

BEYOND THE GRAVES

Volume 5, Number 2, April 2010

THE STORY OF RYDE HERITAGE AUDIO TRAIL

Disgraceful behaviour in a church! Miss Ellen Terry's first theatrical appearance... Highland Pipers amuse the Queen... Ryde Riots... A Bath Chair race up Union Street ... Fleet Reviews ...The tragedy of the Royal George ... the coastguard on horseback ... Smugglers on the beach ... Prestigious visitors to Ryde ... Nude bathing at Ryde! ...Regattas at the Royal Victoria Yacht Club and Ryde Pier... A strange creature displayed at a fundraising event at Brigstocke Terrace... and a priest of the Royal Court who fell from grace and retired to Ryde ...

These are just a few of the many interesting topics about Ryde contained in the new Ryde Heritage Audio Trail.

On 15 May 2010 Ryde Social Heritage Group and the Living Links Project will proudly launch Ryde Heritage Audio Trail at St Thomas' Heritage Centre, Ryde. The trail, which has taken about two years to produce, is a guided walking tour of Ryde illustrated with historical detail selected from archives. Devised to be of interest to local residents and visitors it gives glimpses of the town's rich historical past.



To launch the Ryde Heritage Audio Trail there will be an invitation only evening event on Friday 14 May and then on Saturday 15 May there will be an open exhibition in St Thomas' Heritage Centre, St Thomas Street from 10am to 4pm with information about how the trail was produced, some of the stories we tell as well as some we had to leave out and information about how to download and listen to the audio files.

It was back in March 2008 when I had the first meeting with Susie Scott the Community Archives Officer for the Living Links Project to discuss the idea of producing a Ryde Heritage Audio Trail as one of the creative outputs for the project.

Living Links is a three year Heritage Lottery funded project to help local communities celebrate their stories. The project supported by the Isle of Wight Record Office and the Hampshire Archive Trust, covers the whole of Hampshire and the Isle of Wight. The project has provided support to local community groups by providing Archive Ambassador training across the region. It has also funded a number of creative projects including the Ryde Heritage Audio Trail.

Shortly after our first meeting, Susie Scott was offered another job and left the Living Links project. Then in November 2008 Sarah Speller was appointed as the new Community Archives Officer. With Sarah in place and enthusiastic to get things moving we set about working on research for the audio trail.

A small working group of RSHG members Ann Barrett, Diana Wood, Kate MacDonell, Carol Strong, Rachael Mead, Janette Gregson and Richard Smout from the IW Record Office was set up. We discussed in detail the route the trail should take and what to include in it and decided to start the trail at Lind Street, take it down Union Street, along the Esplanade to the end of the Canoe Lake and then back along the Esplanade and up St Thomas Street to finish at St Thomas' Church.



We also decided to make sure that the whole of the route is accessible to wheelchair and mobility scooter users, so there are dropped kerbs at all the suggested road crossing points.

Our small research team spent many hours at the Isle of Wight Record Office and on the Internet searching through archives to find interesting historical facts about Ryde.

The Living Links project paid for us to have professional advice and employed a company called ATS Heritage to direct us and to produce the finished audio files.

At our first meeting with Mike Howie of ATS Heritage we realised that we had far too much material and too many stops on our proposed trail. We had to do some serious editing to reduce it down to a manageable length. We had so much material to pick from it was difficult to decide and agree on what to leave out, we wanted to share everything we knew about Ryde with our listeners! But with Mike's help and guidance we managed to agree and reduced the number of stops from the original 24 down to a more manageable 17. There was lots of discussion about what we could and should leave out and what to leave in to ensure that the trail was still informative and entertaining to listen to.

