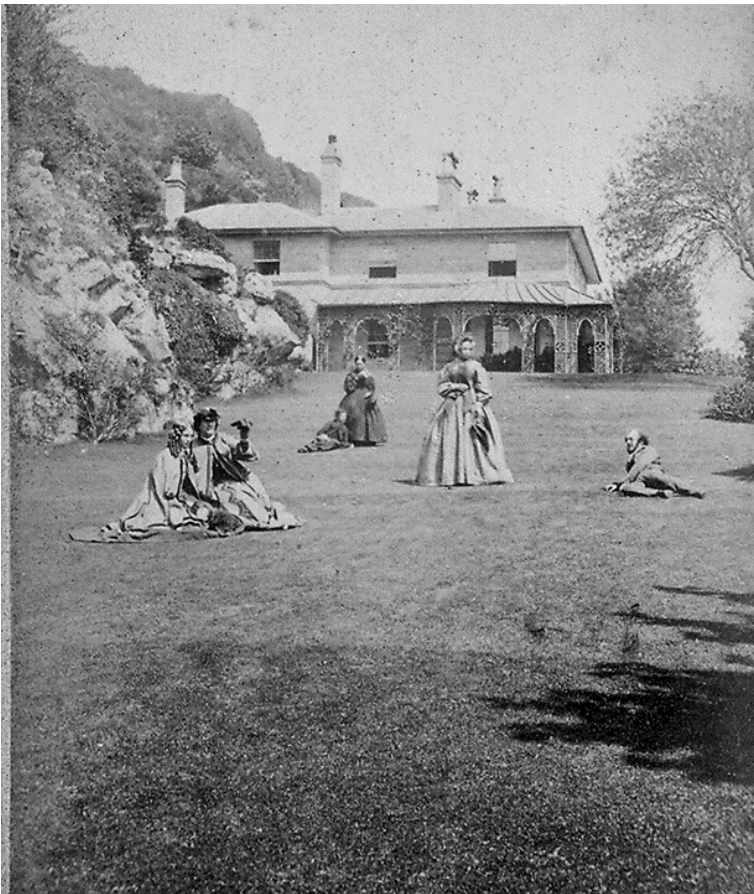


Pulpit Rock



The main image shows a small party of mid-Victorians relaxing on the lawn of Pulpit Rock, a Bonchurch mansion set on a natural plateau or terrace beneath Bonchurch Down.

The image takes the form of a *carte de visite* (visiting card) that was much favoured in the period. Fletcher Moor, a Ventnor printer, produced many of these, particularly in connection with properties that were regularly offered for seasonal letting. Visitors taking such properties could use copies as calling cards when they wished to make already resident visitors aware of their arrival, or they could post them to relatives and friends at home.

The mansion itself was built about 1850 and set in over two acres. At one point it was owned by Dr. Henry Leeson who was largely responsible for creating the fine pleasure grounds, including flower, fruit and kitchen gardens, terraced walkways, wilderness plantations and pools. The rocky cliff face behind the building benefited from various natural caves that were re-modelled to form part of the pleasure grounds.

The name 'pulpit rock' is taken from an especially rugged mass of green sandstone that stood on a prominent position high on the cliff behind the house. It was surmounted by a large wooden cross. The cross was apparently erected by Sir William Heathcote around 1820 and the appellation 'pulpit' was due to the fact that, viewed from some angles, the rock mass did look like a church pulpit.

Legend has it that St. Boniface and his monks preached from the rock more than 900 years ago.

Henry Leeson was a Bonchurch resident for some 30 years, becoming a local 'worthy', at one time chairman of Ventnor Local Board, a magistrate and a local benefactor.

Michael Freeman, [Ventnor & District Local History Society](http://www.ventnorheritage.org.uk), from files in Ventnor Heritage Centre.

