

BEYOND THE GRAVES

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COUNTRY FILE

EARLY RYDE



Stand in St Thomas' Square, facing downhill towards the sea and try to imagine this place in the early 1700s...

You are in open countryside surrounded by fields and trees with a clear view across the Solent to the busy town of Portsmouth. A flock of sheep, brought from the mainland and landed at Lower Ryde, is being herded up the track (now St Thomas' Street) to graze in the fields of the farming hamlet of Upper Ryde, up the hill behind you. Through the gate in front of you and down the path is St Thomas' Chapel. It was built in the field called Pickett Close by Thomas Player, Lord of the Manor, in 1719. It was the first church in Ryde, and means that locals no longer had to travel six miles to the Parish Church in Newchurch.

By the late 1700s Ryde was developing and plans were made for a new street (the future Union Street of 1800) to link the fishing/boating hamlet on the shore with the farming hamlet on the hill, but farms, fields and aspects of rural life remained for well over another century.

In 1859 Mr William Tansom died at Swanmore, aged 84. This old Ryde inhabitant told us many years ago that he had cut wheat and other crops upon the spot where Union Street and many other principal parts of the town now stand. (*Isle of Wight Observer* 9 April 1859)



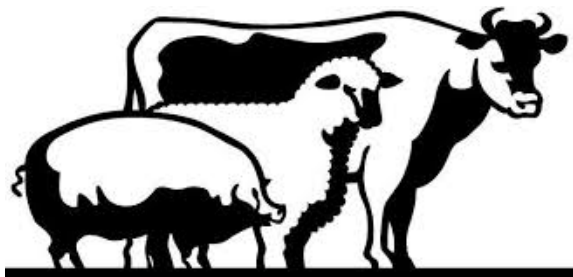
Holy Trinity Church opened in November 1845. Its first vicar, the Rev A J Wade recalled his first sermon there. "At that time Upper Dover Street in which the

Church stands was but partially formed, there was no thoroughfare to Star Street, the ground opposite the Church was still fields with hedgerows - no house thereon - cattle were feeding there quietly as wont - the congregation, variously composed, was assembling, and as I entered the reading desk and was commencing the service, the west door being open, I observed one of the cows cease her grazing, raise her head, and for a little while stand gazing towards the church as if wondering what we were all doing, then gently fall on bended knees on nature's grassy cushion as in sympathy with us."

(*The Chronicle of Holy Trinity Church - Towards another Century* by Jack Wheeler - 1968)



MARKETS AND AGRICULTURAL COMPETITIONS



Ryde Town Hall opened in 1831 and originally the whole ground floor was a market. This was a lively and smelly spot where rowdy incidents were often reported.

The Market - Our new Commissioners intend to enforce greater cleanliness in the market, for it has been in a most disgraceful condition of late years. (*Isle of Wight Observer 18 May 1861*)

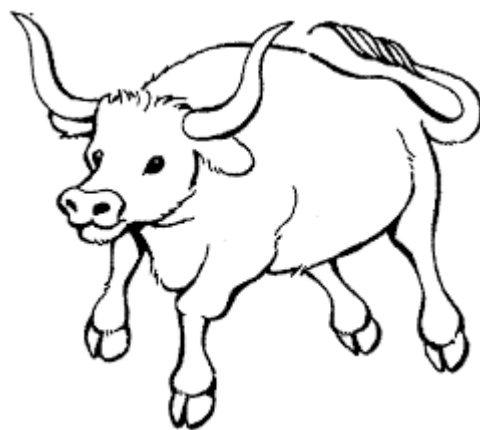
We understand that a fortnightly cattle market is intended to be held at the Star Yard, and that the first show will be announced in a few days. The project has been for some time regarded in a most favourable light by some gentlemen who are largely interested in breeding stock. The Railway is a great convenience and will no doubt induce many agriculturists to visit Ryde on these occasions. The intention is a good one and we heartily wish it success. (*Isle of Wight Observer 20 May 1869*)

National Agricultural Union (Isle of Wight Branch) – With a view to promoting a more united feeling between all interested in Agriculture, which is one of the primary objects of our Union, the Isle of Wight Branch have decided to arrange Competitions for Sheep Shearing, Ploughing, and Mowing, and to offer Prizes for the same. (*Isle of Wight County Press 25 March 1899*)

ANIMAL ANTICS IN THE TOWN

An Infuriated Bull on the Esplanade - On Friday, persons who were on the Esplanade, near the Pier gates, were placed in great danger by an old bull brought down for exportation. Fortunately, the animal was to a certain extent secured by a rope fastened round his neck and leg. It showed, however, a great aversion to enter the horse-boat prepared for its reception, and the shouts of the men in charge of the animal had the effect of rendering it perfectly furious. The cabs, as a matter of course, moved off, and every sensible person got out of the way. The animal went first one way and then the other. At one time it was nearly within the Pier Hotel, and it is somewhat surprising that a great smash of glass did not occur in some of the shop windows. At last a butcher in the employ of Castle Street, came down, patted the brute on the neck, spoke a few kind words to it and it went quietly into the boat.

