGHTON GORGES MANOR HOUSE**

**Tilly King**

Many important buildings in the East Wight have been lost over the last 100 years. The reasons for their losses require explanation. At least thirty buildings – private houses, castles, hotels, hospitals, or cottages that would now be regarded as being of architectural or historic importance have disappeared. I have decided to look at why Knighton Gorges no longer exists.

The manor house was in a hamlet on the out skirts of Newchurch, named Knighton. To avoid confusion with the town “Niton”; they name the hamlet “Knighton.” It was one of the grandest manor houses on the whole of the Isle of Wight, until it was burnt to the ground after a fire in 1821.

This is said to be one of the most haunted locations on the Isle of Wight.

Knighton Gorges manor house was owned by the De Morville’s until 1256; when Ralf De Gorges acquired it by marriage; this is where the name Knighton Gorges Manor House came from. Following the De Morville’s death in 1256, the house passed to their daughter Ellen and her husband; since then many people throughout the years lived in and owned the house.

All of these tragic events together have resulted in a lot of ghostly tales and encounters. The main paranormal activity is that the destroyed manor house re-appears in a ghostly vision, and a man riding a horse each year on the day of his death. Also the mysterious gargoyles that appear on the gateposts at the entrance of the of the manor house.

The manor itself was a good example of Tudor work. The only Tudor stonework that is left today are the two stone gateposts. The manor had large windows and large rooms and a large gallery and was dimly lit due to the low roof. When the manor was at its best in its day it was visited by Sir Henry Englefield who, in 1816 wrote about the manor in his famous book. Artists, writers and administrators including Sir Richard Worsley, Captain of the IW all visited the manor.



## History

Sir Hugh De Morville , 1202, fled the house after being involved in the plot to murder Thomas A'Beckett, the Archbishop of Canterbury; he fled to Knaresborough Castle in Yorkshire.

Early 13<sup>th</sup> century, the owners were a family of the De Morville's John and Ivo, De Morville who died in 1256, leaving it to their daughter Ellen and her husband.

Ellen married Ralph De Gorges, he died and she was left the manor at the end of the century.

Ellen died in 1291, leaving it to her son Ralph.

Ralph leased the manor in 1305 to William Calshale.

1316, Ralph De Gorges settled in the house after this.

Ralph had 2 grandsons

His daughter married Theobald Russell of Yaverland.

1346, Theobald De Gorge then married Elizabeth.

Theobald died in 1380, and the manor was passed to his son Sir Randolph who died in 1382, another son, Bartholomew, died in 1395 and Thomas died in 1404. Thomas left a son.

Sir Theobald Gorges was in possession of the manor in 1462.

The manor was then passed to Thomas Russell.

Gilbert's family then owned the manor in 1563.

General Maurice Bockland had the manor in 1750.

George Young was at the manor at the start of the century.

Edward Carter, and now Hugh Davis is the current owner.



**Knighton Manor in 1816 by Sir Henry Englefield**