

# Ryde (Short) Historic Pub Walk



IW Branch CAMRA



**RYDE**  
Town Council  
Isle of Wight

*A short route to take in a small sample of the wealth of history and culture that abounds in Ryde, reflected in its drinking houses. This circular walk takes in the centre of the town looking at sites old and new, historic and cutting edge in a vibrant and evolving town built on a legacy of amazing history.*

# Contents

## An Introduction to Ryde

Ryde developed throughout the latter half of the 18th century, the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century as a popular seaside resort and important gateway to the Isle of Wight.

The townscape is of considerable historic interest with its Regency and Victorian buildings and the fine monuments such as All Saints Church (designed by Gilbert Scott), and the Town Hall, built in 1829, which is held as one of the finest buildings of its type on the south coast.

Up until 1814, the advent of the pier, ferry passengers were brought across the sands at low tide (around ½ mile) by horse and cart. Today the fast catamaran service to Portsmouth takes around 20 minutes and is serviced by a train along the pier. There is also a hovercraft service to Southsea, which takes 9 minutes.

Open spaces include Western Gardens, Eastern Gardens, the Boating Lake and Vernon Square Garden, which has been restored to its original Georgian design. The town also has a cinema, a bowling alley, a thriving Arts Festival, a Carnival, a Mardi Gras and Pride event, as well as miles of beautiful sandy beaches.

Ryde is not just about history; it is about trends, fashion and quirkiness, for example where else would you see a barbershop with a bar and a classic motorcycle in the window (The Gambling Man opposite St Thomas Square at the top of Union Street)? For more about Ryde please make use of the following links:

- Ryde Social Heritage Group has an excellent website with lots of information about the rich history of the town. Go to [www.rydecemetery.org.uk](http://www.rydecemetery.org.uk)
- The Ryde Branch of the Isle of Wight Society for architecture and buildings (contact 01983 280310).
- The Historic Ryde Society can be found in the Ryde District Heritage Centre in the basement of the Victoria Arcade in Union Street – a treasure trove of displays about Ryde, also housing an Ice Well dating from the 1800s. For more information please go to [www.historicrydesociety.com](http://www.historicrydesociety.com).



## The Route Described

The following pages describe the various buildings and sites that we shall be talking about on our route.

## Recommended Reading

For more detail see The Pubs of Ryde by Kevin Mitchell, Ryde Social History Group <http://rshg.org.uk/>, Historic Ryde Society <http://historicrydesociety.com/history/>

## The Isle of Wight branch of CAMRA – ([www.wightwash.org.uk](http://www.wightwash.org.uk))

CAMRA – The Campaign for Real Ale, was formed over 40 years ago and has since become one of Europe's most successful pressure groups with almost 200,000 members. The Island branch holds social meetings, surveys pubs and publishes a quarterly magazine, Wightwash.

## The Brewery History Society – ([www.breweryhistory.com](http://www.breweryhistory.com))

Formed in 1972 to research and record the history of brewing, the BHS has around 500 individual and corporate members who enjoy a range of visits and meetings throughout the year. The Society publishes Journals, Newsletters and a range of books

## Walk Compilers

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Michael Lilley (Town Mayor), Paul & Sheila Sheldon (IW CAMRA & Ryde residents)

## The Castle Inn, High Street

First opened in 1850 by Thomas Vanner, who operated the Ryde – Newport stagecoach, the castle was a point of pilgrimage for Gales beers in the days of the Horndean brewery. The Castle remains a popular town centre pub with two levels in the bar floor area; a handy place to meet, park or catch the bus, but do not miss its wonderful etched windows, which have made it a Grade II listed Building.



## The Star Inn & Star Street

Just up the road, turning right when exiting the Castle, at no. 40 High Street, is The Star Inn, on the corner of Star Street built in 1873 just above Sweetman's brewery (George Street corner), replaced by the Commodore Cinema building in 1936.