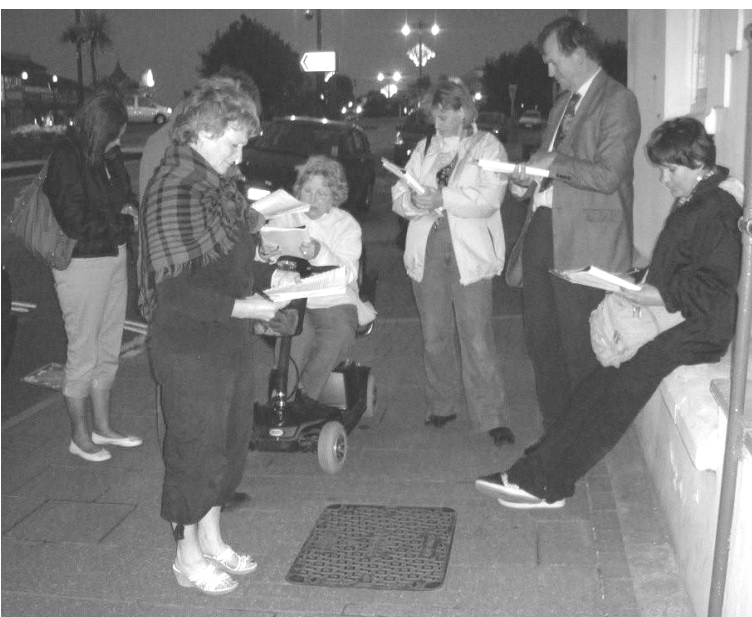
With the decisions made about the number and content of the stops, we divided the trail up and each set about writing our scripts. After our first tentative attempts at writing we met up to read through the scripts and to give and receive comments and suggestions for improvement. Mike Howie, of ATS Heritage, also read through the scripts and gave us constructive criticism so we could fine tune our writing.

The Living Links project paid for local artist Al Rowe to produce the map of the trail and we had several meetings with Al to discuss what to include on the map, how to show the route and how to show historic features that are no longer there - we decided to use sepia tones to show these features, like for example the Pier Hotel.

Several times during the autumn of 2009 we met to walk through the trail and read out the scripts at each stop, again we commented on each other's scripts so that we could continue refining and improving them. One cold and windy day in October we didn't finish walking the trail and reading the scripts until well after dark and had to stand under street lights to read the last few scripts as we walked up St Thomas Street! Then in December last year the final scripts were handed over to ATS Heritage to professionally produce the audio files.



While we were waiting for the audio files to be produced we continued to meet at regular intervals to discuss the production of the leaflet to accompany the audio files and to make arrangements for the Launch and exhibition about the trail on 15 May 2010.



In February 2010 we were delighted to hear the audio files, the professional production, voices and sound effects used by ATS Heritage really bring the scripts to life and with just a few minor corrections to pronunciation and the addition of a couple of appropriate musical clips the final versions of the files were produced.

The Heritage Audio trail is available at no charge and can be downloaded from www.talking-guides.co.uk/ryde and will also be available from our own website www.rshg.org.uk. The audio files can be played on MP3 players and on mobile phones capable of storing and playing audio files.

Please do come along to the launch event in May and learn all about the Ryde Heritage Audio Trail, how we created it and how you can download and listen to it.

We have had a lot of fun producing the audio trail and we hope that you will enjoy walking the route, listening to the tracks and learning about Ryde's history.

Janette Gregson, Chairman, Ryde Social Heritage Group

"PICTURES, FLICKS AND FLEAPITS"

The Bijou

The Temperance Hall (dated 1884) in the High Street, formerly the Free Wesleyan Chapel built in 1860, was also later the home of the Bijou Cinema, showing silent films and featuring a pianist. The building has an upper circular window between blank arches and segment-headed windows at ground level.

The entrance was under the arch beside the building with the screen at the roadside end. The interior of the building was very small and the seats were wooden benches with "free" wooden orange boxes for children, the best seats being at the back. The Bijou closed in 1928 and latterly the hall became a wholesale chemist and then a second hand furniture business. Today it houses a sewing business.



THE CINEMA		
HIGH STREET, RYDE.		
Lessee and Manager	W. MEAD	
6.15. TWICE NIGHTLY. 8.45.		
Matinee Saturday 2.30.		
July 27th—Thursday, Friday & Saturday.		
A COLOSSAL ATTRACTION		
Super Selig Production. One of the Great		
Films of the Year		
KAZAN		
Featuring—JANE NOVAK		
Adapted from the novel by James Oliver		

