

BEYOND THE GRAVES

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TRAVELS TO AND FRO

Landing at Ryde 13 July 1754



Henry Fielding, the novelist and playwright was voyaging from London to Lisbon and his ship, the Queen of Portugal, had anchored off Ryde waiting for a favourable wind. His wife persuaded him to come ashore.

He stayed at the Nags Head Inn which is the oldest recorded Inn in Upper Ryde, originally standing on the southern corner of Newport Street and the High Street. The Nags Head was listed as an inn in 1694 but is believed to have been licensed as early as 1664 so may have been providing lodgings for visitors to Ryde for nearly a century when Fielding stayed there.

On 13 July 1754 Fielding wrote in his journal, *"In fact, between the sea and the shore there was, at low water, an impassable gulf, if I may so call it, of deep mud, which could neither be traversed by walking nor swimming; so that for near one half of the twenty-four hours Ryde was inaccessible by friend or foe... I was at last hoisted into a small boat, and being rowed pretty near the shore, was taken up by two sailors, who waded with me through the mud, and placed me in a chair on the land, whence they afterwards conveyed me a quarter of a mile farther, and brought me to a house which seemed to bid the fairest for hospitality of any in Ryde."*

Fielding was not very impressed with Ryde and described the occupants as mean and squalid. As for the landlady of the Nags Head, Mrs Francis, his description of her appears to suggest the pub was named after her. However, Fielding was suffering from ill health so perhaps this coloured his judgement. He actually died in Portugal on 8 October that year.

Making it easier

For travellers, like Fielding, boarding and landing at Ryde remained a problem until 1812, when a group of prosperous Ryde estate owners and businessmen realised the benefits to the town if it could be easily reached at all times of day. The Ryde Pier Company was formed and an Act of Parliament passed dated 13 July 1812 allowing the construction of the pier.

On 29 June 1813 the Freemasons of the Vectis Lodge laid the foundation stone of the Promenade Pier, the first in Great Britain, and it was formally opened on 26 July 1814. The pier was 1750 feet long and 12 feet wide.

The pier was extended several times and in 1833 the overall length reached 2,250 feet making it the third longest pier in the country after Southport and Southend. It was also equipped with an 'octogan lamp' navigational aid. A second Tramway Pier was built alongside, opening on 29 August 1864, and a third Railway Pier opened on 12 July 1880.



Sources: Ryde Pubs, by Kevin Mitchell. Journal of a Voyage to Lisbon, by Henry Fielding 1754, Project Gutenberg

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The First Fleet Sails 13 May 1787

With the help of a south easterly breeze the First Fleet left the Mother Bank, off Ryde, led by Captain Arthur Phillip and loaded with convicts, on the start of their epic journey to the other side of the world.

The Fleet comprised of the frigate HMS Sirius, three store ships, the armed tender Supply, the Golden Grove, Borrowdale, and six transports, the Scarborough, Lady Penrhyn, Friendship, Charlotte, the Prince of Wales and the Alexander.

Most of the convicts were happy to get away as they thought New South Wales could not be as bad as the life they were leaving behind.

