

# ST LAWRENCE HERITAGE TRAILS

## THE VILLAGE TRAIL

These heritage trails relate some of the history of St. Lawrence through its remaining buildings. In Norman times the area was used as a hunting park and Old Park dates back to the 14th Century. The old church dates to the 12th Century and may have some earlier Saxon elements. Home Farm could be the site of the Norman manor house.

From 1881 to his death in 1889, the German industrial chemist, William Spindler, attempted to develop St. Lawrence as a resort to rival Ventnor. In that short time he had an enormous influence, but he alienated some local people by criticising their laziness. His legacy is a number of grand Victorian houses and the remains of the sea wall in Binnel Bay.

The late 19<sup>th</sup> Century also saw the construction of a new church, a village school and the arrival of a railway. Their buildings are included on this village trail.

The St. Lawrence heritage trails come in two parts. One part is this Village Trail (2.5k/1.6 miles) which involves walking on busy roads. Allowing time to view the buildings, and to enter and explore the two churches, **this trail will take 2 hours.**

There is a separate trail leaflet for the **Coastal Footpath Trail.**

### ACCESS

There is roadside parking in most parts of the village but no bus service except a community bus from Ventnor (No.31) that operates mornings only Mon-Fri.

### REFRESHMENTS

Tea and coffee are usually available at St. Rhadagunds Holiday Centre (11 on this route). The Parish Church provides fruit juices and biscuits in return for a small donation.

You can start and end these trails at any point but the details that follow start from Spindlers Road. The numbered locations appear on the map.

**1. SPINDLERS ROAD** is named after William Spindler a German industrial chemist who attempted to develop his Old Park Estate in the 1880s as a resort to rival Ventnor. He built a number of houses and a promenade at Binnel Bay. He also planned to create a harbour and a promenade all the way to Ventnor.



*Walk uphill on Spindlers Road and turn right on Seven Sisters Road.*

On the right (46mtrs) you pass the old coach house of St. Rhadagunds (see 11) before reaching the old railway station high up on the left with its road bridge nearby on St. Lawrence Shute.

**2. THE OLD STATION** – Opened at St. Lawrence in 1897 as part of the Newport, Godshill and St. Lawrence Railway by the Isle of Wight Central Railway Company. Designed to rival the existing line to Ventnor from Wroxall, it was extended to Ventnor in 1900 but closed in 1952. The line entered St. Lawrence through the 566m long High Hat tunnel.



*Continue right and downhill on Seven Sisters Road past The Old Rectory.*

At Twining Road there is a board on the *Pilgrims Paths* and *Holy Wells* trail. This tells the history of pilgrimages in the medieval church. The old church comes next on the right.

**3. OLD CHURCH** – The church existed before 1201 and may have some Saxon elements. Until the chancel was added in 1842, by 1st Earl Yarborough, it rated as the smallest parish church in England. The windows in the North wall are ancient. The oak pews date from 1926 and the hat pegs around the walls, an unusual feature, are Georgian. A painting of the Royal Arms dates from the time of Charles 1. There is a 15th Century baptismal font, a stoup that is about 500 years old and the piscina niche is almost the same age as the church.

**4. HOME FARM** is next on the right. Possibly on the site of the manorial residence of the Norman De Aula family who became prominent in the early 12th Century. The proximity of the church suggests that it may have started as the manorial chapel.

**5. THE VILLAGE HALL** is at the bottom of the road on the left. Constructed in 1898 as a school but served that purpose for only ten years because the population of St. Lawrence had reduced. This was due to the closure of the coastguard station and the increased taxation for the Boer War which caused wealthier families to close their homes and depart, taking their servants with them. William Spindler was a significant local employer, but he died at this time causing redundancies.



*A little further along Undercliff Drive, on the left, is Spring Cottage.*

**6. SPRING COTTAGE** – Once known as The Duck, it was an unlicensed drinking house used by smugglers who were organised by 'Captain' Harvey. Wool was illegally exported and spirits brought back. The name 'Duck' relates to the story of a fancy duck that disappeared from Week Farm on the upper cliff and later appeared in the spring that still flows near the cottage.



*Next, on the right, is the walled and gated driveway that leads to St. Lawrence Well.*

**7. WELL** – There is an oral tradition that the well was used by early Christian pilgrims. In that era it was just a bubbling spring at the roadside, but in the 19th Century it was enclosed and restructured in the Gothic Revival style by Sir Richard Worsley. The lane in which the well is situated was once the main coastal route from Ventnor to St. Lawrence. In recent years the ancient tradition of 'Well Dressing' has been adopted. A board by the well tells its history.