Isle of Wight Times 27 July 1922

RYDE		
CINEMA		
DE LUXE, HIGH STREET.		
6-30	Every Evening	8-30
The Finest Presentation of		
ANIMATED PICTURES		
in the Island. Beautifully clear, steady and realistic. All that is representative in the Art of Cinematography.		
To-Day (Saturday) at 3.0, 6.30 & 8.30.		
UNSELFISH LOVE.		
CUSTOMS OF HINDOO CASTES.		
Next Week.		
A VIRGIN OF BABYLON.		
LIFE IN THE ALPS.		
SPORTS IN THE INDIAN ARMY.		
Note. —The CINEMA is a Modern Equipped Electric Theatre, well heated and ventilated. The best seats at the back.		
PRICES: Tip-up Chairs, 6d.		
Other Seats, 3d.		
MATINEE EACH SATURDAY AT 3.		
Entire Change of Pictures each Monday and Thursday.		

Isle of Wight Observer 6 May 1911

The Commodore

When it was built in 1936 on the site of Sweetman's Brewery, the Commodore was the largest cinema on the Island. It was constructed to include a large auditorium with a stage and a balcony, an upstairs ballroom and a basement that was a maze of passages and dressing rooms.

In the 1950s and early 1960s, in addition to films, various stage acts could be seen, often on a Sunday. The comedians Max Miller and Arthur English performed at various times and there were pantomimes, including Aladdin in late December, early January and 'Disco Bleu' upstairs.

Also on stage during this period were seen Lonnie Donegan, Dusty Springfield, Lulu, The Searchers and Dave, Dee, Dozy, Beaky, Mick and Titch.

COMMODORE RYDE Tel. 2616

ON THE STAGE **SUN. MAY 5th—7 p.m.**
PRIOR TO THEIR AMERICAN TOUR
JOHNNY DANKWORTH
AND HIS ORCHESTRA

Featuring **OLEO LAINE — TONY MANSELL & THE SEVEN**
BOOK NOW ★ 2/6, 3/6, 4/6, 5/6, 6/6, 7/6 CHILDREN 2/6 ALL SEATS

SUNDAY MAY 12th AT 2.30 p.m. | ENTER NOW FOR THE **GRAND SKIFFLE GROUP CONTEST** — £25. FOR THE BEST GROUP
SEE ALSO ADVERTISEMENT ON PAGE 6

Isle of Wight County Press 20 April 1957

COMMODORE RYDE Tel. 2616

SUNDAY JANUARY 27th — AT 4 p.m. & 6.45 p.m.
ON THE STAGE — IN PERSON
LONNIE DONEGAN
AND HIS
SKIFFLE GROUP

FULL SUPPORTING SHOW ★ **— COMPERE —**
TOMMY GODFREY

THEATRE CAFE OPEN FOR REFRESHMENTS

Isle of Wight County Press 19 January 1957

"A capacity audience of young people applauded the exciting music of Lonnie Donegan and his Skiffle group at the Commodore Theatre, Ryde on Sunday. Famous for his unusual voice, Mr Donegan also plays an electric guitar." - Isle of Wight County Press 2 February 1957

VARIETY AT THE COMMODORE
An Excellent "Bill"

The opening performances of Derek Roy's All Star Road Show, presented this week at the Commodore Theatre, were deserving of larger audiences, for it is probably the best show of its kind that has been seen in Ryde for some time. Derek Roy himself, unlike some of his fellow B.B.C. artistes, reveals as attractive a personality in the flesh as over the air, and adds to his tremendous vitality, outstanding talent as an impersonator, singer and comedian. His imitations of Frankie Howerd (co-resident comedian with him in Variety Band-box until recently), Al Jolson, Bing Crosby, and a number of other famous stars, were grand.

Isle of Wight Times 5 April 1951

<p>COMMODORE RYDE 2616</p> <p>5 p.m. TOMORROW 7.30 p.m. SUNDAY MARCH 24th</p> <p>On the Stage—In Person TOMMY STEELE AND THE STEELMEN</p> <p>ALSO THE FOUR SKIFFS, THE SCUTT BROS., DEAN MADDISON BAND.</p> <p>— Comper — TOMMY GODFREY</p> <p>4/6 5/6 6/6 7/6 10/6</p>	<p>Commodore, Ryde - 7 p.m. Medina, Newport - 4 p.m.</p> <p>SUNDAY MARCH 31st ON THE STAGE</p> <p>CY LAURIE AND HIS DIXIELAND JAZZMEN</p> <p>PLUS BILL (Showband) MCGUFFIE</p> <p>ALSO Rog MAHONEY'S JAZZ FIVE</p> <p>BOOK NOW</p>
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Isle of Wight County Press 23 March 1957

The Isle of Wight County Press, 30 March 1957, reported Tommy Steele appeared at Ryde's Commodore Theatre before more than 2500 fans.

