



## George Barfoot



This striking image appeared in Mate's Ventnor Guide in the early 1900s. The location is the north side of the High Street, close to the junction with Victoria Street. These were once the premises of Walter Hammond, a fine draper, silk mercer, ladies' outfitter, dress and mantle maker over many years. In 1901, though, George Barfoot acquired the business, describing himself as silk mercer and general draper, as well as a high class dressmaker offering 'perfect fit and style', yet at moderate prices. He also dealt in stylish millinery and was an agent for Dr. Jaegar's Sanitary Woollen Clothing.

The window displays are just about clear enough in the image to distinguish some of what George Barfoot offered for sale. On the left, a series of light coloured parasols are seen suspended at the top, while different sorts of curtain fabric are visible below. The middle window is packed with a whole variety of bonnets and hats, while the right-hand window shows ladies' dresses and blouses.

George Barfoot and his wife came to Ventnor from Titchfield in Hampshire with their three children: Ada, George and Marguerite, aged 14, 13 and 11 respectively. George himself was born in Blandford, Dorset, while his wife, Kate was a Londoner, from St. Pancras. All these details are recorded in the 1901 Census. The substantial premises at 101 and 103 High Street also housed six more individuals. Two were 19-year-old servants who were migrants from mainland Hampshire, and then there were six 'boarders'. However, these were not visitors, but assistants in the business, including one who was a milliner and one who was an apprentice. Only the apprentice was Island-born.

George and Kate Barfoot were members of the Congregational Church from the date of their arrival in the town, George soon taking over as its Secretary. For nine years, he was also President of the Ventnor Brotherhood. Following the outbreak of war in 1914, and very likely arising from the collapse in visitor numbers to the town, George left in September 1915 to work for a well-known London business. The High Street store carried on for a time, but ceased trading around 1918 or 1919, whereupon the premises were taken over by the Shanklin, Lake and Branstone Union Co-operative Society Ltd. By the 1930s, according to A.H. Bailey, the Co-op was the brightest and best lit retailer in the town. On Fridays, 'Fish Day', you could buy a small box of cod or haddock for 1s. 6d (seven and a half pence today)

*Ventnor & District Local History Society*: Michael Freeman, from files in Ventnor Heritage Centre. The buildings in the picture no longer stand. They were severely damaged in an air raid of January 1943 and later demolished.



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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