



HEALTH & HISTORY IN VENTNOR

By 1840 the population of Ventnor was over 1000 and by 1850 it was 3000, all were attracted to the town for their health.

The air was known to be good at improving the lung diseases common in Victorian cities and at the same time its coastal location meant visitors could indulge in hot or cold sea-water baths.

The next turning point was the arrival of the railway in



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the site after conducting several scientific experiments to prove the 'healthiness' of the town.

Sadly, the hospital was knocked down in 1969 but its ground became Ventnor Botanic Gardens and the stained glass from its chapel was placed in St Lawrence parish church, where it can still be enjoyed today.

The hospital added to Ventnor's popularity as a tourist destination and by 1900 the population had reached 6,000, which is where it stands today. However, it declined as a health resort in the twentieth century especially after the development of antibiotics in 1942.

In preparation for World War Two a radar station was built on the downs above Ventnor. It was part of the early warning system that allowed RAF fighters to be directed where they were needed as soon as possible and this played a massive part in winning the Battle of Britain in June 1940. However, it meant that the Luftwaffe bombed Ventnor far more than you would have expected, for a small town famous up to that point only for its healthy air.

So in 1942 Ventnor was as bad for your health as it had been good in 1842.



ACTIVITIES

- ▶ Research Ventnor as a health resort.
- ▶ Imagine you are a patient in a hospital here. Write your thoughts and feelings in a diary entry.
- ▶ Can you look for things that suggest Ventnor is a less prestigious area now than in the past?



Alfred Noyes

The poet and writer Alfred Noyes, who is probably best known for his ballad 'The Highwayman' moved to Lisle Combe, in Ventnor, in 1929 for the final years of his life. His poem can be read online.

He was buried on the Isle of Wight in St Saviour's Churchyard in Totland after his death in 1958. His grandson, Robert, and his wife, Ruth, still run the house today as a bed and breakfast.

Although Alfred Noyes was a pacifist (was against the concept of war and violence), he fought during World War One because he believed that he had no option but to support the Allied Forces.

However, it was during this war that he was officially excluded from fighting due to his failing eyesight. In later years, when his increasing blindness took hold, his works were dictated.

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1. Whilst in Ventnor, find somewhere to sit or stand and think about what is around you.

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2. Use your senses (other than eyesight) to write a few notes, below.



3. Consider what you can hear around you and in the distance. Are there any scents which are particularly strong? What can you feel (for example, the breeze on your skin or the sun on your face)?

4. After spending some time picking up on the things that surround you, draft a composition of choice which uses senses other than eyesight. You could craft a story opener or poem which could be written from the perspective of a person with poor eyesight, like Noyes.



The Highwayman

One of the poems for which Noyes is most famous is entitled 'The Highwayman'.

In this ballad, Noyes tells the story of a highwayman who steals gold. Bess, his true love, lives in an inn and the highwayman often visits her there. Tim, the ostler (a person who looks after the horses of people residing at an inn) also loves Bess and one night overhears a conversation about a proposed meeting between the two lovers.

He advises the King's men (who are searching for him) about their meeting and they arrive at the inn, waiting for him to appear. They tie Bess up so that she is not able to escape but they sit her by the window, where she can see him riding in the moonlight. In order to warn the highwayman of their presence, Bess shoots herself and he rides away.

Tragically, the King's men also shoot him, so he dies on the highway. The final stanza describes the two lovers buried together in the churchyard.

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When on the trail, you could draft your own features of this type of genre. If you prefer, you could perhaps just draft a story opener, describing some of the features of the older houses which you see.

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Ventnor - A Desired Destination!

Ventnor has been a popular tourist destination for many years. The town of Ventnor has grown since the mid-19th century, when the warm climate and fresh sea air was considered beneficial to health and several sanatoriums were established, taking patients from all over the country. By the middle of the 20th century, Ventnor was thriving as a seaside resort, and is still popular today with holidaymakers.

ACTIVITY

Have a go at writing your own travel guide entry for a Victorian newspaper! Make some notes in the boxes below and then draft your entry on the next page.

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Location

Ambience (mood)

Facilities

Appeal to different types of visitor



Ventnor: You should visit because.....

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