

BEYOND THE GRAVES

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THE CHANGING FACE OF RYDE

What was life like in Ryde 100 years ago?

Our new project, launched last month, aims to help you answer that question, finding out what it was like for families living here and discover how, like people across the world, the First World War was going to change their lives (and change the world) forever.

Ryde is a very good example of a place with a wide range of social classes - lots of wealthy upper/aristocratic households with an 'upstairs/downstairs' life, lots of prosperous middle class - business/trades people and a section of the poorer/labouring class. Ryde had grown and prospered during the Victorian era, maintained its status during Edwardian times but what happened next? The First World War would be very different from the Victorian/Imperial campaigns many had glorified in. Every family would be affected in some way.



These are some of the questions to ask -

- Was your family living in Ryde 100 years ago? Did any of them go to war, become a casualty or were they lucky to survive? What about those left at home, the women and children, the elderly or infirm? What stories can you discover?
- Do you know who lived in your house 100 years ago? (or who/what was on the site of your house if it is not that old!) How different was their family to yours today?
- Do you know what your street was like a century ago? What sort of people lived there? What were their occupations?
- What was going on in Ryde a century ago? It was almost the start of 1914, the world was on the brink of war, but most families were just getting on with their lives. What changed during the Great War?

Using local archives, resources and family stories we aim to help you find out for yourself how Ryde changed with the onset of war. Ryde Social Heritage Group will be holding exhibitions, workshops and 'how to' sessions at local venues for anyone wanting to learn more about the social history of Ryde and record it for the children of tomorrow.

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ORIGINS OF STREET NAMES

Have you ever wondered how the streets got their names? Some might be obvious, named after Kings or Queens, the direction they face, a famous person from the past or a building close by. We have Queens Road, Kings Road, Edward Street, George Street, West Street, East Street, South Street, Nelson Street, Nelson Place, Garfield Road, Pier Street, to name just a few. But what about the others?



Union Street

Union Street - formed 1801/2, commemorates the Act of Union between Britain and Ireland, as well as the union between the two hamlets of Ryde - Lower Ryde originally a fishing community and Upper Ryde with its farm cottages.



Dr John Lind 1845

Lind Street - developed in 1820-30s, named after Dr John Lind, physician at the Royal Naval Hospital at Haslar, Gosport.

Player Street - named after the Player family, originally brewers from Gosport, they arrived at the start of the 18th century, bought the manor of Ryde and began the development of the town.



Battle of Waterloo by William Sadler

Milligan Road – re-named after the Milligan family of Ryde (Robert Milligan was a Waterloo veteran). It was previously known as Cemetery Road and Upper Cemetery Street.

Wray Street – named after Mrs Eliza Wray and family who lived in Star Street and gave funds for the temporary corrugated church in 1857 on the site of the present chancel of St Michael's Church, Swanmore.

Bettesworth Road – named after Bettesworth Pitt Shearer of Swanmore, Hampshire who gave the land for St Michael's Church. He owned a lot of land in the area and it became known as Swanmore after his estate of the same name in Hampshire. Pitt Street is also attributed to him.

And there are those streets that've changed their name –

Station Street was Brunswick Street.

Hope Road was Crescent Road and also Brook Road.

Osborne Road was Preston Place.

Carlton Road was Cross Road.

St Michael's Avenue was Church Street.



Old Police Station, Brunswick Street



There are many more but did you know the Oakfield area was originally called Little Canada and the St John's area Troublefields?

Has your street changed its name? What or who is it named after? Who lived in your street? What was daily life like in your street?

Want to know the answers to these and more questions? Join our Changing Face of Ryde project now and we'll help you find out.

SPENCER ROAD



Blenheim House

Spencer Road was formed in about 1810 giving access to the whole area now known as Pelham Field, and followed the line of the original lane from Lower Ryde to Ride House Farm (later called Bucklands, which had stood for many hundred years). The first house to be built in the area was Westfield in 1811 by the 2nd Earl Spencer (1758 – 1834). He paid a ground rent of £50 per year and Spencer Road was named after him. Next came Impress Cottage in 1812, later renamed Copsefield.

In 1833 George Player decided to develop the area, it being an ideal site for a small upper class community. He owned all the land around Spencer Road on the south side, with a locked gate at the west end, his mansion and park called Ryde House on the west side and Westfield already established on the east. The shore was on the north side of his boundary and with this 'locked down' land the trading and labouring classes could not live or trade in the area.

Two new roads were laid out in 1835. Augusta Road running north from Spencer Road to the shore and St George's Place (later renamed St George's Road). Augusta Road wasn't named until the mid 19th century, it is thought after Augusta Caroline Clifford (1836 – 1931), 4th daughter of Vice Admiral Sir Augustus Clifford, who had taken over at Westfield.

