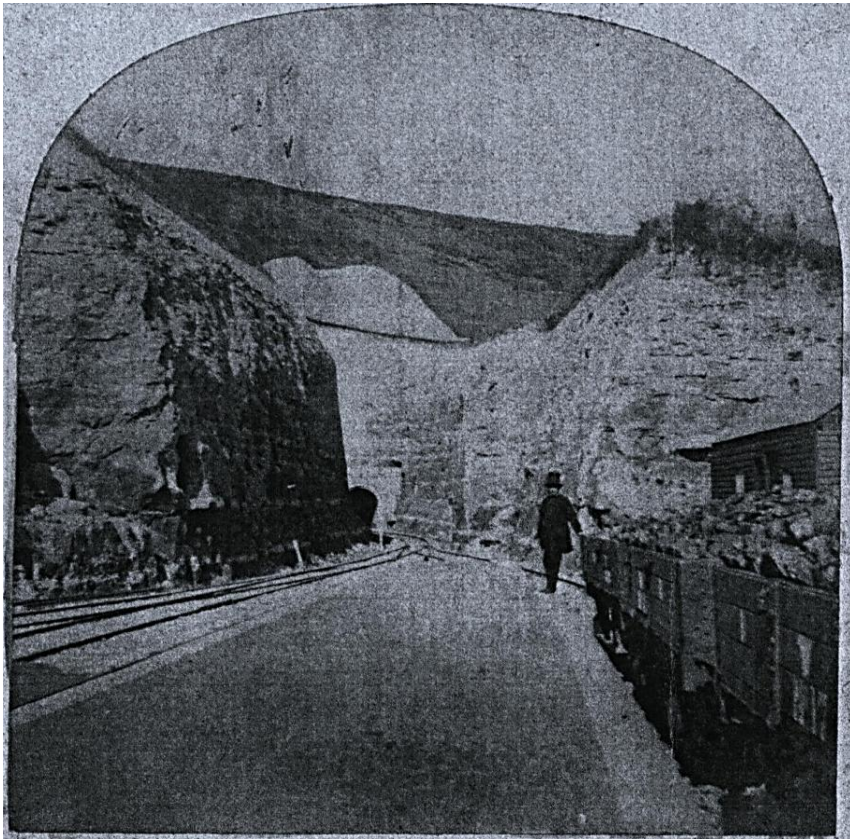




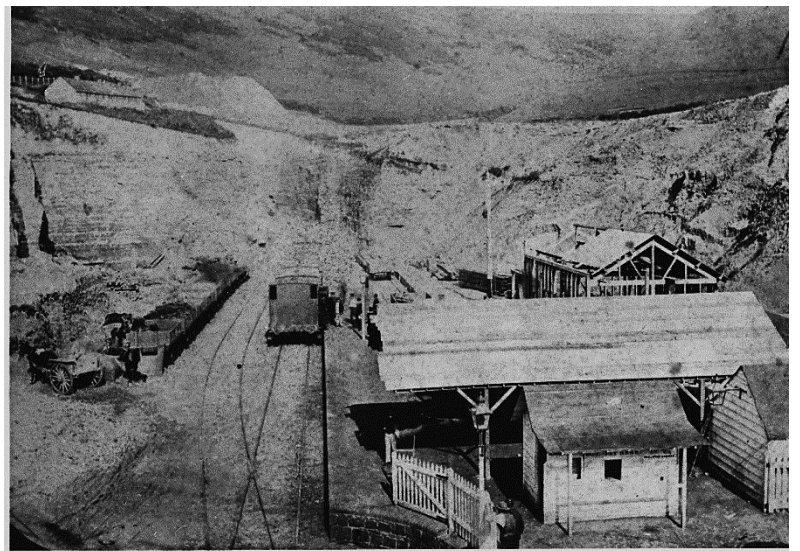
## Ventnor quarry, site of the town's first railway station



A gentleman in a black stovepipe hat poses for the photographer at the entrance to the cavernous cutting leading to the new railway tunnel through St. Boniface Down. A few wagons, heavily laden with coal, stand to his left, while the newly completed island platform occupies much of the foreground. The picture forms one of a pair of stereo images that, when examined together under a stereoscopic viewer, would have transformed that deep cutting into 3D. The excavation seen here was entirely new, for the walls of the stone quarry had previously ended just behind the standing gentleman. In October 1865, the *Isle of Wight Observer* had remarked on the dangerous work being undertaken in cutting a way to the tunnel entrance. One side of it was 60 to 70 feet high. Deep holes were being drilled for blasts of gunpowder. Once the detonation had been made and the debris cleared, other men began removing loose lumps with their picks.

The lower picture shows a larger view of the station site, with construction of the station buildings barely begun. There is the goods shed under construction to the right, a makeshift canopy for passengers in the foreground, together with a few wooden buildings serving as offices. But otherwise, arriving passengers alighted open to the elements. And this was just after enduring the Faustian noise, smoke and darkness of the three-quarters of a mile tunnel, the small four-wheel carriages illuminated only by tiny oil lamps in compartment ceilings. For some, it must have seemed like a journey into the underworld.

To the extreme top left of the picture, you can just discern a long wooden hut, almost certainly forming makeshift lodgings for some of the navvies who worked on this part of the line.



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



Ventnor & District Local History Society is a registered charity, working to preserve and record the history of our area and make it available to the public in the Ventnor Heritage Centre.  
The Society and Heritage Centre are run and managed by volunteers.

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