

BEYOND THE GRAVES

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TELEPHONE, POST & COMMUNICATION

Penny Black to Blackberry & Beyond

TELEPHONE



In the early days of telephony, switchboards were operated manually, connecting calls by inserting phone plugs into the appropriate jacks. Women were regarded as the most frequent users of the telephone, but it also enabled women to work as receptionists and operators.

[Source & photograph of operator – Wikipedia]



From 1878 there were 6 or 7 telephone companies on the Isle of Wight who amalgamated in 1889 to form the National Telephone Co Ltd. In 1889 they had 23 subscribers in Ryde. No 1 was the Pier Hotel, others included Hughes & Mullins, Photographers, No 8; the Postmaster, No 13 and F.G. Flux, a Lind Street Accountant on No 16. **[Source BT Archives]**

IW Observer 14 March 1907 - Councillor Hansford took exception to the payment of £33 5s to the National Telephone Company for fire alarms on the public lamps, as he considered them quite unnecessary. Councillor Teague, Chairman of the Fire Brigade Committee, said they had been found to be useful.

MR A. J. BIRD - Mr Bird died in September 1917, aged just 57. He had been in business in the town for 28 years. Described in his obituary, as an optician and photographer of Union Street, he had been known for his smart business

ability. In the early days of the telephone he was one of the first in the Island to manufacture and install the instruments then in vogue, and, as a manipulator of lantern views, there were few, if any, in the Island who had such a large experience. **[Obituary IW Observer 22 September 1917]**



IW County Press 19 Aug 1933 - A new telephone cable was laid across the sea bed from Southsea to Ryde, vastly increasing the volume of calls that could be made between the Island and London.

IW County Press 1 Feb 1936 - The telephone system that served the Ryde area was switched to an automatic system and was seen as the forerunner of the Island network. The switching involved 769 lines and was completed by four men in just three minutes. **[Postcard of the Call Office at 38 Union St., Ryde – Ann Barrett Collection]**

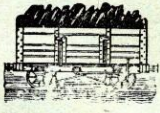
RYDE, I.O.W.			
<i>We, the undermentioned, give special and prompt attention to Telephone Orders.</i>			
TRADE	NAME and ADDRESS	PHONE	OUR SPECIALITY
Art Florists	F. Dunning & Son, 121, High Street	350	Wreaths and Crosses and Cut Flowers For All Occasions.
Auctioneers, Estate Agents and Valuers	Sir Francis Pittis & Son, 60, Union Street	394	Probate, Insurance and Mortgage Valuations (And at Newport, Shanklin and Ventnor.) Established 1780.
Builders and Decorators ...	W. Troughton & Co., 178, High Street and No. 1, St. John's Road	—	Signwriters, High Class Decorators, Plumbers and Hot-Water Engineers.
Butcher (Family)	Rayment, The Hygienic Butcher, 173, High Street ...	105	Purveyor of High Class Meats, English Dressed Lily White Tripe. Personal Attention, Supervision and Prompt Deliveries.
Chemists and Opticians ...	Gibbs & Gurnell, 34, Union Street	249	Dispensing and Photographic Chemists. Sight Testing and All Optical Work.
Cycles and Sports Goods ...	O. V. Mainstone, 9, Union Street	81	Baby Cars, Cycles and Repairs. All Sports Goods and Toys.
Dairymen	Stainer's Dairy (Proprietor: W. Russell), 93, High Street	56	Certified (T.T.) and Grade A Milk. Pure New Milk, Cream, Butter and Eggs Twice Daily.
Dyers and Cleaners ...	Bright & Minns, Ltd., 25, Cross Street	530	Modern Methods at Moderate Charges with Prompt Delivery.

Above - Detail from an undated Guide to Local Tradesmen of Ryde, although not all had telephone numbers. - [RSHG Archive]

Below - J.G. Duffett's number was 362 & H.G. Wolfe's Advert with the unusual telephone number of 187x
[Both from Kelly's Directory 1910]

Telephone No. 362. ESTABLISHED OVER 40 YEARS.

J. G. DUFFETT, JUNR.,
MILLER,
Coal & Coke, Corn, Hay & Straw
MERCHANT,
 AND FORAGE CONTRACTOR,
 6, High Street, Ryde, I.W.



ALL KINDS OF
 AGRICULTURAL AND GARDEN SEEDS.
Chaff Cut & Meal Ground for the Trade.
EVERY DESCRIPTION OF FEEDING STUFFS.