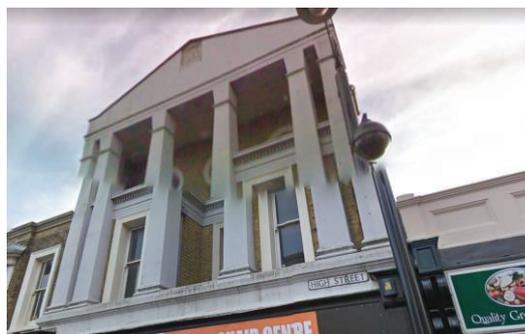
The Commodore included a large auditorium with a stage and a balcony where acts such as Max Miller, Arthur English, Lonnie Donegan, Dusty Springfield, Lulu, The Searchers, as well as Dave, Dee, Dozy, Beaky, Mick & Titch could be seen in the 50s and 60s. It also had an upstairs ballroom and a maze-like basement of dressing rooms. The theatre part now serves as a bingo hall.

## Odd Fellows Hall

The imposing building opposite Star Street is the Loyal East Medina Lodge of the Independent Order of Odd Fellows Hall, opened in 1881.

## Eagle Brewery Tap

There is a narrow cut between nos. 49 & 50 High Street, called Warwick Place, the brewery was here, just behind the High Street.



## St Marys Church and Convent

The distinctive architecture of St Mary's Church (or to give it its full title: Church of the Sorrowful and Immaculate Heart of Mary), built in 1846, is attributed to Joseph Hansom (of Hansom Cab fame) as its designer, and was one of the founding churches of the diocese. Inside the church is a Pugin alter piece.

The church was annexed to St Therese Convent and the Presentation Convent School, now closed. If you take the passage to the side of the church, it leads round to a back door, where people would ring the bell to receive alms.

## High Street Pubs & Temperance

Ryde High Street had a string of pubs, including the Eagle Hotel at no 44 (look for the architectural evidence and eagle still surmounting the building), White Swan at no. 49, the Oak at no. 70, Rose and Crown at no. 116, Bugle Inn at no. 87, the Odd Fellows Arms at no. 114, Atlantic Hotel at no. 119, and a few more. Further details can be found in Kevin Mitchell's excellent book, Ryde Pubs.

Ryde also had a strong Temperance Movement, who bought and enlarged the Free Wesleyan Chapel at no. 131 High Street in 1872 to serve as their Hall, housing around 200 people. Later, in 1910, the use changed again to become the Bijou Cinema, which showed silent films with piano accompaniment. The cinema closed in 1928.

## St Johns Road

Turning into St Johns Road, a few yards down on the left, on the corner of Player Street is the unusually styled Swans Nest, now closed, but once in CAMRA's Good Beer Guide for its Real Ale bar in Salvatore's Italian restaurant, now sadly closed.



There is evidence of other former public houses too as we pass down St John's Road, including The Bedford Hotel at no. 13, New Inn at no 45 and opposite our next destination, the Terminus Hotel, formerly railway offices, now derelict (closed 1980s). Note how the road rises above old windows; when the bridge was built the cellars were filled to support the new road!



## The Railway

Noted for its Ginkgo Biloba tree in the pub garden, this community pub c regularly features at the top of IW CAMRA's Pub of the Year Awards and in the annual autumn Beer, Buses and Historic Walks event as well as in Real Ale lovers' diaries for its beer festivals staged through the year.



## Amazing Monkton Street



Forming a main North-South artery between the seafront and St John's Road Station, Monkton Street is the conduit for access to many industrial depots in the streets branching off to each side, some no longer there, like the sweet factory in Winton Street now replaced with Tyro House, and the Bus Museum is now housed in the old bus depot in Park Road – and well worth a visit!

There are some notable buildings, too, in Monkton Street, some of them obvious for their architectural style, but the Grade II listed cottages at nos. 21 & 22, built around 1840 are not so obvious.



Monkton Street had its share of pubs too, with the Rajah Brook at no. 103, Victoria Tavern at no. 90, Queens Hotel at no. 75, the Solent Inn at no. 7 (still open), and the Simeon just around the corner in the street of its name.

