



BEYOND THE GRAVES

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RYDE SOCIAL HERITAGE GROUP

Contacts

Sally-Ann Garrett
Chairperson
 36 Pellhurst Road Ryde
 PO33 3BP
 Sallyann.garrett2@btinternet.com

Janette Kitching
Secretary
 The Cemetery Lodge
 63 West Street
 Ryde
 PO33 2QF
 janette@subagua.demon.co.uk

Matthew Bell
Treasurer
 cemetery@mbelliw.force9.co.uk

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

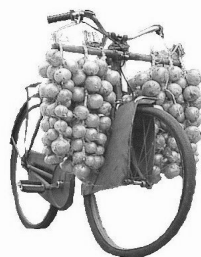
Newsletter Editor

Carol Strong
 30 Birch Gardens
 Ryde
 PO33 3XB
 carol@cstrong.freemove.co.uk

LIVING MEMORIES WHAT'S YOUR STORY?

Living Memories are an important part of our social heritage.

They are your memories: the stories and anecdotes you can tell about the town, tales handed down through the generations, things Granny used to say and do, the people, their lives, their homes and their businesses.



Can you answer these questions and tell the story of Ryde?

Do you remember the street traders: the rag and bone man, the French onion seller, the watercress man, the milkman with his churns and ladle, the paraffin man, or the muffin man? Do you remember the organ grinder with his mischievous monkey and dog, the ice-cream man on his tricycle or the telegram boy?

Where was The Theatre Royal, The Royal Pier Hotel, Hazelwood House, The London? Where is the Flat Iron? What was it? Was it your local? Many pubs and clubs, dance halls and cinemas have disappeared from Ryde. Which ones do you remember?



How about steam trains, paddle steamers, trams and charabancs? Horse-drawn water carts and bathing machines?

These are just a few examples of the things that make up the town's social history.

What are your memories of Ryde?

What was it like growing up in Ryde?
 What are your school memories?
 What was Ryde like during wartime?
 What were the fads and fashions?

Many changes have taken place in our town. Close your eyes and try to picture Ryde in your childhood days. Look around you and describe the sights, the sounds and the smells you remember - the horse and cart, church bells, sirens and whistles, freshly baked bread, fresh fish hanging outside the shop.



These memories will be lost if we don't start recording and documenting them now. Have you got old photographs, postcards or documents to illustrate the stories that spring to mind?

Share your own story with the Ryde Social Heritage Group and preserve the social history of Ryde for your children, their children and grandchildren.



MUSICAL MEMORIES

MR WILLIAM WATTS 1845 - 1933

Among the notables buried in Ryde Cemetery there are those who have made valuable contributions to the musical history of the town. One of these was Mr William Watts, who although being a well known businessman, counsellor and church warden, had an extraordinary talent for managing, arranging and organising musical concerts. In 1869 he managed the first two concerts under Major Augustus Leeds which were given at the opening of the newly built Town hall.

He was responsible for many celebrity concerts and known for being able to attract some of the greatest artistes of the day to perform in Ryde. These included Paderwaki, Kubelik, Bachaus, Pachmann and Madame Blanch Marchesi. He was also responsible for arranging many fund raising concerts for local and national causes. In 1899 he arranged a concert in the Town hall in aid of the Binstead Boy's Brigade which raised the grand sum of £250, and the following year raised £200 for the Boer War Fund.

In 1902 he became the first secretary and one of the foundation members of the Borough of Ryde Philharmonic Society along with Michael Maybrick, the noted composer, as president, and Dr Yates Mander, as conductor. From 1868 - 1875 he was an active member of Holy Trinity Choir and from 1875 - 1923 a member of the Parish Church Choir, during which time he sang many solo's in his fine tenor voice. He took great interest in Ryde and spent a large part of his life contributing to the progress of the town. His was a life of notable achievement which is remembered to this day.



The Watts family grave

MISS MARGUERITE JANE WATTS 1871 - 1956

Miss Watts, who died in The Ryde Nursing Home at the age of 84, was the only daughter of the late Mr William Watts and Mrs Jane Watts. The family resided at North-view, Spencer's Road and managed a well known stationers and booksellers shop in Union Street, Ryde, where Miss Watts worked with her father as a stationers assistant.

She, like her father, will be remembered for her musical accomplishments. Miss Watts was a particularly good pianist and organist. She was closely associated with her father and others in the formation of the Borough of Ryde Philharmonic Society, which she gave devoted service to as honorary accompanist for 20 years from its formation in 1902.

