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## RYDE SOCIAL HERITAGE GROUP

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### About us

Membership is open to anyone who is interested in the heritage of the town of Ryde.

Research is centred on Ryde Cemetery, and the people who are buried there, their links to Ryde's past, their lives, homes, businesses, families and descendants.

### Website

[www.rshg.org.uk](http://www.rshg.org.uk)

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## THE MAYORS OF RYDE

The Town of Ryde was incorporated into the Borough of Ryde by Royal Charter on 23 July 1868 by Her Majesty, Queen Victoria.

Before this the town was administered by Commissioners elected under the 1854 Ryde Improvement Act. In December 1868, a special meeting was held to transfer "all the rights, powers, estates, property and liabilities of the Ryde Commissioners to the Council of the Borough of Ryde". The first meeting of the new Borough Council was held in the Town Hall on 22 December. Thomas Dashwood was elected the first Mayor of Ryde for the year 1868 - 1869.

Many of the Mayors of Ryde are known to be buried in Ryde Cemetery including George Harrington, Edward Thurlow, Benjamin Barrow, Charles Colenutt, Isaac Barton, William Locke, Michael Maybrick, Frank Randall, George Blackall, John Barton, Edwin Hayden, Harry Rogers and William Ramage. Ryde Social Heritage Group has yet to research all of these people. This edition of our newsletter tells some of their stories.



### Edward Thurlow 1816 – 1881 Watchmaker, Jeweller, Alderman and Mayor in 1870

Edward Thurlow was born at Romsey, Hampshire, and came to Ryde about 1841. A watchmaker and jeweller by trade, he took a leading part in the public affairs of the borough and was a well-known townsman.

His interest in local affairs soon made him one of the prominent members of the old Board of Commissioners. He was known for his firm opinions and ability to express them in "terse and vigorous" language.

When the town was made a borough he was elected an alderman. In 1870 he became the mayor, in succession to Alderman George Harrington who was a dentist by profession. The 1871 Census shows him trading at 54 and 55 Union Street, as a watchmaker and Mayor of Ryde, with his wife Mary, son Henry a jeweller, and Walter Rumblow apprentice watchmaker who was aged just eleven.

Unfortunately, he was called to preside over the council in difficult times when feeling ran very high in the town and the discord culminated in the formation of an entirely new corporation about a year later. Mr Thurlow, with others on the council, retired from office.

He also held other public offices and was a director of the Ryde Pier Company, and the Gas Company. He was leader of the local Liberal party and had extremely good powers of organisation.

Edward Thurlow died on 29 June 1881, aged 66 and is buried in Ryde Cemetery.

## Benjamin Barrow 1814 – 1901 Mayor 1874 - 1878, 1881, 1884 - 1886



Benjamin Barrow was one of the most prominent and influential people in the public life and health of the town.

He was born at Bath in 1814 and was articled to a Mr Stanley, Surgeon to St Bartholomew's Hospital. During his training he lived in Mr Stanley's house with other fellow pupils. In 1836 he became a Member of the Royal College of Surgeons and in 1862 a Fellow of the Royal College of Surgeons. Initially he was an army surgeon before moving to Ryde to set up his practice in 1848.

He was by all accounts a rather abrupt man of plain and forthright speaking, known for 'calling a spade a spade'. It is said he was an excellent talker, but a poor listener. Despite his unfortunate manner he had a kind heart and a sincere love for, and a desire to benefit, the town in which he chose to reside. He was a born fighter and was firm and resolute in carrying out his convictions.

Ryde was his home for over 50 years and he did much that was beneficial for the town. When he first came to Ryde the water supply was mainly from surface wells that were often polluted and there was poor drainage. As a result of this the health of the people suffered and typhoid fever was a frequent cause of death. He suggested and led a tireless campaign to have a clean water supply brought to the town from the chalk downs at Ashey and Knighton. Surprisingly this proposal met with much opposition and resistance from the townsfolk who clung on to their polluted old wells with tenacity. The battle seems to have been a bitter one and won him no friends, but Dr Barrow was firm in his belief and continued to argue the case until it was finally decided to go to Ashey for the supply. It was largely thanks to his determination that the magnificent Water Works at Ashey were built, he received little thanks at the time, but as the years passed and the general health of the town improved the benefits became apparent.

