

## **STOP 14 – HOTELS**

You should be standing in front of the Royal Esplanade Hotel. Stand with your back to the sea and look up at the facade of the Royal Esplanade Hotel. This was one of the last seafront hotels to be built along this stretch of the road, and the site of the early baths. *“The prominent characteristic of Ryde is that of a beautiful watering place.”* So wrote Samuel Horsey in 1838: *“The place is well furnished with [bathing] machines and well supplied with baths of all descriptions.”* One of the first families to become involved with baths and bathing machines in Ryde were the Kemps – Kemp’s Original Royal Baths – on the site of the present Royal Esplanade and Marine Hotels, advertised in 1858 as: *“Established upwards of half a century.”*

In Victorian times, nude bathing was the norm. However, the popularity of the bathing stage off Victoria Pier, so close to the Esplanade promenade, was such that complaints had reached the ears of the Commissioners: *“the result of which is that the committee have ordered drawers to be provided for all the bathers. Such namby-pambyism is unworthy the regard of men or women; it may suit maudlin fools.”*

The pier, Queen Victoria, and the advent of the railways, all contributed to make Ryde very popular with visitors and, in 1867, Joseph Kemp opened the Esplanade Hotel advertising: *“Commodious Billiard and Smoking Rooms – Kemp’s Celebrated Turkish Baths – Hot and Cold Sea Baths always ready.”*

Look across the road to the left of the bus station, where the road turns to go along the pier. This was the site of the Royal Pier Hotel. The Royal Pier Hotel was built in the 1820s and was there until 1931. Beyond was Sivier’s Hotel and the Vine Inn. The Royal Eagle Hotel, now Arcadia, is an amusement arcade just beyond the junction of George Street on the left. It advertised winter weekly board at £2 10s in 1855, and in the 1870s was the scene of early night telegraph experiments. Newspapers published lists of visitors arriving in the season, which reveal high status clientele visiting the town: HOTEL ARRIVALS: ROYAL PIER – The Count and Countess de Stacpole; Lord William Hay; Hon O Lofler; SIVIER’S – Princess Troubetsky and family; General Mosgrove; Major Scott; ROYAL EAGLE – Lord Brabazon; Major Turnbull, Captain Stephens; ESPLANADE – Sir Money Kyrle; Colonel Sauzin; Earl of Limerick.....

Cross George Street and then the main road at the pelican crossing. This was the site of the Royal Pier Hotel. Walk around the road away from the pier entrance to the dropped kerbs (in front of Michaelangelos restaurant), cross here and walk on until you are opposite the Prince Consort building, with pillared doorway and railings, just before the car park.