Alongside Monkton Street runs Monktonmead Brook, which originates from Bloodstone and Eaglehead copses, off the Brading Down. The brook is subject to flooding and much money and effort has been spent over the years to control this. The Brook disappears underground before it reaches Simeon Street to be pumped through the centre of Ryde exiting via a concrete outfall at the beach (ref <https://www.islandrivers.org.uk/the-rivers/east-wight/monktonmead-brook/>).

## The Solent



At the other end of Monkton Street is The Solent Inn, with its ornate cast iron balcony, it is difficult to picture that it was once on the shoreline!

Another onetime serial winner of IW CAMRA's Pub of the Year competition, the then landlord, known affectionately as *Andy Windows*, used to refer to his casks of ales as *his babies*. Beware - the public bar slopes downhill alarmingly, so it's not that you've had too much!

Note Monkton Café and Gallery, where there are regular exhibitions the work of local artists and celebrations of Monkton Village past and present.

## Simeon Arms

Next street down, in the unlikely back-street setting of Simeon Street is the Tardis-like Simeon Arms with its annexed function hall to the rear, where it has hosted some of Britain's darts champions.

The pub is immensely popular with the local community, who come to participate in various leagues including shove ha'penny, darts, crib, bar billiards and pool, and petanque on the enormous floodlit terrain in summer. You can always expect to find a local ale.



## The Royal George Memorial

Turning left, out of the Simeon, then right into Cornwall Street, left again along The Strand takes you back to the end of Monkton Street and The Royal Gardens extending opposite the junction through to the Esplanade. On the Esplanade side of the Gardens is an often-overlooked memorial to the Royal George.

Information about the tragic loss of The Royal George on 29<sup>th</sup> August 1782 in the Solent, off Ryde, following her valiant career can be found on Isle of Wight Memorials website <http://www.isle-of-wight-memorials.org.uk/others/ryderoyalgeorge2.htm>, and the following poem sums the story up:

### LOSS OF THE ROYAL GEORGE - by W. Cowper (1731-1800)

*Toll for the brave—  
The brave! that are no more:  
All sunk beneath the wave,  
Fast by their native shore.*

*Eight hundred of the brave,  
Whose courage well was tried,  
Had made the vessel heel  
And laid her on her side;*

*A land-breeze shook the shrouds,  
And she was overset;  
Down went the Royal George,  
With all her crew complete.*

*Toll for the brave—  
Brave Kempenfelt is gone,  
His last sea-fight is fought,  
His work of glory done.*

*It was not in the battle,  
No tempest gave the shock,  
She sprang no fatal leak,  
She ran upon no rock;*

*His sword was in the sheath,  
His fingers held the pen,  
When Kempenfelt went down  
With twice four hundred men.*

*Weigh the vessel up,  
Once dreading by our foes,  
And mingle with your cup  
The tears that England owes;*

*Her timbers yet are sound,  
And she may float again,  
Full charg'd with England's thunder,  
And plough the distant main;*

*But Kempenfelt is gone,  
His victories are o'er;  
And he and his eight hundred  
Must plough the wave no more.*

## Bellevue Road / Nelson Place/ Castle Street

The former Nelson Tavern still stands on the corner of Bellevue Road. When sold in the mid 19C the pub had a brewery. There was also the Hand in Hand at no 8 Nelson Place, Belgrave Hotel at no. 2 Nelson Street, Wheatsheaf at no. 28 Nelson Street.

Turning right to walk along Castle Street until Dover Street, there were several small public houses along its length. As you come to the junction with Dover Street, looking across to where East Street meets The Strand, stands a wedge-shaped building marking the corner, appropriately named The Flat Iron.



### Ryde Castle Hotel

Overlooking Ryde Esplanade and Harbour with views across the Solent. The majestic castellated building is claimed to have been commissioned by Henry VIII to defend The Spithead, Solent and Southampton Water from invasion by the Spanish. It was actually built as a private residence for the Dashwood family (builders of much of Ryde) in 1833. Note the impressive gateway still in existence on Dover Street.

This was the venue used to relaunch the IW branch of CAMRA in 1991.