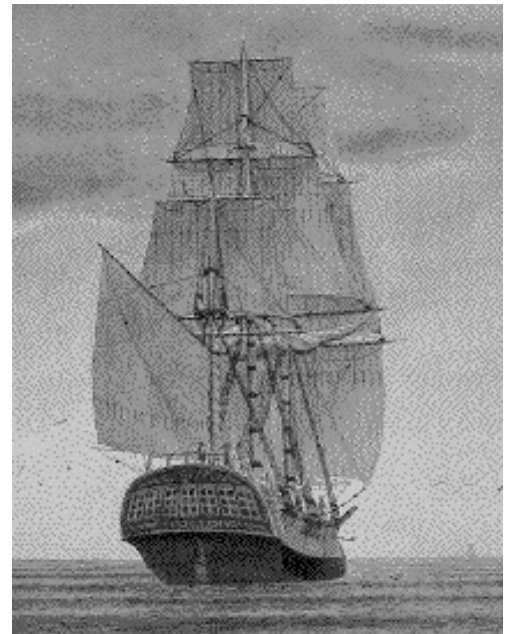


TIMETABLE OF EVENTS

13 May 1787	Depart Portsmouth, England
3 June 1787	Arrive Tenerife, Canary Islands
10 June 1787	Depart Tenerife
5 July 1787	Cross Equator
6 August 1787	Arrive Rio de Janeiro, Brazil
4 September 1787	Depart Rio de Janeiro
13 October 1787	Arrive Capetown, South Africa
12 November 1787	Depart Capetown
1 January 1788	Arrive Adventure Bay, Van Diemen's Land
18 January 1788	Arrive Botany Bay, New South Wales
26 January 1788	Arrive Port Jackson, New South Wales

TOTAL NUMBER OF PEOPLE

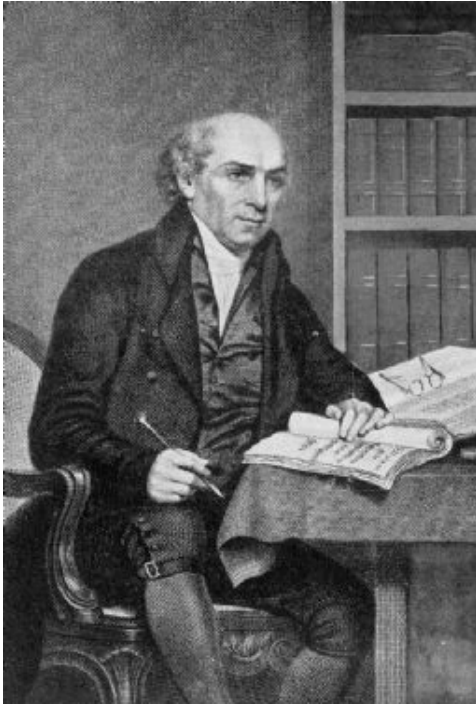
Male Convicts	568
Female Convicts	191
Children of Convicts	13
Marines	206
Marines Wives	27
Marines Children	19
Officials	20



The first of the Fleet ships arrived at Botany Bay on 18 January 1788 and discovered there was no fresh water locally available. When the rest of the Fleet arrived on 20 January, it was decided to go further north, to Port Jackson (now also known as Sydney Harbour).

A formal flag raising ceremony was held by Arthur Phillip on the shore to proclaim the Colony of New South Wales in the name of the King of England on 26 January 1788.

William Carey (1761-1834) - Missionary in India



William Carey was born in Northamptonshire, a weaver's son. Apprenticed to a shoemaker, he educated himself to become a schoolmaster and later a Baptist pastor. He was a missionary pioneer and with his eldest son set off for India in April 1793. En route they were delayed at Ryde, as the captain of the ship received word that he endangered his command if he conveyed unauthorized missionaries to Calcutta. There is a plaque on the wall of a house in Castle Street, Ryde that reads:

WILLIAM CAREY
1761-1834
MISSIONARY
AND BIBLE TRANSLATOR
STAYED IN THIS COTTAGE
IN 1793
AWAITING A SHIP FOR INDIA
THIS PLAQUE WAS AFFIXED IN 1964

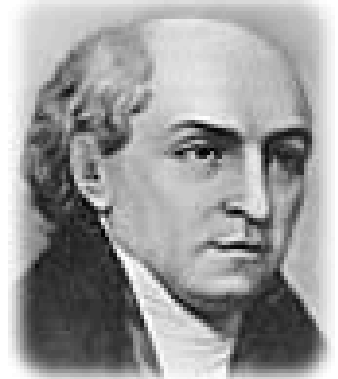
William's wife Dorothy had refused to leave England, being pregnant with their fourth child and having never been more than a few miles from home. William wrote to Dorothy from Ryde on 6 May 1793 claiming, "*... My stay here is very painful and unpleasant...*" but went on to say, "*... This place much favours retirement and meditation; the fine woods and hills and sea all conspire to solemnize the mind, and to lift the soul to admire the Creator of all...*"