(*Isle of Wight Times 25 September 1873*)



Trap Accident – On Tuesday morning a pony attached to the milk cart of Mr George Cleaver, of Smallbrook Farm, bolted at the top of Union Street and ran down the street to the Pier Hotel, where it stumbled and fell. Mr Cleaver was thrown out and Mr F Young, who tried to stop the runaway, was knocked down and sustained slight injuries. The animal was startled by the cart being let down upon it through the back band breaking.

(*Isle of Wight County Press 2 March 1907*)

Runaway Heifers – A commotion was caused in the streets of the town on Wednesday by the behaviour of two heifers which got out of control whilst being driven from St John's Road Railway Station to the premises of Mr R Russell, butcher, High Street. During their wanderings the beasts found their way into the furniture store of Mr H Taylor, Star Street, whence they were ejected with some difficulty. They eventually retraced their steps to the Railway Station, and were recaptured, after having given the drovers and several pedestrians rather an exciting experience. (*Isle of Wight Observer Saturday 10 July 1909*)

Ryde Town Council - The Mayor and Councillor Hamilton had written complaining of cattle being brought through the street in day time. (*Isle of Wight Observer 18 February 1911*)



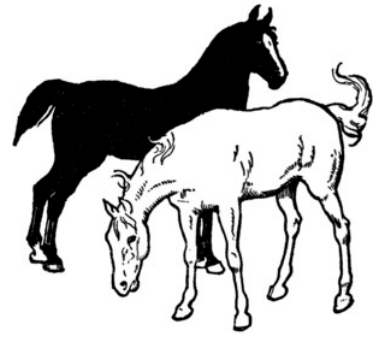
RYDE BULL RING

Relic - Last week in digging for the foundation of a house on Mr Newman's land in Anglesea Street, formerly a portion of "Star Butt", the old bull-ring at which bulls were baited was found. It is a massive piece of iron, with an eye let into a horizontal square. There are few of the old natives now living in Ryde who can recollect seeing it used in baiting.

(*Isle of Wight Observer 25 March 1865*)

VETERINARY SERVICES

Mr John Vickers Blake, M.R.C.V.S., was Ryde's most famous veterinary surgeon, his father and grandfather before him were vets in Somerset. His skill at diagnosing animal complaints became widely known throughout the Island and farmers used to say he had only to sniff the breath of an ailing cow to spot the trouble immediately and supply the right treatment. There weren't many drugs available in those days so he had to depend on a more natural method of healing and a great deal of common sense. On occasions Queen Victoria requested his services at Osborne. Mr Blake established an Animal Hospital called 'The Dell' in Rink Road. His son John Cowper Blake followed the same career path.



"This is to certify that I have this day examined all the horses belonging to D B Gibson, Esq., Ashe Farm, Ashe, IW, and find them free from any contagious or infectious disease." (signed) J Cowper Blake, M.R.C.V.S., Ryde, IW (*Isle of Wight County Press* 5 May 1900)

FARM LABOURERS REQUIRED



The farms in the vicinity of Ryde were often advertising for workers. Extra hands were always needed, especially for seasonal work, such as help with ploughing, potato picking, haymaking and harvest.

SITUATIONS VACANT

Wanted a Carter, and Under-Cowman, and a Cowboy. Only those with good characters and thoroughly up to their work should apply to F Wickens, foreman, Seagrove, Seaview. (*Isle of Wight County Press* 8 April 1893)

Man Wanted – to live in old farm-house, work farm when required, wife attend poultry, work for Boy.

Milk-Round – Young man wanted to do milk-round, must be a good milker - Apply No. 440, County Press, Newport. (*Isle of Wight County Press* 21 September 1901)

Mangel Hoers wanted, two or three for five acres, good job - K Urry (*Isle of Wight County Press* 6 June 1903)

Man, young, wanted, able to milk and deliver and make himself generally useful; good reference – Apply to W H Jones, Appley Dairy, Ryde (*Isle of Wight County Press* 25 July 1914)



(With thanks to Isle of Wight Records Office and Ann Barrett for permission to use photographic images)



SITUATIONS VACANT - Man, young, wanted at once to milk and deliver; good milker and early riser – Apply 9 Arthur Street, Ryde. (*Isle of Wight County Press* 27 June 1914)

MILK! MILK!! MILK!!!