Miss Watts was also the deputy organist at All Saints Church during the early part of the 20th Century. She took a prominent part in the I.W Musical Competition Festival during it's first years and along with Mrs G. W. Colenutt organised many vocal concerts and soirees in the town. She died May 22nd 1956 and is buried in a family grave along with her mother and father.

LIEUTENANT COMMANDER HENRY MORGAN THOMAS D. S. C. R. N. 1889 - 1969

Retired Naval Officer, Lieutenant-Commander Henry Morgan Thomas, D.S.C.R.N., member of the choir of George Street Baptist Church, died at the age of 79 on 10th February 1969.

Lieutenant-Commander Thomas of 23 Swanmore Road, Ryde was born in Newport, Monmouthshire in 1889 and had lived on the Island since 1937. During the Second World War he served on the destroyer H.M.S. Beagle, principally in the Atlantic, and was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross.

The Funeral report in the Isle of Wight County Press dated 15th February 1969 described him:

"Possessing a fine tenor voice, he sang in the choir of the George Street Baptist Church and with the Borough of Ryde Philharmonic Society in many of their productions. He also gave active help to the I.W. Musical Competition Festival Association each year and collected for various good causes."

Lieutenant-Commander Thomas was nursed for three months by his sister Miss Anne Thomas, aged 85, who came from Weston-super-Mare to look after him. He died in a local nursing home. His only daughter, Mrs Marjorie Prior, travelled to India as the wife of a medical missionary.

The Rev. L. L. Jones officiated at the funeral service which was held at the Baptist Church. It was attended by fellow church members and friends.

Lieutenant-Commander Thomas is buried at Asheys Cemetery, Ryde, with his first wife Elsie Rosena Thomas, who died in 1955.





DEATH OF A RYDE BANDSMAN ROBERT ARKLEY COOKE 1840 – 1912

Robert Arkley Cooke, an army pensioner, of Salisbury Cottage, Daniel Street, Ryde died suddenly from heart failure on Monday 17th June 1912, aged 72.

Robert was born in Montrose, Angus, Scotland in 1840, the son of Jacob and Elizabeth (nee Knight). Elizabeth was born in Montrose but Jacob, christened on the 26th July 1801 at All Saints Church, Calbourne, was from an Island family.

Robert Arkley Cooke, joined the army, and on the 1861 census he is listed at Kneller Hall, Twickenham, Middlesex with fellow soldiers. His Army career lasted 27 years and took him to India where he met and married his wife, Jane Ann Townley, in Sanawar on the 12th September 1867. They had 13 children.

Robert was a Bugle-Major in the Shropshire Light Infantry (the 85th Kings Regiment of Light Infantry) and afterwards bandmaster of the Royal Munster Fusiliers (the 104th Bengal Regiment). He was also in the Gordon Highlanders and the 69th Regiment of Foot, Rochester.

On his retirement from the Army in the 1870's, he was attached to the Volunteers for 17 years and also helped train the Boy's Brigade, Boy Scouts and the Church Lads' Brigade. For some years he was bandmaster of the Ryde Town Band and on the Wednesday before his death conducted an orchestra at the Town Hall for a meeting of the National Reserve.

Isle of Wight County Press Saturday 15th June 1912 - Report of the National Reserve meeting

"On Wednesday evening a very successful meeting was held at the Town Hall, Ryde to further the objects of the National Reserve. Col. Craddock thanked bandmaster Holland and the members of the R. F. A. (Howitzer Brigade) Band for their kindness in playing outside the Town Hall prior to the meeting, and also Bandmaster R. A. Cooke and his band for instrumental selections inside the hall."

Inquest

An inquest into his death conducted by the Acting Coroner for the Island, Mr Francis A. Joyce, was held on Tuesday afternoon, the 18th June 1912, at the Park Road Baptist Chapel, Ryde. He heard evidence from the deceased's widow, Jane Ann, that Robert had complained of chest pains after they left church on Sunday. She made him ginger tea and a bread poultice to ease the pain. On Monday he got up but went back to bed, and at one o'clock, when she couldn't rouse him, sent for the doctor. Dr. J. W. Pridmore, who attended the deceased said "When I arrived at the house deceased was dead but the body was still warm and the appearance of the face was consistent with death from natural causes". From the evidence given the Coroner said the jury might reasonably assume that death was due to heart trouble. The jury returned a verdict accordingly.

