



A Ventnor photographer dynasty



For some ninety years, the name Digweed became synonymous with beach photography in Ventnor. George Digweed came to Ventnor from Southsea in 1887 and at one time had a kiosk on the pier. The kiosk shown in the adjacent image is by the Cascade and dates either a few years before the Great War or else a few years after it. The placards advertise that coach parties are photographed daily as well as beach groups and that 'moving photography' is also a speciality. When George died in 1929, he was succeeded in the business by his son Bernard (1900-1971), aided for a time by George's widow, Mabel.

According to the *Isle of Wight Mercury*, George Digweed was the first photographer on Ventnor's beach, which probably means that he was the first to be licensed as such by the Local Board, later the Council. As time passed, other photographers obtained similar licenses and some rather tetchy competition arose among them. When George Digweed was engaged to take photographs of Edward, Prince of Wales opening the new nurses home at the Royal National Hospital in July 1926, George gained the title 'Royal Photographer'. However, he was using the appellation 'Royal' on some of his photographic postcards over ten years before.



This image is thought to be by George Digweed, taken very soon after his arrival in the town. It is not clear why some of the people who figure in it appear to be looking away from the camera.

Ventnor & District Local History Society: Michael Freeman, from files in Ventnor Heritage Centre, and also the monograph by R.V. Turley, *Isle of Wight Photographers, 1840-1940* (2001)



Ventnor & District Local History Society is a registered charity, working to preserve and record the history of our area and make it available to the public in the Ventnor Heritage Centre.

The Society and Heritage Centre are run and managed by volunteers.

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