TELEPHONE 187x.

H. G. WOLFE & CO.,
 WHOLESALE AND RETAIL
Fish Curers & Poulterers,
 115, High St., RYDE, I.W.

ALL ORDERS PROMPTLY ATTENDED TO
FRESH FISH DAILY.
 Shops supplied in any part of the Island.

IW Times 23 Feb 1961 - In preparation for a new system to enable subscribers to dial trunk calls just as they dial local calls, a number of telephone codes were changed. Ryde non-coin-box subscribers should dial 100 for the operator. Access will also be given to the speaking clock and weather forecast services

IW Times 24 Aug 1961 - A fault in the submarine cable between Southsea and Ryde cut direct telephone communications between the town and the entire Portsmouth area yesterday afternoon. People attempting to use the dialling code got a high pitched whine. Engineers are still trying to trace the trouble spot.



IW Times 3 May 1962 - Group Routing & Charging Equipment [GRACE] will come into force at Ryde this month to provide the Island's first subscriber trunk dialling system. For trunk calls up to 35 miles, 2d buys 30 seconds.

IW Times 6 Sep 1962 - A new 'Golden Voice' is being sought by the Post Office to Make the recordings for TIM, the speaking clock. On this occasion the owner of the winning voice may be a man or woman. The present speaking clock has been in use since 1936.

IW Times 2 June 1966 - Britain's Housewives made 853,653 telephone calls to the recipe service in the year ended March 31 1966

POST



IW Observer 4 Feb 1865 – MAIL CART - On Thursday evening as the mail was being driven from Ryde to Cowes, and when near Mr Lock's gate at Haylands, the cart was overturned and the driver thrown out. The driver was not hurt, but the mail cart sustained injury causing a long delay to the delivery of letters.

IW Observer 22 January 1881 – On Wednesday morning the snow still continued ... the rural postmen had a bad time of it, and one postman, named Fox, who left for Haven Street on Wednesday, never turned up till about 11 o' clock next morning, with his ears frost-bitten.

IW Observer 28 April 1894 – A Singular Post Office Rule. I called attention to the grotesque Post Office rule which requires postmen to have all unsound teeth extracted. In a recent edition of the '*POSTMANS GAZETTE*' a case is given in which a poor wretch had to have 18 teeth extracted in order to qualify for the magnificent position of rural postman at 17s per week.

Ryde & Ventnor Mercury – 17 Aug 1907 – Stopped in the street and asked why he was an hour and a half late a postman said "It is those picture postcards" On Thursday the Daily News had a leaderette on picture postcards which said the sending of these cards by one friend to another, had become a "fashion".

A greetings postcard (right) by Raphael Tuck & Sons in their 'Remembrance' Series. Greetings cards of all descriptions were Tuck's speciality and were avidly collected, along with postcards of any topic particularly in the Edwardian period.



Stamp Collecting became a popular hobby and First Day Covers were also keenly sought after.



11 June 1841 - Extract from Sir Rowland Hill's Diary - Bokenham called with a packet which arrived from Rochdale address to a Lady at Ryde, Isle of Wight, which having burst was found to contain 1,000 old postage stamps, some black, some red and some cut off envelopes, what strange collections of rubbish Ladies sometimes make. We went together to the Stamp Office and saw Mr. Timpson, the Solicitor, he thinks no harm is intended, and is not inclined to take any steps in the matter. Bokenham, at my request undertook to write to the Postmaster, Ryde, to enquire as to the Lady's respectability.

18 June 1841 - Recd. a note from Bokenham with refce. to the packet of old stamps. the Lady is a Governess and is believed to be assisting one or two persons who are seeing which can produce the greatest number of stamps by a given date. The envelope in question was despatched and sent to Mrs. Seacock of Ryde.

Sources: Diary Extract - Isle of Wight Record Office; Photograph Victorian Wall Letter Box – Hilary Lloyd; Tuck postcard - Shelagh Gaylard Collection; First Day Cover, 1937, from the Ann Barrett Collection



HOW TO BEST THE POST OFFICE.

One of Mr Henniker Heaton's pet grumbles has been the high charge of 2d for registering letters in addition to the 1d for postage. A clerical correspondent of his observed that if you do not stamp a letter at all, the Post Office will take the greatest care to deliver it in order that the necessary two-pence for the unstamped letter may be extracted. By enclosing two stamps you reimburse your correspondent: you save yourself a penny for postage, and you may be sure the Post Office will not lose sight of your letter.