Other events advertised included:

Sunday 10 February 1957 - US Air Force Band (Isle of Wight County Press 9 February 1957)

Sunday 22 June 1957 - Eric Delaney & his Band (Isle of Wight County Press 21 June 1957)

Thursday 7 May 1964 - Grand Opening of the Commodore Bingo Hall (Isle of Wight Times 30 April 1964)

The Scala / Plaza

The Scala, affectionately known as the fleapit, opened in about 1925 and had 500 seats. The exterior had a rough-cast finish with grand imitation marble pillars at the entrance and ran a continuous programme from early afternoon through the evening, later to include Sunday evenings. The first manager was Mr Milsom. In the 1960s the cinema was sold to Star Associate Holdings who renamed it The Plaza and modernised it. Later it was demolished and replaced by a supermarket (now Iceland).



Scala Theatre, High Street, Ryde, c1955

"It hosted Saturday morning pictures. The show generally consisted of a newsreel, one or two Looney Tunes cartoons and a short film followed by the main feature. This feature was often a cowboy film featuring such dynamic duos as The Lone Ranger and Tonto or the Cisco Kid and Pancho." (Arthur)

"I went to the children's Saturday morning pictures, it cost 6d. to go in. Children would take their own sweets, as the only ones that were any good to buy were the Poppets. When it was somebody's birthday, they were called out to the front and given a blue badge with a white star on it. The older children who were allowed up in the circle would throw their lolly sticks on to us children below and as the sticks went through the lights it would show on the screen." (Hazel)

SCALA Ryde

I.W.T.

THURSDAY, December 10th for 3 days, at 3.30, 6.10 and 9.5 p.m.—

Ernest Borgnine - David Brian

THE RABBIT TRAP®

And at 2.0, 4.50 and 7.45 p.m.—

Audie Murphy - Terry Moore

CAST A LONG SHADOW®

SPECIAL CHILDREN'S MATINEE—
EVERY SATURDAY, 10.15 a.m.

SUNDAY, December 13th, for 4 days only.

Sunday at 5.15 and 8.30 p.m. Weekdays at 2.0, 5.15 and 8.35 p.m.

IN CINEMASCOPE AND EASTMANCOLOR

Clifton Webb - Gloria Graham

THE MAN WHO NEVER WAS®

And at 3.45 and 6.55 p.m. (Sunday 7 p.m.) only—

IN CINEMASCOPE AND TECHNICOLOR

Robert Mitchum - Marilyn Monroe

RIVER OF NO RETURN®

Isle of Wight Times 10 December 1959

"I went to Saturday morning pictures, first when the cinema was called the Scala, I paid 3d to go in. When it was taken over by Star Entertainments, they called it the Plaza, and charged 6d to go in. There was usually a film, a couple of cartoons, and a serial. I remember "Shazam, Flash Gordon", and "Green Hornet". A lady came round in the intermission to sell ice-cream and ice-lollies." (Marilyn)

"On Saturday morning children' pictures, there was sometimes an extra performance in the interval, one time I remember a Yo-Yo demonstration with many people performing really complicated tricks on the stage." (Ron)

SCALA Ryde

I.W.T.

TO-DAY (Thurs.) Nov. 10th for 3 days, at 2.15, 5.25, 8.35 p.m.

Last performance 7 p.m.

Kenneth Moore - Taina Elg

THE 39 STEPS®

(EastmanColor)

And at 3.50 and 7 p.m.—

Ian Carmichael - Belinda Lee

THE BIG MONEY®

SUNDAY, Nov. 13th for 4 days—

Sunday at 5.15, 8.30 p.m. Last performance 6.55 p.m.

Weekdays—1.55, 5.20, 8.40 p.m. Last performance 7 p.m.