**OF THE
FINEST QUALITY**

supplied by

JAMES SPENCER,

WESTRIDGE FARM, NEAR RYDE.

A NUMBER of Samples of Milk were recently sent by the Police to Mr. Otto. Hehner, Public Analyst for the County. Amongst them was a Sample from the Westridge Farm Dairy, which was reported by the Analyst to be of the

FINEST QUALITY.

**New Milk brought to Ryde twice a day,
FOURPENCE PER QUART.**

New-Laid Eggs and Fresh Butter supplied daily.

(Advert - *Isle of Wight Observer* 2 July 1881)

(With thanks to Isle of Wight Records Office for permission to use Island milking image)

The milkmen of Ryde, emulating their comrades of the Metropolis, have this week raised the price of milk to the extent of a penny per quart.

(*Hampshire Telegraph and Sussex Chronicle* 18 September 1875)

NEW MILK FROM HAYLANDS FARM 4d per quart, sent twice a day to any part of the town.

(*Isle of Wight Times* 8 January 1880)

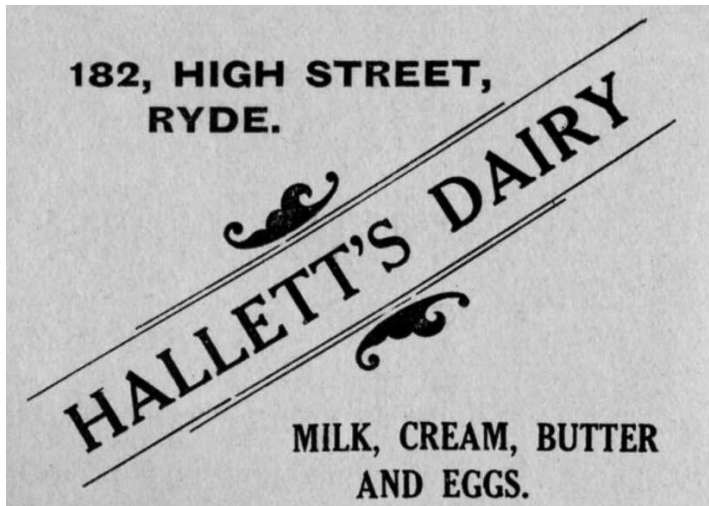
Accident - On Thursday morning a boy named Harris, whose parents reside in Edward Street, was on his way to school, when he ran in front of Mr Stainer's milk cart in St John's Road, and was knocked down, receiving such injuries that he had to be taken to the Infirmary.

(*Isle of Wight Observer* 2 August 1884)

W Cass, Dairyman, Whitefield and Upton Dairies, Ashey. New milk, cream and new-laid eggs, supplied twice daily to any part of Ryde. All orders personally attended to.

(*Isle of Wight County Press* 21 September 1901)

MORE MILK



Mr Walter Russell who has purchased the old established business, Stainer's Dairy, has delivered milk in the town from Smallbrook Farm for upwards of forty years.

(Isle of Wight Times 27 December 1928)

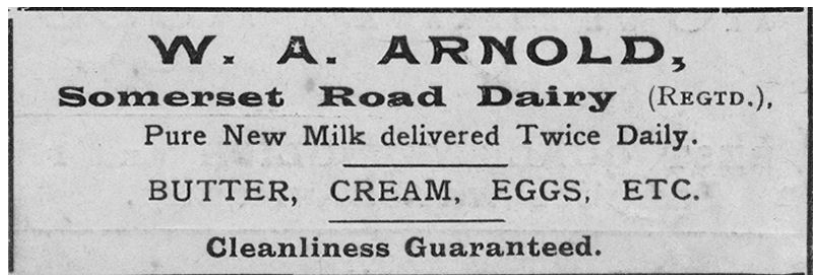
One victim of the great storm was Whitefield farm, Ashey, which faced a desperate situation when power failures made it impossible to milk a dairy herd of 58. The outlook was grim for the farm and the cattle, until a neighbour stepped in with generators. The cows were milked but the delay caused mastitis in some of the animals.