House names in the area have strong links with the Spencer family. Devonshire House is still at the corner of Spencer Road and St Thomas' Street. Short distances from Westfield are properties named Althorp House and Blenheim House. Courtfield, (previously called Marlborough) is also nearby and next to it, is a house originally named Navarino - Earl Spencer's son, Frederick, served at the Battle of Navarino in 1827. Spencer Lodge was demolished in the early 1970s to make way for the telephone exchange extension.

Westfield was the home of the Spencer-Clifford family for over 100 years. At its height in the mid Victorian period it was probably one of the leading houses and gardens in Europe.

The stag now above the gate lodge was praised by the Prince Consort at the Great Exhibition of 1851 and Queen Victoria made a special visit to Ryde to see the stag when it was in position.

A hand-book to the Isle of Wight, dated 1863, describes Westfield "Through the beauty of its grounds and elegance...is emphatically one of the lions of Ryde... The rooms are decorated with great taste and effect; there is a choice collection of paintings by good masters, marbles and other objects of virtue. In the drawing room a portrait of Lady William Bentinck, by Sir Thomas Lawrence; the Duke and Duchess of Devonshire, by Romney; and Domenichino's Sibyl. In the music room a Madonna by Guido; two pieces by Angelica Kaufmann; marbles by Canova, Tadolini and Burgoni...the picture gallery is an elegant room, arranged with attention to harmony and colouring. The gardens are in the Italian fashion, with terraces leading down to the seashore, from which a marvellous panorama of Spithead and the whole reach of the Solent is unfolded..."

Miss Augusta Clifford, born in 1836, lived on at Westfield until 1931. The estate was offered to Ryde Borough Council, but the offer was not accepted. In 1936 it was turned into a hotel. The wonderful gardens were much neglected during the war, but the temples and pavilions, with marble fireplaces, still remained, crumbling yearly. The grounds were bulldozed prior to building in 1962. Westfield House has now been converted into flats and the Italian gardens built over with the modern building complex that is Westfield Park.



Entrance to Westfield

DEVELOPMENT OF WELL STREET

A Ryde street map of 1884 shows an empty road named 'New Street.' This is destined to become Well Street. Whilst Prince, Albert and Surrey Streets are clearly established, there is no Edward Street and Quarry Road, although marked and with several houses at its St John's Road end, is not named.



Example of old thatched cottage (not Well Street) – free to use image from Wikipedia

The County Press, 1934, reflected: 'At the top of High Street in 1884 was the old tub well, which gave its name to Well Street, and a few dilapidated cottages which were scarcely ornamental.'

By 1886 street lamps had been placed in the new streets known as Well Street and Edward Street, In 1894 The Isle of Wight Observer recorded: 'The Corporation have improved the entrance into High Street from Swanmore Road setting back the pavement at the corner of Well Street near what used to be known as Tub Well.'

1899 brought the news of: 'The thatched houses at Tub Well, evidently the oldest properties in the town, have been pulled down during the week. Those who saw the rotten thatch pulled off the roof, and the general dilapidation into which the properties had fallen, expressed the opinion that the Corporation ought to have interfered and insisted on the houses being pulled down years ago.'

Throughout the 1890s building applications, plans and auction notices for properties for sale in Well Street were constantly appearing. The houses were described as single or pairs of villas. They were of similar design, had either three or four bedrooms and gardens at front and rear.

Kelly's Directories - Not all houses are listed in each Directory but the entries for Well Street do give some indication of how houses appeared in a rather random manner as land became available and the street developed. In 1886 there were only 10 houses listed, seven on the South side with four at the upper end and three at the lower end around the level of Surrey Street. There were only three on North side at its upper end, above Edward Street.



Well Street, Ryde

The South side built up quicker than the North, although with some at upper and lower ends, then filling in the middle afterwards. By 1904 there were 47 houses listed, 31 on South side, making it almost completely built down to level with Surrey Street. There were still only 16 on the North side, six before Edward Street (as today), eight between Edward and Prince Street but none between Prince and Albert Street and just two before Surrey Street. Nothing was built beyond the level of Surrey Street until the 1930s and then only on the South side.

Following these Directories it is clear that by 1910, all the houses had been built on the South side and remain as they are today to the level with Surrey Street, except for one new build in the field gap opposite Albert Street. On the North side all the houses had been built and remain as they are today as far as Surrey Street. A map of 1907 also confirms that building is complete and as today to the level of Surrey Street, except for the new build in the field entrance gap.

Names and Numbers - The early Directories identify houses by names only. A present day survey shows that 24 houses still display their original house name. Despite a petition to the Council in 1909 from 57 residents, for the Well Street houses to be numbered, the 1910 Directory still listed only house names. The 1915 Directory listed a mixture of house names, numbers and some with both. By the 1924/25 Directory only numbers were listed, apart from Ascot Villa which appears to share with number 13.



Occupations - Around 100 years ago Well Street residents were involved in a wide variety of employment. Assurance and Insurance Company Superintendents and Agents, photographers, musicians, certificated masseuse, coach builders, painter, decorators, gas fitter, costumiers, dressmakers, tailors, habit maker, stone mason and monumental sculptor, coach painter and heraldic artist, coal merchant, electrical engineer, school teachers, cabinet makers and railway signalman.



