

Ryde in the days before the Esplanade railway tunnel was built and when many of today's busy streets were little more than open fields with just a few cottages dotted about, is vivid in the memory of Mrs. Emma Louisa **BARTLETT** of 66 West Street, who celebrated her 100th birthday on Wednesday.

Born at Portsmouth, her parents brought her to Ryde when she was only six weeks old, and she has lived in the town ever since. She recalls the horse-drawn tram which traversed the streets of Ryde between the St. John's Road Railway Station and the pier head before the Esplanade tunnel was opened in July, 1880, to allow trains to run direct from the ferries to Ventnor, and watched the building of the St. John's Road railway bridge, now to be closed for reconstruction. Daniel Street was called "Muddy Lane" with "just a couple of houses in a field. Even High Street had very few shops. In childhood she lived at Swanmore Road and went to West Place School in a cul-de-sac off West Street – now converted into two houses. Between the ages of nine and 14 she spent most of her waking hours in the Ryde Cemetery lodge, where her mother used to work.

Mrs. **BARTLETT** was among the crowds welcoming Queen Victoria at Ryde and East Cowes and joined the gay throngs who piled into trains at St. John's Road Station to travel a mile or so to the colourful Ashley races, which were once the most popular of fixtures on the Island sporting calendar.

A treasured memory is travelling from Ryde to Newport by stage coach when she was a child of about nine or 10. Descending Kite Hill, Wootton, it was the custom of the coachman to sound his horn to alert ostlers at the Sloop Inn who fetched fresh horses so that the delay in changing the teams was reduced to a minimum. Then the coach would climb the long hill and still reach Newport in a total time reputed to be under half an hour. In fact, it was regarded as a more expeditious way of reaching Newport from Ryde than the railway of those days.

Another early memory is of listening at the Theatre Royal, Ryde, to a military band conducted by the great American composer and conductor John Philip **SOUSA**. She also went to see **BARNHAM** and **BAILEY**'s giant circus which "covered the whole of Portsdown Hill."

At the age of 18 she married Mr. Samuel **BARTLETT** at Portsmouth, and they lived at Ryde until his death in 1939. Their only daughter, Emma, wife of Mr. George **LEAL**, by whom she is survived, died many years ago and their only son, Mr. H. C. **BARTLETT**, died in 1953. Mrs. **BARTLETT** has three grandsons, Messrs. E. J., L. R. and R. H. **BARTLETT**, living at Havenstreet, Ryde and Binstead respectively, and two great-grand-sons and two great-grand-daughters, whose ages range from nine to 17.

EARLY TO RISE

Having lived at Eastfield and West Hill Road since her marriage, she moved in 1948 to her present address, where she lives alone. A busy housewife, she rises at about six o'clock every morning to keep her pleasant council flat neat and tidy. "I cannot lie about in bed," she told a "County Press" reporter. She usually retires at about 8.30 p.m. but sometimes is later. Alert and trim, she can recall being ill only once, when she had to go to hospital with scarlet fever as a youngster. With her eyesight not her best faculty, she spends much of her time listening to the radio, particularly news broadcasts, to keep abreast of the world around her.

Stamps and gift schemes are nothing new under the sun. In Mrs. **BARTLETT**'s sitting room is an impressive chiming clock which has been ticking the seconds away without intermission since the day she became its fond owner some 64 years ago. The clock became

her property merely by saving tickets received with her purchases over a period of about a year from the International Stores in High Street, of which she has been a customer ever since the branch was opened soon after her marriage.

The oldest member of Ryde W.R.V.S., Darby and Joan Club, Mrs. BARTLETT would not think of missing the club outings, and regularly attends the weekly meetings at the W.R.V.S. headquarters in Newport Street, preferring to walk there with her great friend, Miss Vera LEGGE, of 90 Arthur Street, who visits her every day for a long chat and does her shopping. Mrs. BARTLETT also attends evening service at Holy Trinity Church.

On Saturday she was an honoured guest at a party given at the W.R.V.S. headquarters by the youth organisations of the Ryde area for elderly residents. She enjoyed the meal and entertainment, and as usual on such occasions joined in the community singing.

On Wednesday Mrs. BARTLETT received her eagerly awaited telegram of congratulations from the Queen, and this was presented to her at a gathering of her family, friends and some Darby and Joan Club members at Shaplands, Union Street, by Alderman R. V. BOURN (deputy mayor), who was accompanied by Mrs. BOURN. Other congratulatory telegrams included one from Alderman E. T. CLEAVER, J.P., and Mrs. CLEAVER (mayor and mayoress).

Earlier in the day Mrs. BARTLETT enjoyed listening to Bing Crosby's rendering of "The bells of St. Mary's" requested by a member of the family and played in the B.B.C. programme "Family Choice."

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