In this letter it is clear that William was distressed at leaving Dorothy, "*... If I had all the world, I would freely give it all to have you and the dear children with me; but the sense of duty is so strong as to overpower all other considerations ... Tell my dear children I love them dearly and pray for them constantly. Be assured I love you most affectionately...*"

William was delayed until June when finally a Danish captain was willing to take them. In the meantime, Dorothy, who had by now given birth, agreed to accompany him, provided her sister came as well.

After a tiresome, stormy voyage they landed in Calcutta in November and at once began to experience the hardships of life in a foreign land. It was difficult to find a suitable place to live and to establish a mission. William wrote, "*I am in a strange land alone, with no Christian friend, a large family, and nothing to supply their wants.*" There were years of discouragement, poverty, sickness, death of one of his sons, his wife developed insanity and another of his children suffered mental instability.

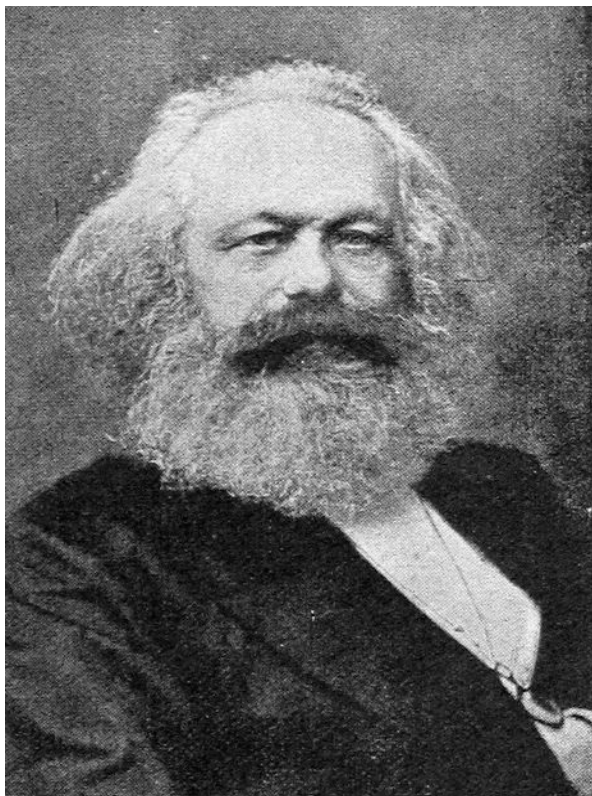
William Carey spent 41 years as a very active missionary in India and never returned to England. He translated the Bible into many different Indian languages. William's family life was also very active! Dorothy died in 1807 after 26 years of marriage but he quickly married the invalid daughter of a wealthy countess. After 13 years of marriage she also died and William found a widow to be his third wife for the last eleven years of his life.



Old Court House Street from the north, Calcutta 1788 by Thomas Daniell

Sources: www.wholesomewords.org, wikipedia & extracts from Carey Biography by George Smith (1922)

Karl Marx at Ryde 1874



Source: Karl Marx on the Isle of Wight by A E Laurence

Karl Marx - philosopher, social scientist, and revolutionary was one of the most influential socialist thinkers to emerge in the 19th century. He was largely ignored by scholars in his own lifetime, but his social, economic and political ideas gained rapid acceptance in the socialist movement after his death in 1883.

Marx visited the Isle of Wight three times – in the summer of 1874, winter of 1881 and winter of 1882.

His first visit with his wife Jenny in July 1874 followed a bout of illness in 1873; he had been so unwell that his physician forbade him from carrying out any kind of work even reading so Marx came to the Island to recuperate.