IW Observer 24 June 1893

IW Observer 24 March 1900 – Two local postmen, Messrs Merwood and Goodall, whose faces are as well-known as the Town Hall clock, will shortly leave the Ryde Post Office.

Mr Merwood has given the postman's knock on Ryde's door for no less a period than forty years, and Mr Goodall's conscientious work for 35 years has won him general respect and esteem. Everybody hopes these good old public servants (who must have tramped thousands of miles during their Post

Office career) will live long to enjoy their well-earned rest. [Pillar Box Photo – Hilary Lloyd]

IW Observer 14 March 1907 – POSTMEN'S PETITION – A petition was received from the Ryde Postmen asking the Council to give their consent to the suspension of the 6.15 p.m. delivery of letters on Thursday. It was a half holiday and very little business was done.

IW Observer 11 Feb 1911 – The report that girls would in future be substituted for boys in the Post Office Messenger department was very misleading. It has been decided, as far as possible, only to employ as many boys in the Post Office as can be afterwards absorbed into the adult service. 300 girls are to be employed instead of boys to carry messages inside the Post Office buildings.

IW County Press 10 Feb 1951 – Former Postman's death – The death occurred on Friday week of Mr Harry Alfred Langdon, a retired postman, of 38, Argyll Street. He was 80. He joined the Post office as a telegraph boy, but left to serve with the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders. On completion of his military service in 1903 he returned to work in the Post Office and was awarded the Imperial Service Medal. Mourners included Mr W. Gough (deputy postmaster) representing Mr E.J. Cohu (postmaster).



Postman Gosden - Left – Photograph of Roy Gosden in his first postman's uniform, aged about 17 years, just before WW2. In 1950 he was transferred to Ryde, first of all out on deliveries. He ended his post office career as a postman higher grade in the Ryde sorting office, which was behind the main Union Street Post Office, with the entrance from Union Lane.



Left- His Imperial Service Medal.

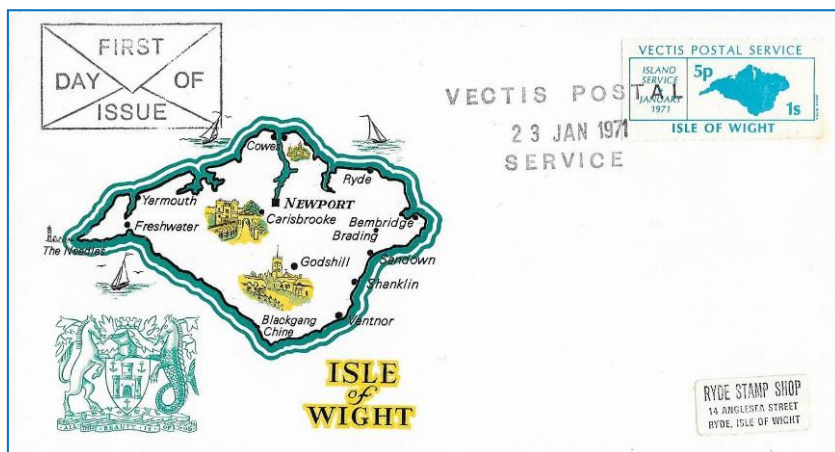
Right - His cap badge.

[Gosden Family Archive]



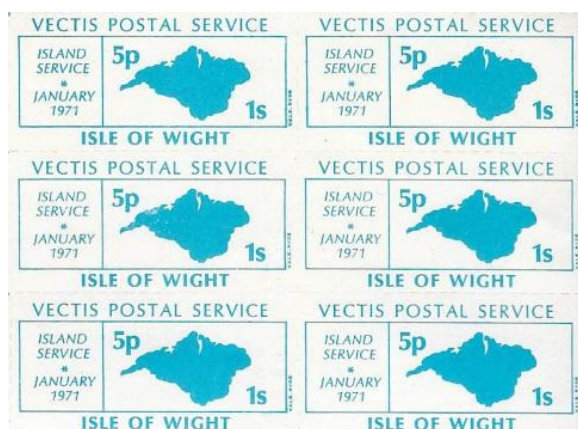
IW County Press 27 June 1914 – The parish Council (Binstead) met on Tuesday, Mr W.E. Lowe presiding. The Post Office authorities wrote that they would not erect an outside telephone callbox without the £6 guarantee. The Council decided to allow the matter to stand over. It was decided to call the attention of the Postmaster to the delay in repairing the pillar box in Kings Road.