### The Royal Esplanade

Built in 1867, the hotel expanded with the building of a new wing in 1873 on land formerly occupied by a brewery run by a Mr Clements. Today the hotel is connected through ownership to the Bass Heritage Museum and Brewery in Burton-on-Trent and often features Museum beer in their very comfortable Harrys Bar.



### Marine Bar

Named the Marine, Shipping, Yachting and Commercial Hotel in 1875, this large establishment has some interesting period features, both inside and out.



### The Pier and the Pavilion

The first pier was opened in 1814, facilitating the ferry service that had started in 1805. For many years the Schneider trophy used the pier as a start and finish line. In the 70s the British Rail ferry service used to serve Courage Directors on board, from hand pump!

Built 1927 using cast-iron stock patterns supplied by McFarlanes of Glasgow, the Pavilion is now a rare example of seaside cast iron architecture.



The Pavilion was a chosen venue for the then radical Campaign for Real Ale IW branch beer festivals in the late 70's early 80's.



### King Lud

Built on the site of the *Original Inn* in Brickwood's favoured Tudor styling in the early 1900's, the King Lud has recently been reborn as a modern beer house and is one of the few Island pubs with 2 draught Ciders on offer.

## Iconic Union Street

Round the corner from the King Lud is Union Street, Ryde's principal street. A street in which no less than the crab-claw can opener was invented! A street which, at the instigation of local Councillor and former mayor, Wayne Whittle, turns into a massive charity water slide once a year, that is so popular with local dignitaries willing to be humiliated as they are seen slipping and sliding down the massive crowd lined slope into the foam splash bath at the bottom that you have to book well in advance if you fancy a go!

No 24 Union Street, in its former guise of Joe Deflo's, was owned by local (Gurnard) celebrity rock star Mark King (out of Level 42), now an Artisan bistro serving such wonderous delights as Earl Grey IPA! The famous Spencer Inn was at nos. 30-31, and Chas Colenutt was brewing at no. 47 before it became Colenutt Inn. In the mid-19C there was a 5 quarter brewery in Union Road (runs parallel to the east of Union Street) run by the Jacob family. Yelf's Hotel (no. 54), an important stalwart in the early days of the IW CAMRA branch, still flourishes with popular vigour. The Royal Squadron was at no.70 and the Redan, now the Kasbah, at no. 77.

## S Fowler & Co



At the top of Union Street, with a bus stop right outside the door (as if to order) of the old department store, now Wetherspoon, S Fowler and Co. This was the first of the chain to be set up on the Island, and remains a magnet for visitors and locals alike – so popular, it's a pity they did not have the foresight to take the whole premises and do the full works with a 'spoons hotel!

The name Fowler has a special resonance in the IW branch of CAMRA, as one of their founding member characters was fondly known as *Boathook Fowler*. He came from Ryde, and it is with this association that the branch celebrates the perpetuation of this name.

## Crown Hotel

Further on up the hill is St Thomas Square, with the Gambling Man opposite, a modern venue that fuses being a barber, fashion shop, outfitters and bistro bar (it also partakes in the annual Beer & Buses festival).

At the top of the square is the Crown Commercial and Family Hotel, now just known as the Crown Hotel. It was built in 1831 and had a working brewery until the mid-19C, run by James Woodrow.