Elizabeth Taylor - Peter Finch

ELEPHANT WALK®

(Technicolor)

And at 3.40 and 7 p.m. (Sunday 7 p.m. only)

Bing Crosby - Bob Hope

THE ROAD TO BALI®

Coming Attractions—"PSYCHO" Watch for the announcement of programme times for NO ONE—BUT NO ONE—will be allowed in after each performance of "PSYCHO" has commenced.

Isle of Wight Times 10 November 1960

Theatre Royal

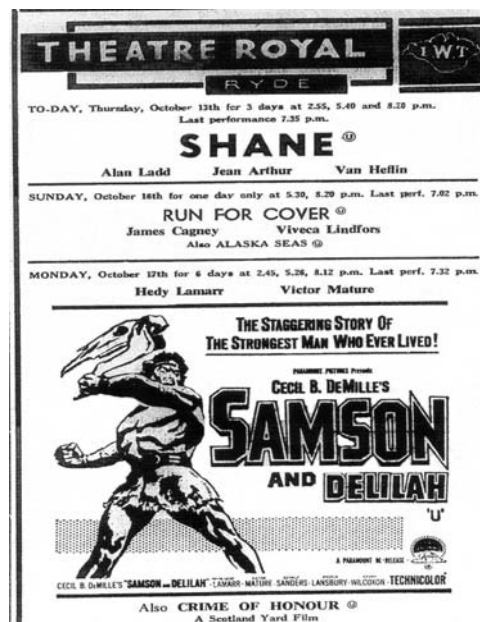
The Theatre Royal stood where the National Westminster Bank is today in St Thomas' Square. It burnt down on 19 May 1961. "The Theatre Royal in the heart of Ryde became a smoking shell within a few hours on Friday week after the fiercest and most spectacular fire seen locally since the Town Hall conflagration of June 1933." (Isle of Wight County Press 27 May 1961)



Please note—There is no increase in seat prices

Isle of Wight Times 14 January 1960

"There were always long queues outside the Theatre Royal, stretching along the street to the side of the theatre and often reaching round the Square to the old Ryde Library building and beyond – the good old days before television, which sounded the death knell of the cinemas! The dearest seat in the cinema was 1/9d, which was the best seat in the Circle" (Cynthia)



Isle of Wight Times 13 October 1960

DOWN MEMORY LANE

Part of this magazine is based on recollections of Ryde. We hope you have enjoyed reading them. Now we would like to hear yours.

"A memory of cheap cakes

As a young child I was told by a friend that I should ask in the baker's near the Catholic Church, if they had any stale cakes from the day before, the shop was run by two sisters (twins) named James. It took me a long time before I could pluck up courage to ask, but was pleased when I did, as each time after that I was able to get a bag full of pieces and sometimes it included some whole cakes, all for 1d." (Hazel)

"In the late 1960s we used to ride on trikes, pedal cars and scooters in the circular arena at the Western Esplanade, we had our favourites that we wanted to ride and sometimes had to wait if they were in use." (Trevor and Ron)

"Also at the Western Esplanade situated on the steps down to the beach, was the green hut belonging to Mr. Biggs, you could get bait for fishing from him." (Trevor and Ron)

"There was a very small, rather scruffy zoo at Appley, by where the Appley Cafe is now. There were two wolves in a very small pen and an owl in a small wooden box, it had no room to fly." (Trevor and Ron)

"Early 1970s we belonged to the Slot Car Club, held in the building behind the Simeon Arms, originally it began at the Drill Hall in St. John's Wood Road. We were young teenagers, but there were also adults. The cars similar to Scalextric, were built by the members, there was a six-lane layout for all to use. We would buy our bits and pieces to make the cars from the Model Shop in the High Street on the opposite side to the Catholic Church." (Trevor and Ron)

These are just a few memories, what are you thinking? You don't need to write an essay, just a line or two will do. We are interested in everything and anything about Ryde to add to our ever growing collection. You can remain anonymous if you prefer but we would like to add your name, and please include the date of the memory. Email us on www.rshg.org.uk using our Contact us page, or write (legibly please!) on a piece of paper and send direct to the editor (details at the bottom of page 1), or give to any committee member.