Karl and Jenny spent some happy and healthy weeks at 11 Nelson Street, Ryde. Despite his doctor's orders Marx studied all the Island newspapers as well as reading books. He took an interest in local affairs and even commented on local electioneering, but above all he enjoyed many long walks and explored much of the Island. He wrote to his friend Engels that "This Island is a little paradise".

This first pleasant stay was abruptly ended when their grandson died before the age of 1 and Karl and Jenny immediately travelled back to London.

Steampacket Company Annual Excursion

PORT OF PORTSMOUTH & RYDE UNITED STEAMPACKET COMPANY, Limited.

EXCURSION to BRIGHTON by the HEATHER BELL, on **THURSDAY**, June 28th, and on the following **Thursdays**, July 12th and 26th, August 2nd, 16th, and 30th, and September 13th; also on **Saturday**, September 22nd; leaving Ryde Pier at 9.30 a.m., and returning from Brighton at 5.0 p.m.
Fares—1st Class, 5s.; 2nd Class, 4s.

EXCURSIONS TO BOURNEMOUTH by the HEATHER BELL as follows: **THURSDAY**, July 5th and 19th, August 9th and 23rd, and Sept. 6th and 20th; leaving Ryde Pier at 9.30 a.m.
Fares—1st Class (Main Deck), 4s.; 2nd Class (Fore Deck), 3s. 6d.

EXCURSION ROUND the ISLE of WIGHT by the HEATHER BELL EVERY MONDAY, Wednesday and Friday; leaving Ryde Pier at 11.30 a.m.

Fares—Main Deck, 3s. 6d.; Fore Deck, 2s.

Also an **EXCURSION to ALUM BAY** and the **NEEDLES EVERY TUESDAY**; leaving Ryde Pier at 11.30 a.m.

Fares—Main Deck, 2s. 6d.; Fore Deck, 2s.

An excellent Band will accompany each excursion.

R. W. FORD, Secretary.

H. THREADINGHAM, Supt

Portsmouth, June, 1877.

Shareholders' Trip

In accordance with the annual custom, the shareholders of the Portsmouth and Ryde Steampacket Company had their excursion on Friday last, that fine vessel, the Heather Bell, being placed at their disposal for the purpose.

The vessel left Southsea about 11 o'clock, under the command of Capt Perrin, with a large number of shareholders, and their number was augmented by friends from Ryde. They were enlivened by Tollervey's band, which played "A life on the Ocean Wave", "Rule Britannia", and other refreshing nautical airs suitable for the occasion.

It was originally intended to proceed to Alum Bay, but as there was a strong breeze from the WSW and a very lippy sea, it was eventually arranged not to proceed further than Yarmouth, where the whole party landed and explored the neighbourhood of Freshwater, especially the small fort, erected in the time of Henry VIII, and the church, which was rebuilt in the same reign.

The return journey was a very pleasant one, enlivened with music and dancing, and our Ryde friends were landed on the pier about 7.30.

Source: Isle of Wight Observer 7 September 1878

Source: Isle of Wight Observer 7 July 1877

Mr Dashwood's Visit to America

In 1884 Mr T Dashwood of Ryde made a trip to America and on his return gave a presentation entitled "A Short Talk about America" to the meeting of the Mutual Improvement Class of the Young Men's Christian Association.

In his opening remarks he described the voyage out, the great size of the ship, and the excellent accommodation for passengers, the daily bill of fare being equal to that of first-class hotels. He recommended any one going to America to select one of the longest ships, as they rolled less than shorter vessels.

