

# BEYOND THE GRAVES

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## FIRE & RESCUE – “READY WHEN WANTED”

This issue is dedicated to the men of the Fire & Rescue Emergency Service and thanks are due to Damon Corr for his kind assistance. [Damon is the author of two books on the history of the IW Fire Service – ‘Ready When Wanted’ and ‘From Victoria to the Armistice’ written to raise money for the Fire Fighters Charity]

**Badge worn by all fire services 18 August 1941 - April 1948.**

The postcard below is Ryde Fire Brigade with their manual engine outside the fire station in Brunswick Street [now Station Street], circa 1905. Henry Frederick Jolliffe, later Chief Officer, far left. Roy Brinton Collection.



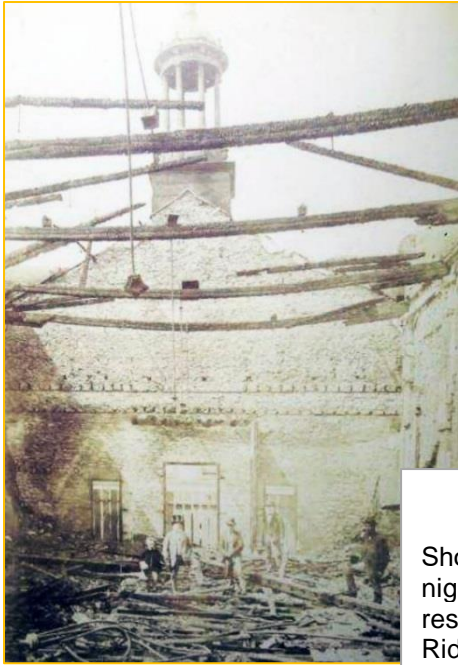
Second Office Robert James White, dated 1906. This portrait now hangs in Ryde Fire Station Mess Room. This image & badges Damon Corr & IWFBF.

This photograph right of Ryde Fire Brigade was taken after October 1908 when the steam fire engine arrived. Captain Sapsworth is partially hidden behind the ladder apparatus third from right. Second officer Robert James White can be glimpsed in the background, sixth from right. Damon Corr & IWFBF.

**IW County Fire Badge 1948 – 1986.**



The aftermath of the fire at George Street Congregational Chapel in 1870. Damon Corr & IWFBF.



The IW Observer reported, 30 April 1870, that at 1 am on Friday morning PS Breary was passing the Congregational Chapel in George Street when *'his olfactory organs were disagreeably disturbed'*. Peering through the keyhole he saw the interior ablaze. The alarm was raised and within ten minutes Henry Buckett and his crew arrived.

It was clear that the building could not be saved so efforts were directed towards saving the nearby school and other buildings. When the roof fell in with a heavy crash the fire burnt itself out. The building was insured with the Sun Fire Office for £1,000 and the organ for a further £300. The safe containing documents survived.

Mr James, the Union Street photographer, took several photographs that were available from his studio. The paper said that there may have been inaccuracies in their report. Indeed, it seems there were as Henry Buckett's letter published in the same paper of 7 May 1870 [below] indicates. It also highlights the fact that Ryde's water supply was turned off at night.

#### Isle of Wight Observer 11 January 1868

Shortly after 12 o'clock on Saturday night the thatched roof of the residence of George Spencer Ridgway, known as Primrose Cottage, at the top of West-street, was discovered to be on fire. The firemen and engine, under the direction of Mr. John Langdon was soon on the spot, but it was nearly 2 o'clock before water could be procured. Mr. Langdon reports that if he could have procured a supply when they arrived, most of the property would have been saved.

#### FIRE AT CONGREGATIONAL CHAPEL.

To the Editor of the Isle of Wight Observer.

Sir,—Having noticed in your contemporary of to day's date an account of the above fire, I beg leave to correct a few mistakes which appear there. First, as to the gear: we had one engine, not two, as stated; one hose reel (not carts) and fire escape. As to water, your contemporary states we had that which remained in the pipes—I suppose he means from the previous evening. Such was not the case, as I myself turned on the water within three minutes after the alarm, and when I reached the chapel I had sufficient water from the low pressure to play over the parapet of the building; and soon after that the high pressure, and EIGHTY-FOUR THOUSAND gallons of water was used, not four hundred, as stated.

I am, Sir, your's, &c.,

HENRY BUCKETT.

Town-hall, Ryde, May 5th, 1870.

Fire at Appley Towers  
22 March 1904.  
Damon Corr & IWFBF.



