

STOP 3 – UPPER UNION STREET

You should be standing across the road from Gibbs and Gurnell's chemist's shop.

Enjoy the view down to the pier and across the Solent. The Gibbs family were active in Union Street from the 1820s; the Misses Gibbs ran a library, and their brother a pharmacy, later joined by Mr Gurnell.

Union Street, formed 1801/2, was named to commemorate the Union of Britain and Ireland as well as Upper and Lower Ryde. At various times in the 19th century, however, the view at the bottom was blocked by buildings, until they were demolished to improve access to the pier.

Now let's go back in time...*“Turning into Union Street, it is quite possible that Her Majesty experienced a surprise aural as well as visual for, stationed on ledges on either side of the second floor windows of Messrs Gibbs and Gurnell, on the east, and of Mr Richard Colenutt on the west, were two Highlanders in full costume, playing on bagpipes patriotic Scotch airs as her Majesty passed by.”*

The date: July 1887; the occasion: the illuminated procession marking the Queen's Golden Jubilee. This popular event led Mr Gibbs and Mr Gustav Mullins to form a carnival in Ryde the following year, now the oldest in the country.

.....And did Queen Victoria enjoy the 'aural surprise'? The Isle of Wight Observer, August 6 1887, reveals: *“as the Queen went by they played a well-known Scotch air, which caused Her Majesty to look up with a smile, and call the Princess Beatrice's attention to the men.”* She was amused!

Now walk down and stop outside Yelf's Hotel, one of the oldest buildings in the street.