



This photograph of the Ventnor Cricket Club team donated to us recently is, as you can see, sadly slightly damaged by damp, but is a valuable new addition to our collection, not least because on the back it lists the names of those in the picture. It was probably taken in 1903 or 4, and in the centre of the middle row is the President, William Mew Judd, and sitting on the right hand end of that row is Dr Victor Blake, the team Captain. The shield is, I think, the 1899 First Division trophy.



The Club was founded in 1858 when it was known as the Undercliff Cricket Club. It lacked a permanent ground, and had mixed fortunes in the early years until 1885 when Major Dudley Hambrough offered them a lease on a field in the Steeplehill Castle grounds; funds were then raised for a pavilion, which was opened in 1892. In the final year of the century all came good when Ventnor defeated Newport by 33 runs on August 26 1899 to become First Division Champions. Steeplehill is of course a unique ground, more of an amphitheatre or bowl shape than a flat field, with some of the fielders standing on the surrounding slopes. At the Club dinner in 1903 William Mew Judd recalled that after their defeat by Ventnor, the County Club players were disgusted and told him *if we ever play that ***** club again we will send a team of goats.*

Dr Blake was team Captain from 1903-7, and may have been one of the players in that championship year. He was born in Alveston in Hampshire, the son of a wealthy ironmonger, and he trained as a doctor in London, where in 1896 he married Amy Harris before moving to Ventnor to take over the practice of Dr Stonham the same year. The Blakes immersed themselves in the life of the town. They were founder members of the Esperanto Society (see last week's story) and Victor enjoyed sailing, captained the hockey team and was involved with the Isle of Wight Rifles Volunteers as well as the Cricket Club. Mrs Blake, as the middle class wife of a doctor, would have been involved in the various charities and societies of the town. They lived in Elsinore in Alpine Road, and their two daughters Violet and Pearl were born here in 1898 and 1902.

In 1908 Dr Blake was appointed Medical Officer of Health to Portsmouth Education Committee, and the family left Ventnor. There was a collection and farewell entertainment for them at the cricket pavilion in recognition of their many services to the Club, where Victor and Amy were presented with an oblong silver tray, described as *richly engraved and provided by C. Miller, Jeweller, Pier Street.*

Victor died in 1925, aged 52, Amy in 1948 aged 73. They seemed to embody a gentle Edwardian England, but their daughters lives were to be rather different. In 1916, when she was 19, Violet married a widower, Lieutenant Colonel Lewis Tollemache Halliday; when she was in her pram watching her father score runs at Steeplehill cricket ground, he had been serving in China during the Boxer Rebellion where his bravery during the attack on the British Legation in Peking on 24 June 1900 earned him the Victoria Cross. Younger daughter Pearl married Captain Stanley Thomas Beardsworth in 1927; he died in 1941 on board HMS Prince of Wales sunk by enemy aircraft alongside HMS Repulse in the China Sea.

Lesley Telford, [Ventnor & District Local History Society](#), using records from our collection including *A History of Ventnor Cricket Club* by Jim Edwards. Thanks to Jill Wearing for the photograph of Ventnor Cricket Club (amongst many others).