**8.** Close to the Well is the entrance to **MARINE VILLA** built in the 1790s by Sir Richard Worsley of Appuldurcombe who used it as a seaside retreat with the name Sea Cottage.

**9. LISLE COMBE** is further along on the right (91mtrs). The house was built in 1815 by Lord Yarborough as a country retreat for his brother Captain Pelham. It was originally rectangular. A wing was added in 1843 and another renovation followed in 1849. The many-gabled sandstone house has fretted bargeboards, windows with square-sided bays and small oriels, a veranda, and brick work. The house cannot be seen from the road but a splendid view is obtained from the Coastal Path near the Battery site (9 on The Coastal Trail). The writer Alfred Noyes (1880-1958) lived here for 28 years from 1930. Lisle Combe is now a guest house and its history is described at [www.lislecombe.co.uk](http://www.lislecombe.co.uk)

The Village Trail turns back along the road at this point, but those wishing to undertake the Coastal Trail, which takes 1.5 hours from here, should proceed to Bank End Farm, on the right, and join footpath V91 down to the coast at Orchard Bay.



*Returning back along the road on The Village Trail and past the village hall, you see the parish church on the left.*

**10. PARISH CHURCH** – The church was built in 1878 to a design by Sir George Gilbert Scott who was famous as architect of the Albert Memorial in London. It has a 17th century altar and a chest that dates from 1612. The demolition of Ventnor's Royal National Hospital for Diseases of the Chest in 1969 resulted in the Pre-Raphaelite stained glass windows from the chapel being installed here. The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood was a group of English painters, poets, and critics, founded in 1848 to reform contemporary art. A leaflet describing these windows is available for purchase in the church.

**11. ST. RHADAGUNDS** comes next on the right. Built in 1870 as a gentleman's summer residence and occupied by the McDougall family of flour merchants. The buildings at the back, on Seven Sisters Road, were the coach house and piggeries. It is now a Christian Holiday Centre [www.strhads.co.uk](http://www.strhads.co.uk) Refreshments are usually available here.



*Just before the junction with Old Park Road, on the left is:*

**12. ST. LAWRENCE HOTEL** was later known as the Carfax Hotel and, until fairly recently, was the Inn at St. Lawrence which also housed Yates Brewery, now moved to Newchurch.

**13. CRAIGIE LODGE** is on the opposite corner. Built as St. Lawrence Lodge for William Spindler in 1889. His artist son Walter remodelled the interior in 1898 for the novelist and dramatist Pearl Craigie who used the house to write and read. She was the daughter of John Morgan Richards of Steephill Castle and wrote under the name John Oliver Hobbes. Richards re-named the house Craigie Lodge after her death in 1906.



*Turning left down old Park Road, 91mtrs on the right is:*



**14. QUEEN MARY COTTAGE** – William Spindler built the water pumping station over the spring in this cottage garden. In the 1930s a pumping station engineer, 'Brisher' White, lived here and created an ornamental hedge in the shape of the Cunard ocean liner Queen Mary (1936-1967). This became a tourist attraction and raised donations for mariners' charities until its accidental destruction by a pumping station vehicle in 1976.



*Coming back up Old Park Road, turn left for 137mtrs to:*

**15. TOLLGATE COTTAGE** – The 2nd Earl Yarborough constructed a new road through the village in the 1850s and this was the tollgate.

THE  
VENTNOR &  
UNDERCLIFF  
HERITAGE  
PARTNERSHIP

[www.ventnorheritagetrail.co.uk](http://www.ventnorheritagetrail.co.uk)

Richard Downing, August 2014

The website of the St. Lawrence Community Association contains a History Gallery of photographs that includes some buildings mentioned on this trail [www.stlawrenceiow.co.uk/Pages/historygallery.aspx](http://www.stlawrenceiow.co.uk/Pages/historygallery.aspx)

# THE VILLAGE TRAIL MAP



- 1. SPINDLERS ROAD
- 2. THE OLD STATION
- 3. OLD CHURCH
- 4. HOME FARM
- 5. THE VILLAGE HALL
- 6. SPRING COTTAGE
- 7. WELL
- 8. MARINE VILLA
- 9. LISLE COMBE
- 10. PARISH CHURCH
- 11. ST. RHADAGUNDS
- 12. ST. LAWRENCE HOTEL
- 13. CRAIGIE LODGE
- 14. QUEEN MARY COTTAGE
- 15. TOLLGATE COTTAGE