



## Postal delivery in Ventnor in the 1920s



A horse-drawn Royal Mail cart stands outside a tobacconist and sweet shop at the east end of Park Avenue, at its junction with Zig Zag Road. The 'GR' that forms part of the Royal Mail emblem makes clear that the date is after 1910 and we know from the identity of the individual holding the reins that it is probably some 15 years later, for the young man is Tommy Dennes, born in South Street, Ventnor in 1896. Cecil Stanley Dennes (known as Tommy) apparently began his working life as a fruiterer's porter, according to the 1911 Census. A few years later, he had become a butcher, before enlisting in the 8<sup>th</sup> Btn Hampshire Regiment as a Rifleman in January 1914. He served for 3 years and 147 days, gaining the rank of Lance Corporal. At discharge, he re-enlisted in the RNVR.

One might have expected that, by such a date, local Royal Mail delivery would have largely been the preserve of motor-vans, for there is plenty of photographic evidence, nationally, of their use before 1914. However, horse-drawn carts also remained in regular use well into the 1930s and particularly in remote regions. Moreover, there is even a record of London still having a horse-drawn mail-van as late as 1949.

The tobacconist and sweet shop occupies a building by then known as *The Rendezvous*. However, its original name was *Redan Villa*, built in the 1840s as a lodging house, and probably so named on account of its two main faces (on Park Avenue and Zig Zag Rd) forming a salient angle, the word 'redan' being French in origin. At some stage in the early 20th Century, the building was also a tobacconist shop and tea garden, run by Helen Tilly. The addition of a tea garden likely explains the building's change of name to *Rendezvous* around 1925 when Carlo Mogano took over the premises. By about 1939, Mogano had departed to live and work in Coventry and subsequent owners or occupiers included Mrs Gertie Underwood, the Alford family, and Miss Mary Lloyd, though it is not quite clear in what order. It would seem from such a turnover of proprietors that the business was not altogether profitable.

You will not be able to find the building today, for it was demolished over 1961-2 to make way for extensive road widening.

*Ventnor & District Local History Society*: Michael Freeman, from files in Ventnor Heritage Centre, especially the late Fay Brown's index. The photo was supplied to the Centre by Rita Gawn, along with biographical notes.



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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