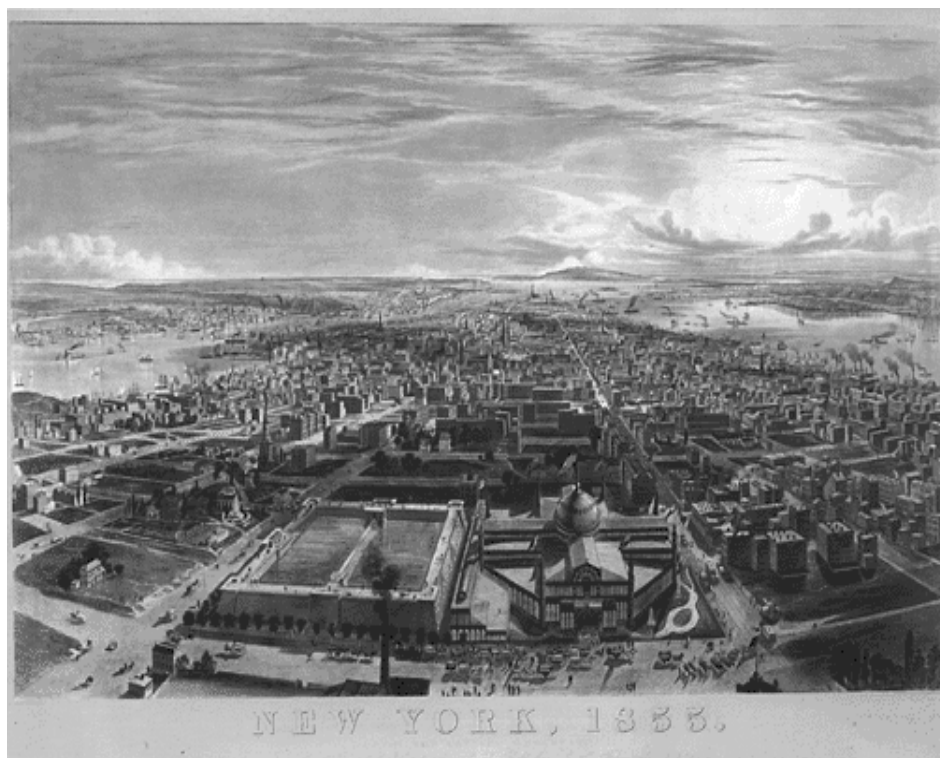


Image from www.thecityreview.com/empircit.html

On landing at New York he was struck with the charges demanded, which he described as fabulous. The price of a cab for about half a mile was nearly 12s and for cleaning a pair of boots 5d!

From New York he travelled to the South, at first encountering severe weather. One noticeable feature of the journey was that the banks of the rivers were enclosed by mighty forests. A great part of the journey had to be undertaken in the river steamboats, which were very large, resembling floating houses with superior accommodation.

As he travelled further south the weather became very warm, he saw many butterflies, some of which looked like birds, they were so large; and grasshoppers that were as long as his finger. He also saw alligators lying upon uprooted trees, basking in the sun.

His destination was Florida where the soil and climate were suited to orange growing. He found the Negro population he came into contact with objected to the name Negro preferring to be called "coloured men".

He also visited Washington and went to see the Capitol, which he thought was the most beautiful and magnificent building he had ever seen.