In March 1904 fire broke out in the upper rooms of Capt. Hutt's residence, Appley Towers. The Ryde fire brigade were called at 2.40 pm and arrived, under Capt. Sapsworth at 3 pm, by which time the fire had a good hold, but their ladders were too short.

Capt. Sapsworth soon called on other Island brigades for assistance, Sandown arrived first, followed by Shanklin and Newport. Water pressure was low so the turncock shut off supplies to other parts of the town to increase it and a brisk westerly wind hampered their efforts.

A large crowd gathered and some helped remove the contents including a Gainsborough painting. The fireman tackled the blaze from inside and by 7 pm had it under control. They saved the ballroom and the new clock tower, but the upper floor was destroyed with damage estimated at £3,000.

The mansion was not, apparently, insured. The coastguard and the police had also given valuable assistance. IW Observer 26 March 1904

#### Isle of Wight Observer 26 March 1904

The cool way in which Captain Hutt took the destruction of his residence by fire, on Tuesday, caused some surprise to the onlookers, especially when he lighted a cigar and remarked "One seems to want a smoke when by one's own fire-side."

To Surveyor's Salary .....	50	0	0
To Highway Committee, Wages .....	139	0	0
Quarterly Bills ..	176	19	1
To Watering Streets .....	63	1	9
To Drains .....	357	13	6
To Ryde Gas Company .....	214	3	9
To New Fire Engines—Mr. Jon. Dashwood	126	19	6
To Repairing ditto—Mr. Jon. Dashwood ..	3	6	9
" Messrs. Woods .....	1	13	6
To Pavement Account .....	232	15	0
To Wall for Mr. Rendall .....	13	0	0
To Expense of Accident to Window .....	1	12	0

Captain Sidney Charles  
Sapsworth,  
Ryde Fire Brigade  
1897 – 1910  
Damon Corr & IWFBF



Detail from the Town of Ryde Balance Sheet – 8 September 1852.  
New Fire Engines – Mr. Jon. Dashwood £126 19s 6d  
Then to Mr. Dashwood and Messrs. Woods for repairing the same,  
£3 6s 9d and £1 13s 0d respectively!  
Damon Corr & IWFBF

On a Wednesday morning in August 1908 a rick belonging to Mr Thompson caught fire. This type of fire was very difficult to deal with and the fire brigade often had to prevent flames reaching other ricks or property. In this case the rick had to be pulled to pieces and it was well into the afternoon before the fire brigade could stand down. IW Observer 29 August 1908.

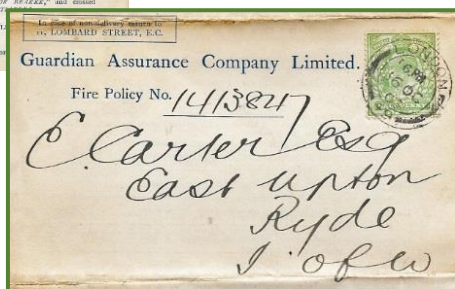
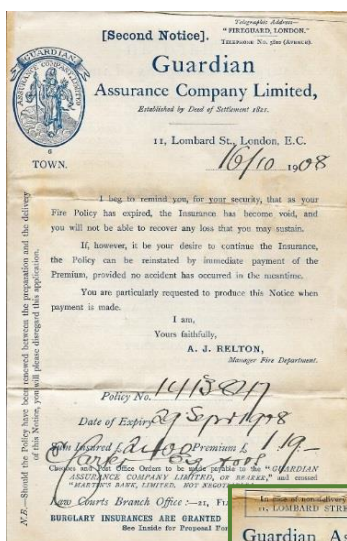


Postcard of the rick fire at  
Haylands, 26 August 1908.  
Roy Brinton Collection.



The IW Observer of 30 October 1909 reported on the flooding at Ryde tunnel after days of heavy rain. The railway company's pumps could not deal with the situation so they called in the local fire brigades. Ryde, Sandown and Shanklin sent their steam fire engines which each 'could throw 300 gallons a minute, but they made slow work'. By the Friday they had only reduced the depth by two feet. 'The spectacle of three small fire engines attempting to soak up such a volume provided entertainment for a large number of spectators'.

Postcard Roy Brinton Collection.



Edward Carter, of Puckpool House and East Upton, who died in 1931, insured his property. In 1908 the Guardian Assurance Company sent him this reminder as his fire policy no 14138217 had expired about three weeks previously. For a premium of £1 19s he would be insured for £2,400.  
RSHG archive.

