

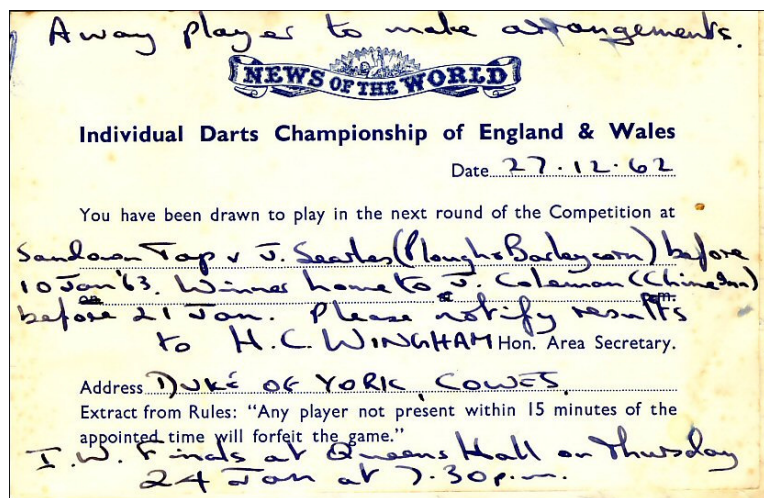
THE WINTER OF 1962 – 1963

By Dave Bambrough 2009

December 1963 was heralded as the sunniest December since records began in 1914, with a total of 109.8 hours of sunshine recorded. This total exceeded the previous record of 92 hours established in December 1946. However, in the last five days of the month the sun disappeared and winter dawned on the unsuspecting local landscape. An early warning sign was the -5° -Celsius on Boxing Day and a light snow shower, a prerequisite

for the warm clothes and coal fires that would soon be required.

On Saturday 29th December 1963 at about 7.30 p.m. several members of the Sandown Tap public house dart team journeyed to the Plough & Barleycorn public house, Shanklin, to support their house champion, who was representing the Tap in the first round of the News of the World National Dart competition. Despite the Tap man losing, it had been a very convivial evening at The Plough, and whilst everyone was



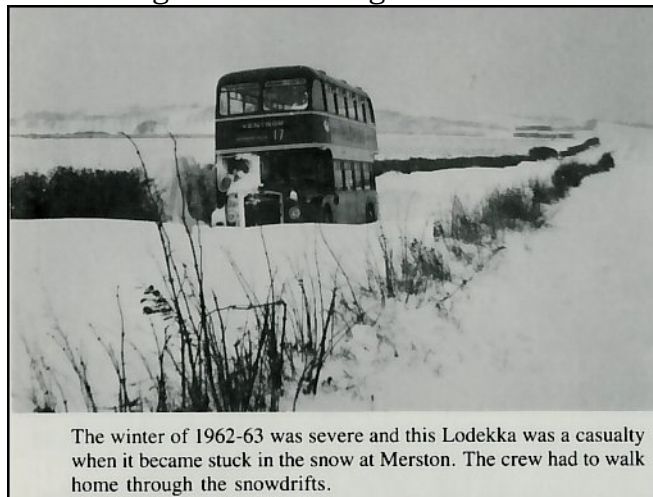
aware that snow was falling during the evening's entertainment, none of the participants realised just how much was falling.

Not many young men between the ages of 18 and 23 had their own transport in those days, the odd luxury and a couple of nights out very quickly used up any excess money left over, once the board and keep contributions had been distributed. The cost of a motorbike was sustainable, and many youths of this age had them, the cost of a car however wasn't, to most, therefore the bus was the most popular form of transport.

Immediately on leaving the Plough with the intent of walking to Shanklin Bus Station it became imminently obvious to all concerned that travelling home was going to present problems, the snow was exceedingly deep.

The bus service had been suspended along with all other forms of road transport. Fortunately British Rail was still running and the merry group made their way to Shanklin Railway Station, and what a relief it was, to see an 02 Tank Engine steaming in from Ventnor, bound for Ryde, via Sandown and Brading.

Eight and a half inches of snow fell on that Saturday evening, with the district almost completely cut off overnight. Many householders were busy on Sunday morning with shovels, clearing garden paths and pavements. There were no Sunday newspapers, as the 7.20 a.m. train had left Ryde about an hour late, and came to a halt in the huge drifts at Rowborough near Brading.