VECTIS POSTAL SERVICE



When the Post Office went on strike early in 1971 Mr Arnold and Mr Cawdell, both of Ryde, helped to set up a local Island service, for letters and parcels, with collection points in towns and some villages. Mail was sorted at the Dorset House Hotel, Ryde. In the first week about 500 letters a day were handled, rising, at the peak, to 2,500 a day, with local businesses using the service. The first stamps, blue on white, were rushed out for the start of the service on 23rd January, and second batch, white on green, on 16th February.

'First Day Cover' Envelope Vectis Postal service [Ann Barrett Collection]



Blocks of 'stamps' – Left – 1st issue blue on white.

Right - 2nd Issue white on green 16 Feb 1971. [Hilary Lloyd Collection]



IW Times 11 April 1963 – “It’s all the vogue to give your house a name instead of a number, but it means a headache for the poor old postman” commented Ryde’s Head Postmaster, Mr P.T.Bunnell. Mr Bunnell could understand that “La Maison” sounded better than “47 Gasworks Sidings” he asked people to have a number as well as a name. Said one postman: “This house name lark is enough to make you want to turn it in.”



IW Times 21 January 1964 – Again this year the Post Office used the Vectis Hall, Melville Street, to help with parcel post. [Photo Vectis Hall Tracy Welstead]

Right - Le Philatliste by François Barraud (1929) - [Wikipedia]



IW Times 9 May 1963 – **PHILATELISTS** – A first day cover series for the National Nature Week special stamps, which will be issued on May 16, will be provided by the Post Office. A philatelic bureau is being set up, to provide a central point, the purpose of which, will be to meet the special needs of philatelists.

COMMUNICATION

In 1859 the IW Observer was reporting on the progress of the Electric Telegraph at Ryde. In October Mr Thurlow advocated granting the use of a portion of the Market House to the Telegraph Company at a nominal rent of 5s per year. By the end of the month the Telegraph from Newport had progressed to Havenstreet. The workmen being engaged in laying it by the side of the road about fifteen inches below the surface.

IW Observer 17 Dec 1859 – ELECTRIC TELEGRAPH - The line to Ryde in connection with the International Company is now open for traffic. The office is situated close to the Town Hall, but the clerk resides in Castle-street which is near half a mile off, so on Sunday last, when a man came in from the country and wanted to telegraph in great haste, it took him nearly half an hour before he had accomplished his object.



IW Observer 6 Dec 1862 – NIGHT TELEGRAPH – On Tuesday night some of the Royal Engineers tried several experiments in the north east topmost room of the Royal Eagle Hotel, to test the newly-invented system of telegraphing by night. Communications were sent from the Eagle to the Baltic Tower on the Portsmouth side, on to Portsdown Hill, and vice versa. The lantern used is somewhat similar to a magic lantern.

[Image of the Eagle Hotel courtesy of the IW Record Office]

In 1864 the IW Observer reported that the Telegraph Office was to be moved from the Town Hall to the Pier, necessitating cables being carried over houses and streets, rather than underground. Objectors said it would give a fashionable town a mercantile appearance, without its profits. Mr Gunn considered it one of the necessities of the age.

IW Observer 12 Dec 1908 – DECEMBER FOG – A dense fog enveloped the Solent on Monday evening with the usual result that communication with the mainland was suspended from 3 o'clock in the afternoon until midnight. Numbers of

people who wished to be in Ryde found themselves detained in Portsmouth and a similar large number in Ryde.

IW Observer 12 July 1913 – Aeroplanes will soon be “common objects of the sea shore” to dwellers in Ryde. The ease with which they are manoeuvred suggests the inauguration of an aerial service to Portsmouth as an alternative to the Solent Tunnel.

IW Observer 19 Feb 1916 – The Isle of Wight's greatest need is uninterrupted communication with the mainland. This can only be brought about by a sea tunnel. [Early photo of Ryde Airport - Ann Barrett Collection]



IW County Press 18 March 1939 – The death took place at a local nursing home on Friday week, of Mr John Thomas Mursell, of 2 Winton Street, at the age of 70. A native of the town he is believed to be one of only two Englishmen to have received the Chinese equivalent of the Victoria Cross, awarded to him while serving in China on behalf of the Eastern Telegraph and International Communication Companies. By sending an important cable he saved a situation during the war with the Manchurians.

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