

STOP 15 – ROYAL VICTORIA YACHT CLUB

You should be facing the back of the colonnaded Prince Consort building.

You are now looking at the back of the original Royal Victoria Yacht Club House. Prince Albert laid the foundation stone in March 1846. A grand procession marched from the Town Hall to the Pier to meet the Prince for the ceremony. The magnificent, elegant mansion opened in 1847 with the Queen and Prince Albert as patrons and had many distinguished members. By 1871, the club had eighty yachts with an aggregate of ten-thousand tons.

An exclusive and prestigious grand regatta took place every August attracting the English Gentry and dignitaries, as well as prominent foreign visitors. It once included the Round the Island Race and the Ocean Race from Ryde to Cherbourg. A second town regatta was held a month later for the 'ordinary boatmen' and people of the town. This was described by Sheridan in his Guide to the IW 1833: *"The Regatta takes place early in September, prizes are contested by the different class wherries, and pilot vessels; and rowing matches contribute to the amusements. The whole course is visible from the Pier, which is crowded with elegantly-dressed residents and visitors. The company are enlivened by a band of music; in the evening there is a display of fireworks on the Pier; and a Regatta ball is held at the Town Hall."*

The 1908 Olympic Yacht Races were held at Ryde with victories for the British team. A local man also participated in the Olympic football tournament as reported by the IW Observer October 1908: *"Clyde Purnell, the most promising athlete we have ever had in Ryde, has been chosen to play Forward in the match, Great Britain verses Sweden, he may be relied on to be a credit to his country."* The Great Britain team won the gold medal!

The Club building was requisitioned in 1943 as the headquarters of the ATC. The Yacht Club moved to Fishbourne in 1965 and since then the building has been a bar, nightclub, theatre and gym, now converted to luxury apartments.

The car park to the left of the building was the site of the manor house built in 1706 for Henry Player, the lord of the manor of Ryde. It was demolished when the Yacht Club purchased the land to make a garden.

To see the amazing colonnaded front of the Yacht Club building topped with the Royal Crest, cross the road and go through the car park. There are no dropped kerbs here. When you are ready, continue up the hill on this side of the road to Brigstocke Terrace, making sure you look at the fantastic houses both sides on the way.