Dr Barrow was not one of the first members of the Corporation when Ryde was incorporated in 1868, but when trouble brewed in the town between the Rate Payers Association and the Council Dr Barrow warmly espoused the cause of the Corporation. A most determined battle was fought at the November elections in 1874, in which Mr Henry Knight and the Ratepayers Association lost and Mr Barrow was elected an Alderman and Mayor.

At the time the Council was in turmoil, the meetings were disruptive and disorganised and it was felt that an exceptionally strong man was required to take the lead. The choice of Mr Barrow was justified, his powerful personality, determination and the hold he had on the Council were proved by the fact that he served the office of Mayor year after year from 1874 until 1878 and again in 1881, 1884, 1885 and 1886, nine times altogether.

During this period a great deal of important work was accomplished in the town – the improvements at the waterworks; the drainage of the town and marshes; and the construction of the Boating Lake and Esplanade Gardens to name a few. Dr Barrow fought tenaciously for these improvements with an energy that was almost fierce, nothing could daunt his courage and determination. He held sway over the Council in an almost dictatorial

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style for many years, but over time as the disputes in the town settled and the necessary improvements were brought about, Council Members began to long for a more gentle and tactful leader and in the end Mr Barrow retired into private life.

Despite his unfortunate manner the town of Ryde owes a huge debt of gratitude to Mr Barrow for his determination and drive in bringing about many benefits to the town.

## *Extract from MEDICAL NEWS AND GAZETTE 25 April 1857*

*APPOINTMENT AND TESTIMONIAL. – Benjamin Barrow, esq., Surgeon to the Isle of Wight Royal Infirmary, has been appointed Chairman of the Board of Commissioners for improving the town of Ryde, etc. A considerable sum has been raised by private subscription to present this gentleman with a Testimonial for his unwearied exertions in the cause of Sanitary Reform; this sum he has appropriated to the erection of a Public Museum of Natural History, which will, it is expected, be opened in a few months. The inhabitants and visitors are mainly indebted to Mr. Barrow for a constant supply at high pressure of pure water procured from springs at the foot of Asheys Down, four miles from the town; and also for great improvements in the drainage, which is now carried, by means of two main trunks, to low water mark. The effect upon the public health, since the introduction of the water and clearing away of cesspits and privies, has been most striking in the dwellings of the poor.*

As well as his work in the Council he did much more for the town. For many years he was the president of the School of Art and assisted in arranging a number of exhibitions of works of art in the Town Hall, which were much appreciated at the time.

For many years Mr Barrow urged the town of the need for a recreation ground for the youngsters. Eventually, as he had been unsuccessful convincing his colleagues to obtain such a place, he rented the ground himself and threw it open for sport. Afterwards, seeing how much it was appreciated, the Corporation took it on and eventually Miss Brigstocke purchased the land and presented it as a free gift to the town. The same belief in the need for physical exercise made Mr Barrow erect, at great expense, a gymnasium for the use of the children at the various schools.

He also accepted the office of Borough Medical Officer and carried out these duties for several years without pay. He took a leading part in the establishment of the County Hospital and gave many years valuable service to it as Honorary Medical Officer.

In August 1881 Benjamin Barrow was President of the British Medical Association and hosted their Annual Meeting at Ryde. This was a four day conference and many distinguished doctors and surgeons from around the country attended and many visited the County Hospital.

Even in retirement he remained active but in the autumn of 1900, whilst staying in London, he fell in the street and injured his left wrist. He made light of this at the time however it was more serious than he at first thought, complications set in and in January 1901 his arm was amputated above the elbow. The operation was carried out by Mr Barrow's friend and colleague Mr Alfred Willett, who attended him with Mr Ingleby Mackenzie. Despite Mr Barrow's great age, over 86, the stump was entirely healed within three weeks, but a little later he became restless and his health deteriorated.

Benjamin Barrow died on 7 March 1901, at his residence, St John's Lodge, St John's Road, Ryde. The funeral service was held at Holy Trinity Church on 11 March followed by burial at Ryde Cemetery.