The winter of 1962-63 was severe and this Lodekka was a casualty when it became stuck in the snow at Merston. The crew had to walk home through the snowdrifts.

One option that many passengers used was to somehow find their way round the drifts and walk the line to Sandown & Shanklin. The Ryde to Cowes train suffered a similar fate being stranded at Dodner, just beyond Newport. Worst hit by the blizzard in the Sandown district was Newchurch, with eight-foot drifts reported in the High Street. In some parts around Adgestone, wind swirled snow 15 feet high in places. Amazingly, Sandown & Shanklin had actually got off lightly, compared with other parts of the Island.

Four buses were stranded overnight, two near the Fighting Cocks public house with

local people on board. The Sandown – Ryde road was blocked over the weekend and Monday, with drifts being 12ft deep in places. Sandown & Shanklin work gangs cleared

and sanded the main roads during Sunday, despite difficulty in getting the diggers and other mechanical aids into the district. A remaining trouble spot was Cowlease Hill, (between Shanklin and Ventnor) when fresh falls again complicated the issue on New Years Eve, necessitating gangs to work on New Years Day. Even when the road was cleared for the passing of traffic, 6ft drifts remained on either side of the road to be shifted.

**SANDOWN-SHANKLIN
& DISTRICT
CAMERA CLUB**
Important Notice!
**ANNUAL
SOCIAL**
 will now be held on
**FRIDAY,
JANUARY 18th**
**Savoy Hotel,
Shanklin**
 at 7.30 p.m.
instead of JANUARY 4th.
 Postponement due to
 weather conditions.

Commendation was given to the local Postmen and Milkmen for their determination in delivering to all but an isolated farm or two. Milkmen worked a 12-hour day in order to complete their rounds. At Princelet Farm near Apse Heath, the Princelet Dairy roundsmen had to dig their way through nearly a quarter-of-a-mile stretch of snow before starting deliveries. One keen worker walked from Ventnor to the dairy, starting out at 5.15 in the morning. The one outpost that proved impossible to reach that day was Arreton.

On Wednesday 2nd January, numbers 12 (Sandown - via Shanklin - Newport) and 14 (Sandown - Newport) buses were still out of action due to hazardous road conditions. On Tuesday, the No. 16 service was in operation between Shanklin and Ryde but in certain sections of the snow-blocked highway, traffic was reduced to a single lane due to the huge drifts on either side of the road. All local services apart from the one, which ran between Shanklin bus depot and Oaklyn Gardens

were suspended.

Sportsmen also suffered from the inclement weather. It was so cold during the annual Boxing Day angling competition on Sandown Pier that the competition only attracted 15 hardy anglers. The salt water froze on anglers' lines as they reeled in, and at the end of the competition the judges were faced with another dilemma, not a fish had been caught. This presented the problem of how to distribute the prizes, so as they were all Christmas related, the 15 names were put into a hat and a draw made. The winning three; K. New, (pudding), J. Winter, (bottle of Sherry) and I. Draper, (cigarettes).

Sandown & Shanklin golf course was completely shut down due to the depth of snow on the course and even the most popular hole, the traditional "nineteenth" never saw a customer for a short period. Saturday, January 3rd brought a halt to all Island football matches, the first time since 1947 that such havoc had been caused, although in 1954 similar weather conditions resulted in a considerable hold up to the programme, but not for so long. The Golf course took until March 5th to regain almost complete normality, although there were still temporary tees and greens in use, but by then only one hole, the 5th was still out of play.

**Sandown-Shanklin
Rugby Club**
 (The Hurricanes)
**NEW YEAR
DANCE**
POSTPONED
until further notice
 Owing to bad weather.

JAMBOREE SHOW
 by
East Wight Scouts and Cubs
POSTPONED
 until further notice owing to
 bad weather.

The weekend of 12th/13th January brought about some unexpected entertainment for those with a pair of ice skates in their loft. Sandown Canoe Lake had frozen to an acceptable thickness, enabling a large number of residents to take full advantage of a rare occasion. Skating was also enjoyed by many on the stretch of river between Alverstone and Newchurch.

