



This week we continue the story of Swiss pastry chef Walter Zuber, who arrived in Ventnor in 1925 .

As Ventnor started to recover after the second world war, Wally's businesses thrived. Food rationing didn't finally end until July 1954, and his pastries were a rare treat during this period of national austerity. The Continental Cafe on the Esplanade, shown here in 1951, was popular with local teenagers like Win Smith who remembers evenings at the roller skating rink on the Esplanade: *'It was magic to skate at night, with the lights from the pier, and the sea, and the moon shining on the water. Afterwards we would go to the 'Continental Cafe' who used to serve us coffee and doughnuts.'* Another frequent visitor there was Arthur Askey, who appeared in summer shows at the Winter Gardens and whose daughter, Anthea, was educated at Upper Chine School in Shanklin.



But it was Café Suisse, sitting on the corner of Spring Hill and the High Street, that was central to the day to day life of the town. Leigh Geddes remembers going there when she was young, watching Wally and his wife bustling about in aprons, and marvelling at the trompe l'oeil wallpaper on the back wall which showed mountain scenery (including a church tower with a real clock in it!) The large room on the first floor was used for Quaker meetings and also by Ventnor Youth Club, while the cafe below was a favourite place for social chat and gossip. Richard Owen, whose father was the manager of Barclays Bank in Church Street in the early 1950s, recalled: *My mother went out shopping with a wicker basket nearly every day . . . and in the middle of the morning foregathered with other women at the Café Suisse - alias 'The Snake Pit' - the town was sufficiently small that everyone knew about everyone else's business. Wally Zuber, the proprietor, was a genial Swiss man who served a good coffee with a variety of delicious continental pastries. All the ladies were very fond of Wally, but there was never a whiff of scandal attaching to Wally himself. When the Zubers retired in 1964 and sold the business, Café Suisse would never be the same again!*

Wally was always deeply involved in the commercial life of town. An early member and President of the Ventnor Chamber of Trade (later the Professional & Businessmen's Association), in 1945 he was one of the founder members of the Ventnor Rotary Club, the first to be established in this country after the second world war, and was elected President in 1951. He used his considerable

talents and experience to campaign for the Island as a tourist destination, as well as helping young people who came here to work in the summer months. Speaking at a Rotary Club meeting in 1975, he recalled the 'Home Rule for the Isle of Wight' movement, first propounded in Corboulds (now the Blenheim) which suggested that the Island should abolish rates and introduce local income taxes in their place. One of his pet projects was to try, on many occasions, to get the Post Office to authorise the Isle of Wight to produce its own stamps, which, he maintained, would be a source of income and extra publicity for the Island.



Bowls was another of his passions and the picture here, one of the few we have of Wally, shows him at the Bowling Club in 1961, sitting in the front row with his wife Emma on his left. He was President of the club on two occasions (and twice the County Bowls President). Walter and Emma had a son, also called Walter, and a daughter, Trudi, who lived with her parents and son Francesco in The Grove.

Emma died in September 1976 and five years later Walter downsized to Yarborough Court in Belgrave Road, opposite the Wellington Hotel - moving there exactly 56 years to the day since he and Emma had first stayed at the Wellington! Walter died on May 27th 1983 aged 84. The Zuber family graves can be seen just inside Ventnor Cemetery gates.