



Ventnor's Pier in the later 1950s



Ventnor's reconstructed pier re-opened fully at the end of May 1955 and this fine photo was taken shortly after. It is unmistakably 'fifties' from the clothing fashions visible: the young woman seated closest to the camera wearing exactly the sunglasses that were favoured at the time, as well as wearing one of those summer frocks that were nipped at the waist and then widened in fully fashioned style to a hem that was just below the knee. The young lad on the far left is also dressed in a style that was very characteristic of the time: khaki shorts, a white short-sleeve shirt and close-fitting short sleeve pullover. What also dates this photo is the design of the new screen shelters for the pier neck. They were double-sided in thirty-foot lengths and decorated at the ends with sets of vertical side struts that had small coloured balls spaced out over their length. This was a style that was straight out of the Festival of Britain of 1951 and became a common motif for interior design in the early 1950s.

Looking towards the Esplanade, one can just make out the single-storey building that included the pier entrance way. There were seven retail outlets here, let on three-year contracts to various individuals. Shop No. 1 was let to S. Richardson of Ventnor for £450. This was an ice-cream seller and the contract included ice-cream rights on the foreshore, beach and cliffs. Mr G.J. Cook of Brighton had shop No. 2 which was for the sale of light refreshments, but not ice cream. Other shops sold sweets and tobacco, seaside novelties, and photo equipment. There was a toll to enter the pier, two old pennies for people and one shilling (now 5p) for dogs. The dog toll was exorbitant

and must have been intended as a deterrent to prevent the fine new oak decking from being spoiled by dog excrement. Today's 'pick up your dog poo' slogan was not current at the time.



The new pierhead had extensive facilities, including a large entertainment arena. But the prime visitor attraction was probably the large first-floor sun deck, with a licensed bar at the seaward end and a coffee bar at landward end. The latter was named the 'Calypso' and had a striking decorative scheme as well as the latest coffee-making equipment. The adjacent artist's sketch does not do it justice.

Ventnor & District Local History Society: Michael Freeman, from files in Ventnor Heritage Centre



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The Society and Heritage Centre are run and managed by volunteers.

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