



Ryde: a tale of tragedy, tides, and tourism!

Welcome to Ryde! Once a straggling fishing village strung out along a narrow belt of land between a steep bank and the sea, Ryde started life as 'La Ride'; first recorded as a settlement in 1300.

It's come a long way since then; the steep hills have been conquered by modern heavy machinery and building techniques, making it one of the largest towns on the island.

Its proximity to the mainland (only about 5 miles!) benefits Islanders and tourists alike. It has become a major transport hub for the Island, with buses, trains and cross-Solent links interconnected at the transport interchange or 'Gateway'. It's equally accessible from the mainland, and tourism is big business!

Activity 1: Can you spot?

The photo below was taken from the bridge over the railway. It shows the 'Gateway'. Stand here for a few moments and you will soon realise that it's a busy place!

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Can you spot the...

- Buses, which link Ryde to many other towns and villages on the Island? Maybe, you will even spot one of the open-top 'Downs Breezer' buses which follow a route through Sandown and Brading, across the tops of The Downs, through the charming villages of Newchurch, Arreton, Wootton and Fishbourne.
- Trains? The train line runs 14km to Shanklin, passing through Smallbrook Junction (interconnects with the Steam Railway) Brading, Sandown, and Lake on the way. Refurbished Northern Line underground trains are used!
- Ferry catamaran service that runs from the Pier Head (at the end of England's earliest and longest pier!) to Portsmouth Harbour? Trains at Portsmouth Harbour then connect to London.
- Hovercraft that takes 10 minutes to zoom across to Southsea? You'll probably hear it first!

Risky Ryde!

On a calm summer's day, there may be little evidence that Ryde could ever be considered 'risky', but there has been tragedy in its past...

The Solent, which is the stretch of water separating the Isle of Wight and the mainland, is a very busy and risky place to be, and tragedy struck here on 28th August 1782.

The *Royal George* was the largest Royal Navy warship on the seas at the time. She was anchored in the Solent, at Spithead, taking on supplies and preparing to set sail for Gibraltar. Repairs to the hull were being carried out and a fatal mistake was made when moving the ship's 100 guns, causing it to lose balance and sink. Of the estimated 1,200

'Toll for the brave
The Brave that are no
more,
All sunk beneath the
wave,

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The poet William Cowper wrote a poem to remember the souls that were lost that day (see right).

Activity: Take a moment to look out to sea and observe the range of different vessels and activities going on out there and you will appreciate that, even today, it's a high-risk stretch of water!

Watch out!



Rising Tide: Flood Alert!

One of the reasons that this made such a good site for the early settlement of 'La Ride' was that there was a stream to provide fresh water. However that stream, called Monktonmead Brook, has been causing trouble!

This brook has burst its banks during times of heavy rainfall and/or high tides many times, causing extensive flooding and damage to property. Building in the area means that, in times of heavy rainfall, water reaches Monktonmead Brook quickly and it can be quickly overwhelmed.

Also, during high tides, the water can be unable to escape quickly enough and 'back' up in the Brook.



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Activity: 5-question quiz!

Visit the pumping station, along Ryde Esplanade, and have a look at the information boards on the side of the building. Use them to find out the following:

1. What stops water entering the brook at high tide and during storm surges?
2. What provision has been made for climate change (causing increased sea levels) in the future?
3. Fragments of the tubes of which creature can be found along Ryde Sands?
4. Why are the Eel grass beds found here so important?
5. Why do birds like Ryde Sands so much?

Activity: Tourist Heaven!

Today, Ryde is a popular tourist destination, especially with day-trippers from the mainland who can come across quickly and easily on one of the cross-Solent services.

Take a walk along the promenade and see if you can find where the following 'snippets' of pictures come from... all of these are tourism-related!



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