IW Observer 6 June 1885

**FIRE BRIGADE PRACTICE.**—On Wednesday evening the members of the Fire Brigade, under Capt. Buckett, had a practice with the hose, reel and fire escape. There was a good pressure on the mains, and the Brigade were able to send the jets of water to the top of the Town Hall tower, and wash the face of the clock. The Brigade then proceeded to the Theatre, and thoroughly washed the front of that building, sending a jet of water quite over the highest part to the door of the Crown Hotel, which was considered very satisfactory. Fortunately our Fire Brigade do not have many opportunities of displaying their skill, but it is satisfactory to know that in case of emergency they are in a position to effectually deal with fire.



IW County Press [10 June 1933] carried a detailed report on the fire at Ryde Town Hall. It was discovered in the roof at lunchtime, Ryde Fire Brigade under Captain Jolliffe arrived and soon after 1.30 pm called on the Sandown Brigade [who arrived in 12 minutes] and the Newport Brigade. Water poured from 7 jets, but the flames took hold leaping high into the air. 2<sup>nd</sup> officer Williams and firemen Kemp and Mursell were in imminent danger of being trapped.

The Corporation silver was quickly rescued and volunteers salvaged items such as Egyptian mummies and stuffed birds which were piled on the pavements. The police marshalled the gathering crowds and closed streets. By 2.30 the whole roof was ablaze and by 3 pm had fallen in.

The Brigade stood by until the following day. The organ installed in 1897 and valuable paintings were destroyed. Damage was estimated at £15 – £20,000. Princess Beatrice sent a telegram and the fire brigade won praise for their actions.

### HENRY FREDERICK JOLLIFFE Half-a-Century of Public Service

The Borough of Ryde had lost, after nearly 50 years of conscientious service, a most valued member of the Fire Brigade in the late Mr Henry Frederick Jolliffe, who passed away suddenly on Sunday at the age of 71. [He] served as Captain of the Ryde Fire Brigade, having joined as a probationer fireman in 1887 ... he was the oldest serving fireman in the country ... He never missed a drill, or an opportunity of inspecting his engine and equipment ... He won open competitions in many meetings in the South of England. His working life was that of a carpenter and joiner, employed for 38 years on Ryde Pier, retiring in 1928. His one hobby lay in gardening. His first wife being Miss M. Harvey of Ryde, whom he married in 1889, three sons and a daughter survive. The second marriage took place in 1929 with Miss Peck of Newport.

Obituary IW Times 14 May 1937



### Isle of Wight Observer 16 May 1868

**Caution to Smokers** – On Thursday evening, some little alarm was created on the pier by the discovery of a smouldering fire, caused by some person having thrown a lighted fusee between the boards. By the prompt way in which water was poured upon it, the fire was soon extinguished. Smoking on the pier is contrary to the company's bye-laws, but even if these are infringed, smokers could surely take the trouble to throw their fusees into the water.

Poster of 1941 and photo of Chief Officer Max Heller [left] with Mayor H.W.O. Weeks during Ryde's War Weapons Week, December 1940.

Both Damon Corr & IWFBF



**IW Observer 29 January 1887** – Mr Tharle went into the Eagle Bar, placing his bucket of tar on the floor. It boiled over, flames leapt to the ceiling. The intense heat cleared the bar, Mrs Bartlett, wife of the landlord, had her hair scorched. Luckily the landlord turned off the gas supply. Bottles of spirits on the shelves burst. Captain Buckett and the brigade were there in 5 minutes, but a young man called Sibley had nearly extinguished the flames by throwing sacks over them.

Image of The Eagle Tavern – Kevin Mitchell.

**Isle of Wight Observer 7 September 1918**

**Hedge on fire** – On Tuesday, at High Park Road, a tall hedge was observed to be on fire, probably the result of a stray match carelessly dropped. By the exertions of inhabitants in the immediately vicinity and visitors the fire was soon beaten out and the fowls and chicken in the adjoining field escaped injury.



Taken opposite the Fire Station this image shows the new fire engine that arrived in 1925. Chief officer Jolliffe is front right. Damon Corr & IWFBF



The Ryde brigade won the Couldrey Cup at an IW Fire Brigade Federation competition held at Big Meade, Shanklin 14 July 1938.

Damon Corr & IWFBF

**IW County Press 18 February 1939**

**Fireman's Dance**

Over 200 attended a dance promoted by the fire brigade in the Commodore ballroom. Music by Bert Dewey's orchestra. The ballroom had been decorated by fireman Brown with firemen's hats, belts and axes, with streamers overhead. The Couldrey Challenge Cup was on the platform.

**Isle of Wight Times 7 March 1968**

**Scotch Mist** – A hoaxer dialled 999 and brought two appliances from Ryde Fire Brigade to the Scotch Wool Shop in the High Street on Saturday evening. This is one of several recent malicious fire calls which are the subject of police enquiries.