The Funeral

The funeral took place on Thursday afternoon, the 20th June 1912, and was attended by a large number of people. The funeral procession from the house in Daniel Street was headed by the trumpeter, Mr E. Palmer, and the firing party of the Isle of Wight Rifles marching with arms reversed, under Colour Sergeant Instructor Evans. Then came the massed bands of the Howitzer Brigade, R. F. A. and the Isle of Wight Rifles, with whom were several retired bandsmen not attached to any regiment, who were allowed to play out of respect for an old comrade. The drums were draped in crepe and the coffin, of polished elm with brass mountings, was covered with the Union Jack, on which was placed the deceased's busby, sword, and belt, together with a wreath from his wife. The pall-bearers were all retired warrant officers. The bearers, members of the old Ryde Town Band, of which Mr Cooke was the bandmaster, were Messrs. J. H. Daish, H. Thearle, Crabb, J. Long, Coyne, Austin, E. Drayton and Sayers.

About 40 members of the National Reserve followed the coffin under the command of Col. E. W. Craddock, J. P. Then followed the Isle of Wight Rifles, under Lieutenant Swain and the Howitzer Brigade, under Lieutenant A. J. Hartnell and Lieutenant C. Swain. The bands played Chopin's "Marche Funebre" and Beethoven's "Funeral March" on the way to the Parish Church. The Rev. Hugh Le Fleming, M. A., Vicar, assisted by the Rev. Cyril L. Blake, M. A. conducted the service.

As the procession left the church the organist, Dr. R. Yates Mander played the 'Dead March' in Saul and 'O Rest in the Lord'.

At the graveside committal the Territorials and National Reserve formed up in a hollow square. The firing party fired three volleys over the grave, and the trumpeter very impressively sounded the "Last Post".



OVER 2000 GRAVE RECORDS TRANSCRIBED

There are now records of over 2000 individuals from approximately 500 graves transcribed and uploaded to the website. The Old Parish Cemetery (OPC) and the 'Sand pit' areas are nearly complete. Sadly some of the graves have no visible markers and others are too overgrown with ivy and brambles to read the inscriptions. All the recorded information is checked against the Cemetery maps and any differences in the location of the grave or names of the deceased are passed back to David, leader of the Mapping sub-group, for amendment. The details are then uploaded to the website and photographs of the graves are added to the record.

Thanks to every member who has contributed to such a remarkable amount of work during the summer months.



Ryde Cemetery pictures



The process of documenting the Cemetery does not end here. The names and dates of the deceased are passed to the Research sub-group led by Ann and Les, who begin the hard work of finding the stories to go with the names. Ann has kindly detailed their extensive research process below.

RESEARCH GROUP – METHOD OF WORKING

by Ann Barrett

1. I go through the RSHG website, looking for new names, and also the latest transcriptions. Our own database of names searched and the particular newspapers looked at, is an essential part of this first stage.
2. The names and death dates are checked against the burial date and the I. W. Registrars index, to give us more accurate weeks/years to search. The accuracy of this research is paramount, so it cannot be rushed, and we verify each item with at least three sources. I note any discrepancies and changes that I have made, so that the master index can be amended.
3. I then put the information (name, age and date) onto a worksheet for Les to search the newspapers at the record office.
4. Les works from approximately six sheets at a time, each containing 25 names.
5. Les takes the info sheets to the record office and puts a film onto the reader/printer (say 1920) and then he searches all the names for that year on his six sheets. For 1920 there would be three newspapers to search through. He does about five weeks pages for each name in each paper. (Very time consuming when you work out how many columns to read on each page). Prior to 1921, I look at a fourth newspaper which is not on film, from which I take a digital image if there is a report.
6. If Les finds the obituaries/funerals or other details he obtains a copy and I work through them at home one at a time and type them out and edit them twice to make sure there are no errors. I search for and add to the files, prior to uploading to the RSHG website, any of the following that might be available: the census, Kelly's directory, marriage, electoral registers, other snippets etc. Should anything require an explanation on the uploaded typed documents, a small note (NB) is written at the end of the file.
7. Some census and small front page stories are typed in advance, awaiting further information to be found from other sources. Sometimes there isn't any more to find, so the small amount is uploaded, with a view to adding more if and when found later.

This process can take many weeks to work through, from the first instance of taking the details from the website to the eventual uploading of a file. A lot of work is always "at the holding stage".

We also have lists of the 19th century deaths/burials we have researched at the Record Office, many of the census to go with these individuals will have already been typed (waiting for more detail). This is another list of names that is ongoing, where work is also "on hold - awaiting".

Other research, i.e. for publications or enquiries, is given priority, as they are usually worked to a deadline or a reply to an enquiry and are best sent as soon as possible, therefore no part of this search is put "on hold – waiting".