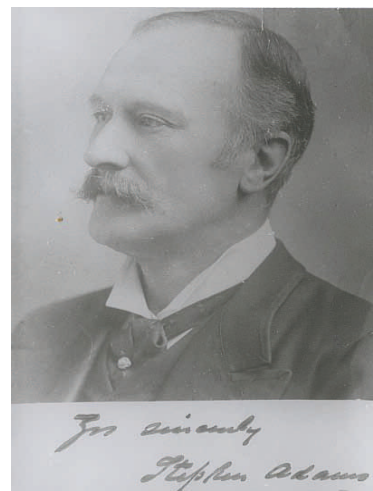
## Michael Maybrick 1844 - 1913 Mayor 1900 - 1901 and 1908 - 1910

Although much of his life was not spent in Ryde, Mr Maybrick's contribution to the town during the early part of the 20th century cannot be ignored.

He was born in Liverpool in 1844, one of seven boys born to William Maybrick and his wife. His parents were eager to encourage his considerable musical talent, both in performing and composing, and at the age of 22 he was able to go to Leipzig to study music.

From 1871 onwards, under the name of Stephen Adams, he composed many popular songs including "Nancy Lee", "The Midshipmite" and "The Holy City" which is possibly the most well known.

After moving to the Island in 1889 (in the wake of his sister-in-law, Florence's much publicised murder trial), Mr Maybrick soon became an integral part in the day-to-day running of Ryde.



He first became Mayor of Ryde in 1900, a position he would hold a further five times over the next eleven years. Many important improvements were made to the town during this time, most notably the completion and opening of the new Western Esplanade.

He was a man who was keen to be involved in all aspects of the management of Ryde and its entertainments. The list of things in which he was involved is quite impressive for a man of his age.

He was President of the Isle of Wight Conservative Association and a member of the Directorate of the County Press. In 1911 he represented the Island at the coronation of King George V. In 1912 he was elected Chairman of the Royal Isle of Wight County Hospital. He was a Justice of the Peace for both the County and for the Borough of Ryde. In 1902 he, along with other well-known citizens of Ryde, had founded the Ryde Philharmonic Society of which he became president.

Mr Maybrick was also involved with many sports clubs in Ryde. These included the Ryde Cricket Club, Ryde Football Club and Ryde Bowling Club, as well as being president of Ryde Lawn Tennis and Croquet Club in 1912.

In August 1913 his health was in decline and he went away to stay at a hotel in Buxton. On the morning of 26 August, after not having gone down to breakfast, it was discovered that he had died in his bed. He was 72 years of age.

The news that he had passed away was met with genuine sadness from the people of Ryde, no matter what their social standing.

In an article printed in the Isle of Wight County Press on the day of his funeral, it says of him, "To the very last he was a perfect example of one of nature's gentlemen, a true friend, wise, generous, and helpful to rich and poor alike, without distinction of rank, creed or politics,"

Michael Maybrick was buried in Ryde Cemetery on 30th August 1913. It was one of the biggest funerals Ryde had ever seen.



## George Allen Blackall 1851 - 1934 Mayor 1911 - 1912



Born in Reading, Berkshire, George Allen Blackall came to Ryde around 1874 when he was in his early twenties.

He began life on the Island as an assistant to Mr David Allen, at his grocer's shop in Union Street, Ryde.

Two years later he married Miss Hannah Keet, daughter of another grocer, Mr J Keet, whose shop was in the High Street, Ryde.

He was soon trading on his own account, in the same profession, in Swanmore Road, Ryde. A quiet and unassuming man, George Blackall became a prominent figure in the civil and religious life of the community of Ryde.

For over 40 years he was involved with the work of the Town Council, first being elected for the West Ward in November 1893. He served on many committees including the Water, Sanitary, Health, Fire Brigade, Pier, Parks and Amusements, and the Finance Committee for which he was chairman for ten years. For many years, he was chairman of the General Purposes Committee. He was the returning officer at many elections, and one of his last public duties was to undertake that role at the County Council elections. He was made a Justice of the Peace for the borough in 1907 and regularly attended sittings of the Bench. He served as Mayor of Ryde from 1911 to 1918.

