



VENTNOR & DISTRICT LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

Henry Brown's Posting Establishment



Henry Brown was born in 1849, the son of a Chale blacksmith and the youngest of eight children. He died in Ventnor in 1919, after a life spent working with horses in the days when they ruled the roads. The picture here shows him in about 1910, standing outside 'Brown's Posting Establishment' next door to the Rose Inn in Pier Street (which was named Mill Street until 1874).



Henry married Millicent Baguley, daughter of a Lincolnshire 'Carrier and Huckster' in 1878, and they had four daughters, Edith, Emma, Cissie and Bessie. Cissie became an accomplished horsewoman and riding mistress, and is standing in the kiosk in the photograph here.

Henry and his older brother Frank had moved from Chale to Ventnor. Henry ran a horse-drawn omnibus business from the mews in the High Street, with stables and a forge in Pound Lane, while Frank worked as a lodging-house keeper in Dudley Road in the 1870s, before setting up as a 'Postingmaster' at 10 Mill Street, next door to the Rose. The name Postingmaster dates back to the days when official letters and documents were delivered across the country by messengers on horseback and it was vital to have fresh horses available at specific 'posts' along the route; by the nineteenth century it had come simply to mean someone providing horses for hire and operating horse drawn vehicles on established routes - rather like a hire car firm and a local bus service combined. When Frank became a farmer at Rew Manor, Henry combined the two family businesses as *H Brown's Posting Establishment*, based in Frank's premises in what was now called Pier Street.

Bill Turner was one of Henry's employees, and here his son recalls some of the details of his working life: *My father worked for Brown's and later G K Nash, from the time he left Godshill School until he retired at about 70 years of age. The only break was when he served in the Royal Field Artillery during the first World War. At the time that father started work Brown's stables were in Pound Lane. They later moved to Albert Street where the stables were situated where the Health Centre has now been built. I can well remember going there as a boy and watching Dad and two other employees - Curly Rugg and Bob Beavis - cleaning down the horses and hissing through their teeth as they did so. This appeared to be a common habit amongst horsemen.*

Henry Brown's omnibuses plied between Ventnor Railway Station and any part of the town, taking visitors to and from their hotels. There was a bus at the Station to meet every train which came in, seven days a week, doing very good business when friends and relatives came to visit patients at the Royal National Hospital. William Turner's son recalled that: *Brown's Bus - or the Town Bus - was horse-drawn until a few years after WW1 when one day Dad pulled up, very proudly, in his new motor bus. Who taught him to drive goodness only knows.*

Henry died aged 70 in 1919, after a life spent working with horses in the days when they ruled the roads. By then, the business was being run by his daughter Bessie's husband, Arthur Hann – a business already moving seamlessly from being horse powered to petrol driven. The building in our photograph here eventually became the Vectis Bus Garage, now sadly empty and derelict.

Lesley Telford, [Ventnor & District Local History Society](#), using records and images from our Collection and UK Census records.