



Three doctors and the climate of the Undercliff - Part 1



In 1830 Dr James Clark, shown here, published a book which identified the Undercliff climate as suitable for invalids suffering from chest complaints: *The influence of climate in the prevention and cure of chronic diseases*. In that book he also complained about the lack of accommodation 'With all its natural advantages, the accommodation at Undercliff are at present so few as to render the benefits of the place almost nugatory, except to a very limited number of invalids'.

It was Clark who recommended another medical doctor, George A Martin, 'whose experience in pulmonary complaints is almost unrivalled in this country' to re-locate to the Undercliff.

Dr Martin lived in Belgrave House, Belgrave Road for thirteen years before publishing *The Undercliff of the Isle of Wight: its climate, history and natural productions*. He took very detailed records of the climate and also made use of measurements provided by others.

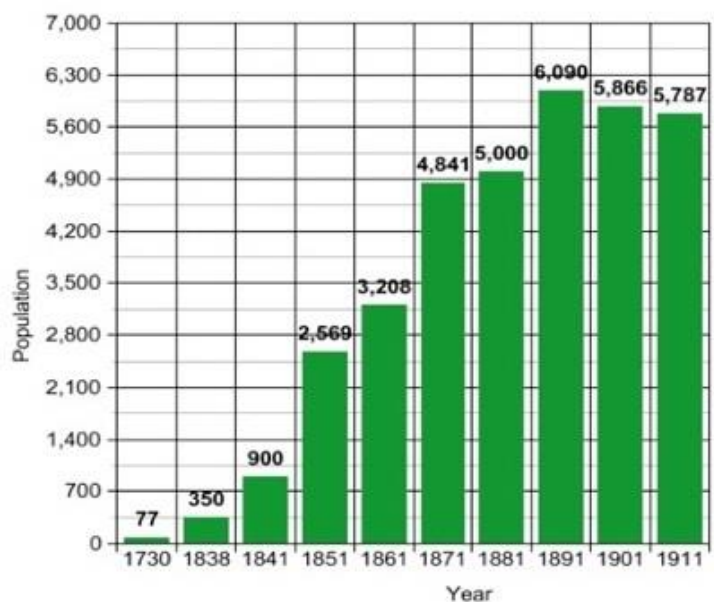
Martin's book, published in 1849, contains numerous tables of weather and climate which he recorded every day, even comparing temperatures 'Out of Doors' with those 'In Doors' and calculating mean monthly and daily ranges. He took barometer readings, hygrometer (humidity), pluviometer (rainfall) and the direction of prevailing winds. He even calculated that more rain fell at night than during the day!

But it was Clark's book, published nineteen years earlier, advocating the Undercliff climate for those with chest complaints, and highlighting the lack of suitable accommodation in the Undercliff, that led to a building boom in Ventnor.

As this table shows, the number of people in the town grew very rapidly after the publication of Clark's book. The population of the town was 350 in 1838, not long after Clark's book was published. Twenty three years later, in 1861, it was nearly ten times that, standing at 3,208.

Next week we will consider Dr Martin's comments during the Ventnor building boom, his home at Belgrave House and a third doctor who took over his practice.

Ventnor Population 1730 - 1911



Richard Downing, [Ventnor & District Local History Society](#). Sources: James Clark, *The influence of climate in the prevention and cure of chronic diseases* (1830); Rev Edmund Venables, *A guide to the Isle of Wight* (1860); George A Martin, *The Undercliff of the Isle of Wight: its climate, history and natural productions* (1849).