(Isle of Wight County Press 23 October 1987)

(Hallett's Advert - Moonstone Programme 1921)

MEMORIES OF MILKMAN 1930s and 1950s

Shetland ponies were used to pull the Isle of Wight Creameries Ltd cart around Ryde in the 1930s. The advert on the side of the cart was 'Island milk in sealed cartons'. Their depot was in West Street, telephone number 2153. The ponies were replaced in the 1950s by electric floats. The milkman came round twice a day in the summer to ladle out milk into your jug – there were no fridges in houses! *(Tony Gale)*



(Arnold's Advert - St John's Parish Magazine January 1934)

Our milk was delivered by Miss Taylor who ladled it out of a small churn into mother's milk jug. There were rumours that the milk was stored in the cold store at her brother's undertaker establishment! *(Sally Ouston)*



LOCAL FARMERS

HARDINGSHUTE FARM

Arthur Williams visited his great grandparents John and Rose Nobbs on the farm. He remembers them as left over from a bygone era. Their dress, lifestyle and Great Grandpa's beard had changed so little! The photo, left taken in 1942, shows John and Rose at the farmhouse door, aged 87 and 78 respectively.

(With thanks to Arthur for the family photo)

WEST ASHEY FARM

Leonard Brown farmed at West Ashey for many years and was a well known and much esteemed Island agriculturist. He was a familiar figure at Newport Market, a valued member of the IW Guernsey Cattle Society and a successful breeder of Guernseys for the commercial market. He lived with his invalid sister Clara who died just over two months after his death. She was much beloved within the district, especially among the agricultural community.

(Isle of Wight County Press August 7 November 1935)

MARK PLUMBLEY was a well-known local dairyman for over 40 years and a member of Ryde Dairyman's Association. He is recorded as a dairy farmer at Fern Cottage, Upton Park, Windmill Shute and Long Common, Ashey.

(Isle of Wight County Press 17 February 1940)

COUNTRY PURSUITS

HUNTING - At the meet at Whitefield on Wednesday last there were no less than 67 mounted with a large number of carriages.

(Isle of Wight Observer 25 February 1865)

General Sir H Daly, K.C.B., C.I.E., Master of the Isle of Wight Foxhounds, and Lady Daly entertained the Hunt at dinner on Wednesday at their residence, Ryde House. A large number attended.

(Hampshire Telegraph and Sussex Chronicle Saturday 16 January 1886)



IW FOXHOUNDS - Hounds met at Faircroft, 17 Binstead Road, Ryde, the residence of Colonel E Howard-Brooke, the popular MFP, on Tuesday, when there was a huge crowd of spectators on foot. After the Master and Mrs Howard-Brooke had dispensed hospitality, a move was made to the copse at Quarr Hill, which, however, was drawn blank.

(Isle of Wight Observer 11 January 1913)

SHOOTING - A very beautiful specimen of a cream coloured kestrel Hawk was shot by George Rendell Esq. last week. It has been handed over to Mr F Beazley for preservation.

(Isle of Wight Observer 1 October 1859)

Pigeon and Sparrow shooting took place in a meadow at Play Street, near Ryde on Wednesday last. There were 11 entries at Sparrows; Mr John Cave (Ryde), Mr F Fletcher (Portsmouth), Mr Drayton and Mr Farrell (Ryde) and Mr Boldish (Brading) were winners.

(Isle of Wight Observer 10 March 1860)

The IW Gun Club welcomed visitors from French and Dutch clubs with a garden party and shooting match. The day's activities were followed by a formal dinner at the Royal Victoria Yacht Club, at which Lord Alverstone presided. *(Isle of Wight County Press 11 July 1908)*

There appears to be every possibility that the Ryde Rifle Club, which is in process of formation, will prove a very popular organisation. It is suggested that a range be made on land adjoining St John's Road Railway station. *(Isle of Wight Observer 11 March 1911)*

There was a large attendance at the meeting of the IW Gun Club at Ashey on Wednesday, when Mr E R Ratcliffe and Colonel Rhodes shared the prizes between them.



The miniature rifle range at the IW Gun Club at Ashey is almost as popular amongst the lady visitors as the clay pigeon shooting is to the members. The club has arranged a series of International Shooting matches to take place in the Island this year. As the International meeting coincides with the Review, the many French and Dutch sportsmen will find their visit doubly interesting. The Ryde Pier Company has agreed to frank the French and Dutch visitors on the Pier free of charge. *(Isle of Wight Observer 13 May and 10 June 1911)*

AND FINALLY

Island farmers were being encouraged to buy the latest Rolex watch from Ryde jewellers Bernard Mitchell because of its resistance to mud, dust and water! *(Isle of Wight County Press 1 November 1958)*

(With thanks to Isle of Wight Records Office for permission to use Island photographic images)