



The Commercial Tap and Stables: Charles Farrow and family

This evocative photograph dating from about 1895 shows Charles Alfred Farrow and his wife Annie (nee Groves) surrounded by their eleven children. Charles's father William, originally a farmer from Northwood, was working as the Postmaster in the Crown Inn in Ventnor High Street in 1851, providing horses and stabling for travellers and running the Inn with his wife, sons and daughters. An inn with stabling was a good business, and when their father died in 1855, son Edward ran the Crown with sister Emily, while sons Henry and Charles took on the Prince Albert Inn and the Commercial Tap and Stables respectively.



Back L-R: Elizabeth (b 1878), George (b 1873), Emily (b 1864), Charles (b 1867), Sarah (b 1862), Francis (b 1875), Kate (b 1871). Front L-R: Ellen (b 1867), Daisy (b 1885), Charles Alfred Farrow (1838-1915), Alfred (b 1882), Annie Farrow (Groves) (1844 - 1895), Alice (b 1880)

The Commercial Tap and Stables in Market Street were behind the Commercial Hotel (now the Central). The stables would have been the major part of Charles Farrow's business, which was described in 1881 as: *Commercial Hotel Mews, Market Street. Livery and Bait Stables and Posting Establishment. Landaus and Carriages of every description for hire. Good lock up coach houses. Proprietor C Farrow*. 'Bait stables' were for the horses of visitors staying at an inn, and Charles also had stabling in Marlborough Road. The Tap, on the other hand, mainly served the stable hands, ostlers and coachmen, who used to get their beer passed out to the stable yard from a back door of the Commercial. One of the outbuildings was converted to become the Tap, and this was where the Farrow family lived, and where Annie and her daughters would have helped out serving beer. Stable work was long and thirsty work and there was a lot of heavy drinking, with wheelbarrows being kept available to use when necessary to remove drunks from the premises.

When Annie died in 1895 eldest daughter Sarah and her husband Thomas Reed ran the Tap, taking over the licence when Charles died in 1915. Beer selling prospered as the stables became less busy when cars and lorries took over from horses on the roads, and next week Jill Wearing continues the story of the old Tap up to the 1950s with *Echoes from the Hole in the Wall*.

We can trace the stories of all the children except for one, Francis, who disappears from the records and may have emigrated. Emily and Ellen were in service in Ventnor until they married - Ellen as a maid to Elizabeth Missing Sewell in Ashcliff in Bonchurch for several years. The younger girls, Elizabeth, Kate, Alice and Daisy, all moved to London working as shop assistants or maids, and all married there. Of the boys, George became a Coachman, working for his father and living at home until he married. The two other sons went further afield: Charles, the eldest, emigrated to America, and the youngest, Alfred, worked on ships travelling between Britain and New South Wales from the age of 18, and married and settled in Australia. A very Victorian family

Lesley Telford, [Ventnor & District Local History Society](#), using records from our collection and census and registration records. Thanks to Marion Neiman, Elizabeth Farrow's great granddaughter for the photograph of the Farrow family.