NATURAL HISTORY IN THE CEMETERY

As the long hot summer turned into autumn rose hips added a vibrant splash of colour in the Cemetery. The hips of most species are red and each hip comprises an outer fleshy layer and inside contains 5–25 seeds (technically achenes) embedded in a matrix of fine, but stiff, hairs.

The hips are eaten by fruit-eating birds such as thrushes, waxwings and finches, which then disperse the seeds in their droppings.



As part of the bio-diversity study in the Cemetery, a fungi walk, lead by Jackie Hart, a member of the Isle of Wight Natural History Society, took place on Sunday 22nd October.

Autumn is the best time to look for fungi but not necessarily on a very wet Sunday morning!

A few intrepid members braved the rain to join Jackie and she was able to collect several specimens to take away for identification. There was quite a variety of fungi found but some of the more colourful waxcaps have yet to make an appearance. Jackie thinks early November may be a good time to spot these.

Thanks to Jackie and her brave fungi foragers for a successful morning.

SPECIES OF FUNGI IDENTIFIED IN THE CEMETERY
 Agaricus campestris - Field Mushroom
 Agaricus silvaticus - Blushing Wood Mushroom
 Agaricus xanthoderma - Yellow Stainer Mushroom
 Boletus luridus - Lurid Bolete
 Boletus porosporus
 Coprinus comatus - Shaggy Inkcap
 Coprinus silvaticus
 Ganoderma applanatum - Artist's Bracket
 Hygrocybe conica - Blackening Waxcap
 Hygrocybe virginea - Snowy Waxcap
 Hygrocybe persistens
 Hygrocybe psittacina - Parrot Waxcap
 Lactarius camphoratus - Curry Milkcap
 Lepista flaccida - Tawny Funnel
 Macrolepiota rhacodes - Shaggy Parasol
 Marasmius rotula - Collared Parachute
 Micromphale foetidum - Foetid Parachute

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

NOVEMBER 2006

Tony Gale and Roy Brinton will be talking about the history of Ryde Pubs and Brewers for the last time on 24th November 2006 at 7:30pm at the George Street Centre, Ryde. The event is in aid of the Vernon Square Society.

The officers of the Vernon Square Society have kindly agreed for RSHG to put up an exhibition on the evening showing some of the stories and research carried out so far.

JANUARY 2007

The next members meeting will be held on Saturday 13th January 2007 at 10.30am at the George Street Centre, Ryde. Paul Donnellan will be giving a presentation on Capt. Barnes.

The next newsletter in January will have a maritime theme to the stories and more news from the Group.





RSHG NEWS

RYDE LIBRARY EXHIBITION 18TH TO 29TH AUGUST

A small exhibition was held in the library during August. The display, a double sided set of three boards, showed some of the research carried out by Ryde Social Heritage Group so far, particularly some of the stories of the people buried in the Cemetery, such as General Sir Sam Browne, Alexander Findley Smith, Thomas Hellyer, Haynes and Heward, and Thomas Rickard.

Copies of the last newsletter, postcards with the website address and membership forms were available for visitors to take away.

PRESENTATION TO THE ISLE OF WIGHT SOCIETY

On Wednesday, 23rd August 2006, Sally-Ann Garrett, supported by Janette Kitching, made a presentation about the Ryde Social Heritage Group to members of the Isle of Wight Society. About 40 people, including several RSHG members, attended the meeting.

Sally-Ann used a PowerPoint presentation to illustrate her talk and told the audience about the aims of the RSHG and the topics being researched, from the people and their histories to the development of the town and 'suburbs'. Many of the features of the talk were illustrated with printed pages from the website handed out to the audience. These stimulated plenty of discussions.

After the talk, copies of the recent newsletter were made available, and members of the audience were able to ask questions and to talk individually to Janette and Sally-Ann. Roy Brinton, Honorary President of the RSHG, provided some dates and details about the photographs Sally-Ann used in her talk.



LOOKING BACK

A new feature on the website is Looking Back - Interesting things that happened in Ryde 100 years ago, and 50 years ago. Snippets of Ryde news from 1906 and 1956 for the months of September and October are already available and new months will be added throughout the year.

Here's a piece of news about the Cemetery from October 1906:

Oct 18th 1906: CEMETERY CONSECRATION

An additional piece of land measuring 1½ acres and containing 1,537 grave spaces, was consecrated on Thursday at the Ryde Cemetery by the Bishop of Southampton, in the presence of a crowd of spectators. The clerical procession was met at the Cemetery by the Mayor and Corporation in their robes. The impressive service closed with the singing of "Jesus Lives!" and the blessing. The Mayor and the Town Clerk were introduced to the Bishop by the Vicar of Ryde.