



## Madeira Hall



Madeira Hall is one among many of Bonchurch's finest mansions. Located down a long drive leading south off the easterly end of Trinity Road, it is thought to have been built by a Mr. Claxton sometime between 1800 and 1820. Gothic in style with two shallow projecting wings, it may have formed an enlargement of an old cottage on the site. Inside, it had a grand drawing room that communicated with a large library. There were dining and morning rooms, as well as six main bedrooms. It was set in grounds of two acres and benefited from a four-stall stable and coach house on the southern boundary with Madeira Vale (now Madeira Road).

'The Hall', as it was for many years once known, was briefly the home of the historian Thomas Babington Macaulay. In 1850, he spent a working holiday there whilst writing later volumes of his famous *History of England*. From about 1860, the Hall became the home of Mary Dick and her three daughters, the youngest, Margaret Catherine Dick, often thought to be the model for Miss Havisham in Charles Dickens's novel *Great Expectations*, serialised over 1860-61. The daughter became something of a recluse after being forbidden to marry a young naval lieutenant (see the VDLHS article in the *South Wight Chronicle* dated 14<sup>th</sup> April 2022, accessible on the Society's website).

The Dick family, or subsequent members of it, lived at Madeira Hall until the late 1880s, but by 1895, it had been bought by Dr. John Hougham Bell of the Royal National Hospital at Steephill, and his widow was still living there in 1914. In 1924, a member of the Swinburne family is given as residing there and then, in Kelly's Directory of 1935-6, it has become the home of Lieutenant-Colonel Charles Samman, a barrister. A decade later, though, Madeira Hall had ceased to be a private mansion with a small army of domestic servants to support it. Instead, it had become a hotel, operating as such for 60 or more years. Mr and Mrs A.G. Burt were its proprietors in the years following the war, offering weekly terms of 5 to 8 guineas and boasting an electric passenger lift, interior sprung beds, a putting green, as well as home garden produce. Today, Madeira Hall is a private home once more.

*Ventnor & District Local History Society*: Michael Freeman, from files in Ventnor Heritage Centre. The image dates from the 1860s and is in the form of a *carte de visite*, reproduced here by courtesy of Sharon Champion.



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