## The High Street

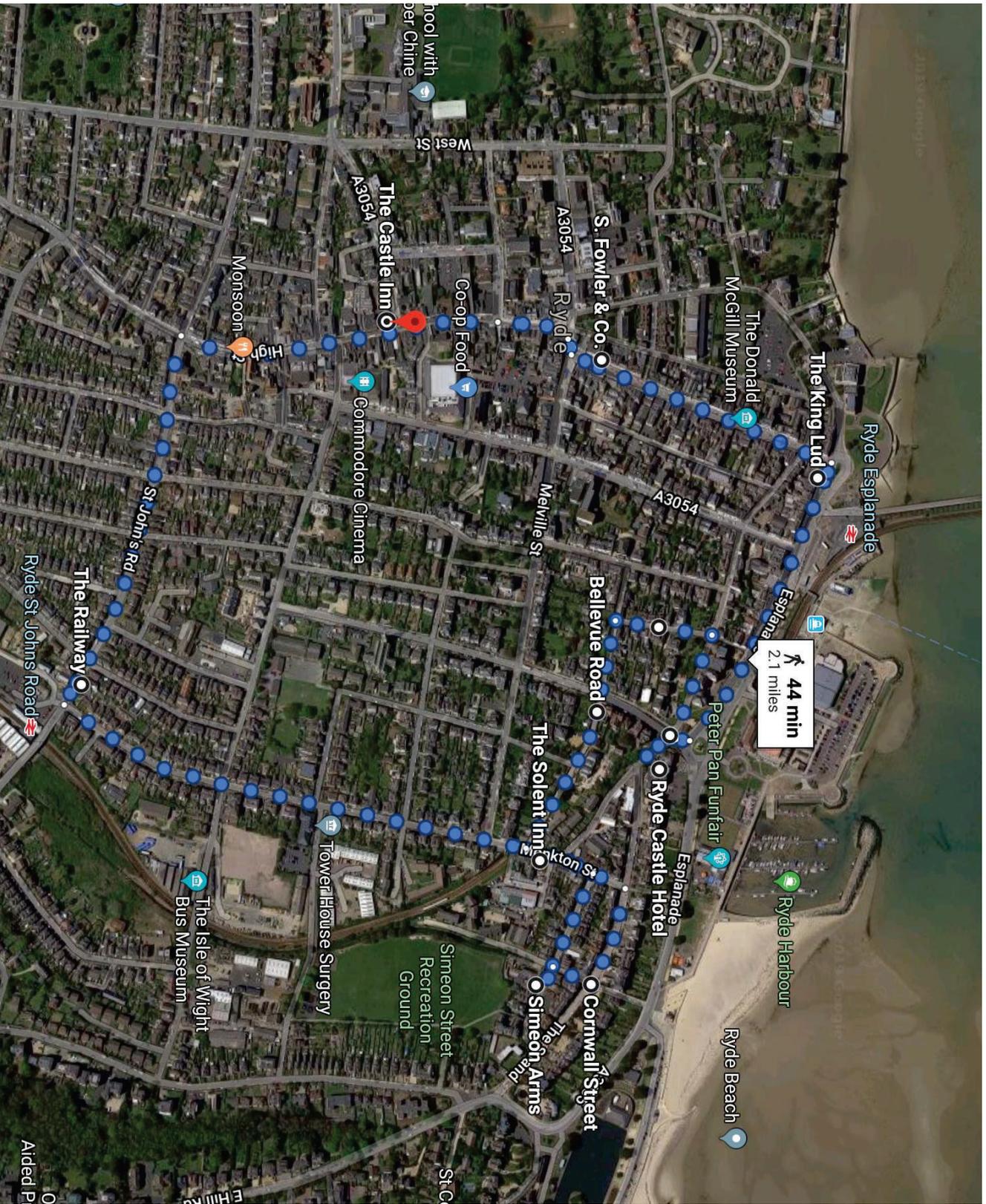
Continuing up into the High Street, there was the Granville Hotel at no. 22, and the tiny single roomed Prince of Wales in the section of the street opposite, famous for its notoriously abrupt landlord Bill Pine.

## Lion Brewery

Just off the High Street was Duffet's Lion Brewery, originally owned by the Lake family. The brewery was behind the Lion pub (formerly the George Inn, by Garfield Road and had the brewery's Red Lion over the door for many years. The business continued as a grain merchant and the warehouse had a railway track from Mew Langton's Royal Brewery in Newport.

## Anglesea Tavern

Just before we return to the Castle Inn, we pass Anglesea Street on the left where the Anglesea Tavern was on the uphill side, opposite what is now the supermarket square, now converted into accommodation.



**Route Map**

- Castle Inn
- Star Inn
- St Johns Road
- The Railway
- Monkton Street
- The Solent
- Simeon Arms
- Royal George Monument
- Bellevue Road
- Nelson Place
- Ryde Castle Hotel
- Royal Esplanade Hotel
- King Lud
- Union Street
- S Fowler & Co
- Crown Hotel