**Isle of Wight Times 4 January 1968**

**Old Flames** – Ryde firemen quickly dealt with a chimney blaze at the old people's homes, St. John's Road, on Monday afternoon.

**'Operation Clean-Up' Saves  
Pork Butcher's Bacon**

Fire was discovered on Sunday afternoon at Barnett's by the owner's son. The fire brigade used breathing apparatus to quickly put out the fire in the deep freeze cabinet, almost all the other stock was condemned so was sold at half-price. Around 20 staff and friends rallied round to get the shop ready for opening on Monday. Mr & Mrs Barnett expressed thanks to the fire brigade.

**Hearty  
Christmas Greetings**  
To All Our Customers  
FROM  
**R. C. BARNETT**  
The Cooked Meat, Bacon and  
Poultry Specialist

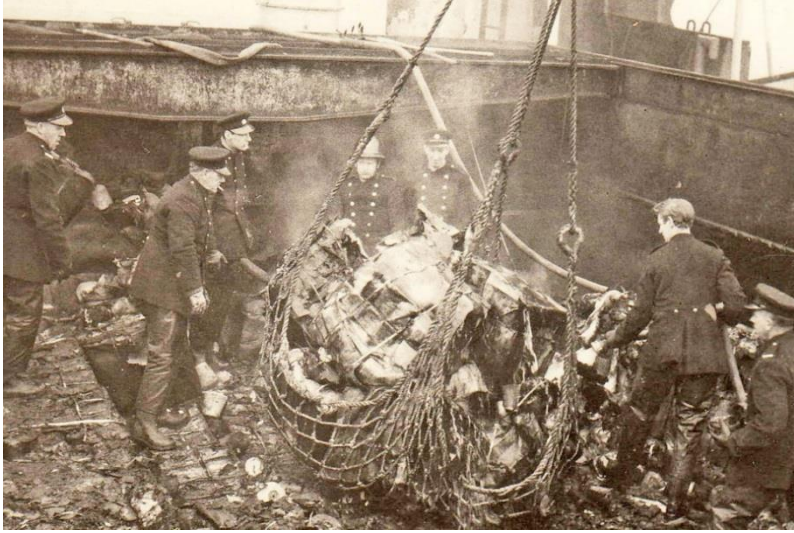
We proudly present for your Christmas enjoyment the Best

**ISLE OF WIGHT**  
Turkeys, Geese, Chicken  
and Ducks

With Barnett's Service and Competitive Prices  
THE BEST IS ALWAYS CHEAPEST

**R. C. BARNETT**  
29 HIGH STREET, RYDE Phone: Ryde 2468

Advert IW Times 18 December 1952



Len Williams Ryde Station Officer on board the MV Saale.

Thank you to Arthur Williams for these photographs and other information about Len's career which can be found in the RSHG archive.



IW County Press 14 June 1969 reported on the fire at Holy Cross, Binstead, which began in the organ loft. Over 30 firemen from Ryde and Newport fought the blaze which destroyed the organ, ruined the new floor, and caused an estimated £40,000 worth of damage. The church plate survived in the safe. Photograph below Arthur Williams.



Cotton bales from MV Saale, which beached at Wootton, in 1967, came adrift and could cause a fire hazard if found and stored incorrectly, warned a fire service official. One washed up on the Ryde Hovercraft slipway and an appliance had to be called when it caught fire.

IW County Press 15 April 1967

In May 1968 the Trinity House cutter '*Vigia*' caught fire off Ryde. Lifeboats attended and the fire was nearly out before firemen arrived from Cowes on the '*Tantalus*'. The following year things were more serious.

Arriving back at Ryde Pier Head one January morning the '*Vigia*' caught fire again, this time with a large quantity of fuel on board. While the crew went for help two appliances from Ryde, with 12 men under Fire Officer Len Williams arrived at the Pier Gates. Unfortunately, the vehicles were too large to get on the Pier so the men took their equipment up by tram, Williams, himself, going up in a passing ambulance. While this was amusing, the situation was very dangerous and the brave men went on board to fight the blaze despite the risk of explosion. When the fire was put out it was seen that the vessel was nearly destroyed.

IW Times 9 May 1968 & 16 January 1969



A serious fire at Upton House [above] was prevented from spreading to Robeck Farmhouse, the home of Mr & Mrs Gaskin, by the efforts of nine appliances, from Ryde, Newport, Bembridge, Cowes and East Cowes and over 30 firemen. The roof and upper floors of the old house were destroyed, the property, empty at the time, had recently been sold.

IW County Press 11 September 1981

Photo Roy Brinton Collection