WHERE HAVE ALL THE PUBS GONE?

Ryde was once full of pubs and beerhouses but a gradual reduction in the numbers during the 1900s and the more recent economic downturn has seen many disappear from our streets. When the Borough of Ryde was established in 1868 there were 58 fully licensed pubs and 24 beerhouses and it was not uncommon to see a pub or business on every street corner. By 2011 there were only 22 full licences in the Ryde area.

One street we have started researching is St John's Road (and Hill). Few businesses survive today and there is only one pub still serving, The Railway, but how many were there, what do you remember?



Here are three examples of closed pubs then and now: Falls of Niagara, Terminus Hotel and Bedford Hotel.

There were seven pubs in the street. The Malt and Hops, originally called The Oak, on the corner of High Street and St John's Road, opened in 1868 and survived only until 1928 when it was demolished. The Bedford Hotel on the corner of Player Street was opened in the 1850s as The Plasterer's Arms by local builder John Meader and renamed in 1858 when it was acquired by Sweetmans brewery. The photograph of the bar above was taken in the 1940s; it closed in the 1960s and is now converted to flats. On the opposite corner was The New Inn opened in 1879 as a beerhouse by Whitbreads. It did not have a full licence (allowing wines and spirits to be sold) until 1946. The advert below appeared in the Ryde guide book 1947.

Beer & Wines **THE NEW INN** Proprietor: Tom Green
Bar parlour & Smoking room. A jolly evening assured
Board Residence, Furnished Flat. Write for terms
THE NEW INN, ST. JOHN'S ROAD, RYDE, I.O.W.

The Railway opened in 1850 as The Monkton House Inn. Its name changed several times over the years - The Cask and Cucumber and The Railway Commercial being just two – but was often referred to locally as 'Pecks' as members of the Peck family were the licence holders for many years. On the opposite corner of Monkton Street was The Terminus Hotel, named as the railway from Ventnor terminated at St John's Road station when it opened in 1873. The old picture (top middle) shows it before the railway bridge was built. The levels in the pub then changed, the ground floor becoming the cellars as you can see in the recent photograph (bottom middle). The building is now boarded up and in a dilapidated state.

The Oakfield Inn on the corner of Oakfield High Street and St John's Hill opened in 1836 and closed in the 1980s. The photograph dated 26 January 1990 shows it being demolished.

The Falls of Niagara opened as a beerhouse called The Builders Arms in 1850 being renamed by Lakes brewery when it was granted a full licence. It closed in 1970.



Thanks to Tony Gale, David Bushell and Carol Strong for the photographs.

RYDE 100 YEARS AGO

Many more of the streets in our town had pubs and businesses now lost to time but survive in your memories. Join our Changing Face of Ryde project and help preserve the history of our town. We can help you use our resources and local archives to unlock the secrets of your family, your house or street, a favourite place in the town or a particular occupation or pastime. We want you to find out what Ryde was like in 1913 and how it changed throughout the First World War, what happened to the families, homes and businesses of the men and women fighting in the Great War, how did the social life of the town change and what happened next.

At our Heritage Open Days exhibition in September the streets project attracted a lot of interest and already we have started people looking in the records, most being amazed at the amount of information freely available on the Island. One of our displays featured Ryde in 1913 with snippets of information and adverts from businesses in the town. What happened to these during the First World War? Did the families and sons survive and carry on trading? Join our project and find out for yourself. We will be holding workshops and exhibitions to guide you in your research and how to document it.

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Floods and Damage. Death of Mr. H. H. Freeman.
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Presentation of Prizes at Gatten School. Illustrated.
Islander Photographic Competition.
Weddings of the Week.
Ladies' Fashion Pages. Illustrated.
Serial Story, "The Other Man," by Tom Gallion,
&c., &c.
THE WEEK'S EVENTS IN PICTURES.

Isle of Wight County Press 23 August 1913

A guide and map for German tourists was produced after growing demand to visit the Island. The work contained an interesting and well written review of the history, flora and fauna of the Island, and particulars of the most important hotels. The IW had become extremely popular with the higher class German public.

Isle of Wight Observer 23 August 1913

Ryde Pier Regatta - This annual event held off the Pier on Thursday, fine weather favouring the event, but a stiff breeze being somewhat against it, and preventing one of the items, the tub race for boys, from being carried out.

Isle of Wight Observer 6 September 1913

Letter To The Editor - Sir, Can nothing be done to induce the fishmonger in Pier Street to either remove his clock altogether, or make it go correctly. Owing to its conspicuous position and vicinity to the railway station it is particularly objectionable in its present state. ACH.

**Join us in Ryde Library, George Street on Saturday 16 November 2013 for the official launch of the project.
Come to see if your street has been started; learn how to make a story box and how to begin your research.**