



VENTNOR & DISTRICT LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

## Isle of Wight Rifles - Ventnor Platoon 1914



The 8th Battalion, The Hampshire Regiment, Princess Beatrice's Isle of Wight Rifles, informally known as the Isle of Wight Rifles, was formed to defend the Isle of Wight after a 19th century invasion threat. In the First World War the regiment served overseas in Egypt, Palestine, Mesopotamia and Suvla Bay (Gallipoli), and during Second World War they were involved in coastal defence artillery. It was not uncommon for men from the same town or village to serve together in the same platoon, and the large photograph here shows members of the Ventnor platoon during training at Yaverland in 1914.



The soldier in the dark sweater and wearing boxing gloves in the centre of the top picture is Corporal Lewin Channing who was regimental boxing champion that year. In the lower picture, he is the one standing. Corporal Channing took part in the Gallipoli campaign during 1915, returning home safely, and was demobilised in 1919 with the rank of Sergeant. After his army service, Lewin entered the catering trade and, along with his family, was well known for tea rooms and tea gardens in and around Ventnor and the Landslip for the best part of 50 years.

The soldier on the extreme right of the upper photo, down on one knee, is Sergeant Tom Pearson, and he is the one sitting down in the lower photo. Sergeant Pearson joined up towards the end of the 19th century. He was demobilised in 1916 never having seen service overseas, and returned to his profession as a plumber, with a workshop in a cave in the station yard. Tom's father was Captain George Pearson - officer in charge of the Ventnor Fire Brigade - and Tom decided to join the fire brigade as well, eventually rising to the position of First Officer, second in command to Captain Bob Spencer. Tom's brass helmet, axe and utility belt are on display in the Heritage Museum.

The photographs here are from my own personal collection - by some strange quirk of fate, Tom Pearson was my maternal grandfather and Lewin Channing was my wife's maternal grandfather!

I hope that some readers may recognise their own relatives in the picture – if you can put any names to the faces, please let us know at the Heritage Centre in Spring Hill. We are closed now during the week for the winter, but open on Saturday mornings all year - and volunteers continue working 'behind the scenes' so we can always be reached by email: [info@ventnorheritage.org.uk](mailto:info@ventnorheritage.org.uk)

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