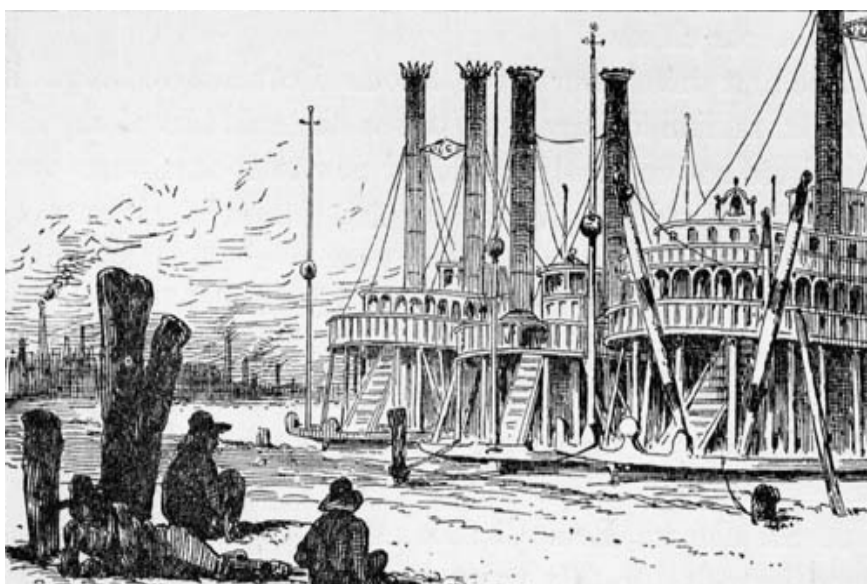


Image from www.docsouth.unc.edu

Source: Isle of Wight Observer 17 January 1885

A Tour through Switzerland

On Monday 19 November 1894, the Rev John Shearme, MA, Vicar of Ryde, delivered a lecture illustrated by limelight views. The lantern was manipulated by Mr H W Arnaud, who arranged the entertainment in aid of the Ryde Parish institute.



Limelight burner with limes and lime tongs
www.markbutterworth.co.uk/lantern.html

The Vicar remarked that Switzerland was a very beautiful land, perhaps more beautiful in the winter than any other time. He said there was no such place as Switzerland for recovery of brain power, and probably that was the reason so many lawyers and clergymen went there!



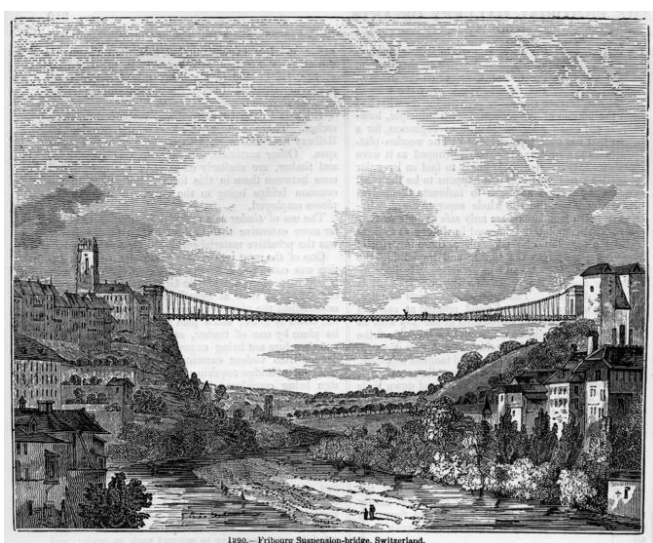
The Falls of the Rhine

He showed some beautiful views of Basle followed by the Falls of the Rhine. Rev Shearme said they were the loftiest falls in Europe, being half the height of Niagara Falls.

The next place visited was Schaffhausen, and Constance with the Rhine Bridge.

Zurich, the town where the first entire edition of the English Bible was printed by Miles Coverdale in 1535, was next and then came Lucerne. A picture of the celebrated Lion monument at Lucerne, erected in memory of the Swiss Guards who fell while defending the Tuileries, during the first French revolution was displayed.

Pictures followed of the Rigi Railway, which has a gradient of 1 in 4, and one of the Grimsall Lake and Hospice. Splendid views of the falls of the Reiffenbach ("which are very majestic"), Interlaken and the Geisbach Falls, were warmly applauded. Grindelwald, (where the sun does not rise until 12 o'clock in the winter), Thun (upon the lake of the same name), and Friburg were illustrated.



The suspension bridge at Friburg, the longest bridge in the world with a single curve at the time, and the cathedral at Friburg, were also beautiful views.

The series ended with some very artistic views of Berne and the clock tower which was said to be 800 years old.



Mr Arnaud then showed a number of slides illustrative of Tennyson's "Brook", while the Vicar read the poem. A number of miscellaneous slides, lent by Mr J Dore, of Sandown, and some lantern effects, brought the entertainment to a close.

Source: Isle of Wight Observer 24 November 1894, Images from <http://chestofbooks.com/>