Alderman Blackall played a significant part in the Free Church life of the town. Besides being one of its oldest members, he was an Elder of the Congregational Church. Throughout his membership he worked for the church with zeal and devotion. He often preached in their village stations and drew up a plan of preachers for the villages. He was Honorary Secretary of the Local Preachers Association, and for many years local Secretary of the British and Foreign Bible Society. He became involved with the work of the Isle of Wight Gospel Mission and the branch of the League of Nations Union. He was at one time chairman and the Honorary Treasurer of the Ryde and District United Liberal Association, and chairman of the committee of Ryde Dispensary. He was a director of the Ryde Pier Company and the Vectis Permanent Investment Building Society.

His fondness for music led to him becoming chairman of the committee of the Isle of Wight Musical Festival Competition, and one of his proudest moments was being able to take part in the festival with his son. He was tireless in his efforts to guarantee the festival's success, and throughout his time as chairman it grew in strength and importance.

Among his recreations was the game of bowls and he was a member of Ryde Bowling Club for many years.

At his funeral service, held in the Congregational Church, the great respect he was held in was reflected in the large attendance that represented the civic, religious and social life of Ryde, in which he played a significant part for over 40 years. The service was taken by the Rev J E Thomas BA, BD, from Ross-on-Wye, who had been a recent pastor at the Church. He recalled working with Alderman Blackall and accompanying him on his visits to their village chapels, especially Langbridge, and witnessing his strength and devotion to the people. He stated that the Congregational Church realised what a great debt they owed him for his many years of devoted service in various roles including deacon and Elder. Every duty he undertook, Rev Thomas declared, was accomplished with his usual amiability and dignity.

Although he had not lived in Ryde all his life, George Blackall had spent sufficient time here for people to think of him as a Ryde man, one who had served the community well.

Alderman Blackall is buried at Ryde Cemetery. Messrs. Purnell and Purnell were the undertakers.



# Newsletter of RYDE SOCIAL HERITAGE GROUP

## Harry Rogers Mayor 1956 - 1957

Harry Rogers was a police officer in Ryde and at one time deputy chief constable of the Island. He became a member of Ryde Town Council on his retirement. In 1956, he was elected mayor and later an alderman. He took a great interest in many clubs and associations of the town and served on school management committees.

He was a sidesman and member of the Parochial Church Council of All Saints Church, Ryde.

Harry Rogers died in April 1966. His funeral at All Saints Church was attended by the serving mayor, Alderman William Ramage, and members of Ryde Town Council, preceded by the town sergeant, Mr G H Savill, bearing the draped mace.

Many serving and retired police officers were among the congregation together with representatives of the local organisations he had been involved with. The vicar, Rev R H Granger, paid a personal tribute to Harry and said he was a well-known and loved man in the Borough. Interment in Ryde Cemetery followed the service.



## William Locke 1826 - 1909 Mayor 1898

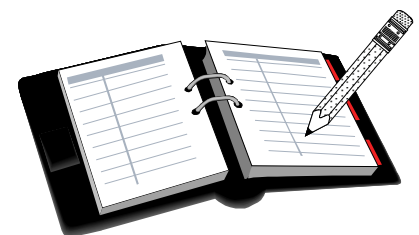
William Locke was born in Newport, Isle of Wight, son of George Locke, a corn merchant. He married Martha Dennett at All Saints Church, Newchurch on 19 January 1853.

He started in business as a butcher in Ryde around 1852. In the 1871 census, he is listed as a pork butcher at 141 High Street, Ryde, employing two men and one boy. He and Martha had nine children and at least four of his sons, George, Arthur, Albert and Charles later also became butchers.

William was elected Mayor of Ryde in November 1898 after serving as a member of the Town Council for 21 years. He was also a member of the Board of Guardians for many years.

In 1901 he was raised to the Aldermonic Bench but was forced to retire through ill health six years later in 1907. William died at his address in the High Street, Ryde, on 29 July 1909 aged 83 and is buried in Ryde Cemetery.

## Dates for your Diary 2008



5 July 2008	Ryde Arts Festival Parade, Ryde Regatta weekend, Ryde Arts Festival Week
12 July 2008	RSHG Members Meeting, 10.30 - 12.30 at the George Street Centre, Ryde
28 August 2008	Ryde Carnival Main Procession
30 August 2008	Ryde Carnival Illuminated Procession
11 - 14 September 2008	Heritage Open Days
11 October 2008	RSHG AGM and Meeting, 10.30 - 12.30 at the George Street Centre, Ryde

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