Daws & Knighton, Ironmongers, at 81 High Street actually found some old stock of skates, which were quickly put out for sale. Even the seawater froze in the large pools left by the receding tide on Sandown Beach and spray thrown over the sea wall at high tide also froze. At Shanklin, giant icicles formed in the Shanklin Chine Stream, where it tumbled down the Chine.

Ice on the roads, caused by the overnight freezing of thawed snow, and heavy frosts made motoring difficult although it was somewhat easier on main roads. Frozen pipes and hot water systems caused grave concern to many local residents and hoteliers. The coldest daytime temperature recorded thus far in the New Year was -3° Celsius, on Sunday January 13th, overnight

it dropped to -8° Celsius. On Monday 14th & Tuesday 15th slight thaws were experienced overnight with temperatures of 3° Celsius. The night temperatures fell to -6° and -3°

respectively, undoing the good work done by the thaw and everything froze again. By Wednesday it had risen to -2° overnight. One bright spot in all of the gloom was that applications for the local holiday guide was greater than ever, so reported the Sandown-Shanklin publicity officer.

By January 17th statistics showed that this winter was now only comparable with the heavy snow of 1947. The postponed St. John's Parish Room New Year Party went ahead on Friday 18th, despite the Parish Room water pipes being frozen. This was only possible with the help of Mr. F. R. C. Colenutt, a near neighbour, who supplied the Hall with water. The continuing cold weather brought about a large number of building workers being stood off. Statistics showed that 50% of the houses in Sandown & Shanklin had water supply trouble. Twenty percent were without water at all, and 30 percent were partly frozen. These figures were given by the Isle of Wight Water board, the Inspector stating that they were getting about 40 calls a day from each town. Water carts were in operation at Luccombe, Alverstone Garden Village and Borthwood. Standpipes were installed in Cross Street, Royal Crescent, New Road and Carter Street. There was also grave concern for the well being of birds and animals.

During the period January 17th to the 24th only one solitary day recorded a temperature above freezing. Recordings made by the Sandown meteorological Officer, Mr. Leslie Goodfellow at the Eastern Gardens, showed that the highest temperature of the seven days was on Sunday January 20th, when 1° Celsius was recorded, this was a short lived experience when a low of -6° Celsius was recorded that night.

Despite the cold weather, or perhaps due to necessity, there was no respite from burglary. Frost's (topical name for the time) shop and café at No. 6 Station Avenue were broken into after the heavy snowfall on the Saturday night. The haul consisted of; a sack of potatoes, vegetables, 9lbs of tea, tobacco, cigarettes, chocolates, canned goods, lard and butter. They also forced open the gas meter and took the cash container. Not content with that, they also stole appeal boxes for Dr. Banardos Homes and for Cancer research. (It doesn't appear that those responsible were caught, so if you are reading this, feel ashamed lads).

Over the week ending January 31st, skating was still in progress on the Canoe Lake, along with a new sport, Ice Yachting, and impromptu games of hockey. The river Yar at Alverstone was also still in use for winter sports.



Statisticians were having a field day compiling new records that this chaotic wintry scene was throwing up. January 1963 was confirmed as the coldest since records began in 1914, with the average maximum temperature for the month being 1° Celsius. The average minimum was minus 3° Celsius.

The highest temperature recorded in January 1963 was on the 4th, 4° Celsius, and the lowest -8° Celsius,

this at various times. Many comparisons were drawn to the very cold winter of 1947 but the difference was; average maximum for 1947 was 6° Celsius, and the average minimum, was minus 2° Celsius.

Sandown Football Club finally played their first match for 8 weeks on February 14th, defeating Waterloo Reserves by 4 goals to 2. Even this was only possible after some hard work from club supporters who spent the week clearing the pitch from snow and ice. Sandown team: Duke: Davies, Casey, Bacon, Rogers, Passell, Legge, Guy, Jimmy White, Harmes and Greening.

To nearly quote a popular television programme of the time "That was the Month that Was".

Footnote. Thanks to Reg Davies who took the photograph of the stranded Lodekka bus, and to Richard Newman who kindly allowed re-production for the Chronicle.

(Conclusion). Next Chronicle article "Sausages and Golf".