

## STOP 12 – RYDE CASTLE HOTEL

You should be standing at the entrance to Ryde Castle Hotel. Built by Mr. Dashwood in 1833-34, The Castle in mock Tudor/Gothic style, with battlemented parapets and seafront location, must have been any Englishman's dream home: to live like a monarch. Over the next two decades, further building of impressive marine villas continued eastwards along this strip of former manorial estate and the Esplanade and the Strand, a street running parallel, were laid out.

In the 1860s the railway was extended to link Ryde Pier with St John's Station. This was via a tunnel actually running underneath The Castle, very near the spot where you are standing and the tunnel is still there today.

An article in a local paper of 1862 proposed The Castle becoming a hotel. *"(We need) sufficient hotel accommodation for the very large number of visitors who annually resort to this fashionable Watering Place. The Castle will have, in addition to ample suites of private rooms, (the bedrooms will exceed eighty in number), spacious Coffee rooms, Reading, Billiard and Smoking Rooms; The range of Coach houses and Stabling will also be large and most convenient."* However it did not become a hotel until 1930. During WW1 many grand private homes were offered for War Service and The Castle was adapted as a fully equipped Red Cross Hospital. Here are two letter extracts of 1915 to John Oglander, Island Lord Lieutenant.

*"Colonel Hosie considers The Castle most suitable. It is offered by Colonel Cradock. Officers Rooms – 4. War Office Food Contribution 2/- per head, 3/- for enterics. Doctors are speaking very highly of the work of my members in the town."*  
Kleo Friend – Commandant Voluntary Aid Detachment, Hants.

*"I have been trying very hard to get Miss Friend started at The Castle. Lord Kitchener stated he would require forty-thousand more beds by the end of March:- here is a house which in a week's time could be ready to receive about forty wounded men, the house fully equipped as a convalescent hospital with all necessary material and a division of well trained nurses. Our wounded men will be nursed back to health and so in many cases able to return to the front and God knows we want every available man if England is to win in this awful war."*  
Sincerely, Mabel Gough-Calthorpe.

During WW2 Ryde Castle Hotel was again used for the war effort as Army Headquarters. Then in the early 1960s heyday of beat bands, Ryde Castle Hotel was a popular music venue. Admission, 2/6 midweek, 3/- weekends.

Now continue round the corner to see the original gatehouse entrance to The Castle. Then cross carefully at the bollard and walk along the Esplanade to the Coastguard Cottages opposite Ryde Ice Rink.