

# BEYOND THE GRAVES



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## RYDE SOCIAL HERITAGE GROUP

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### About us

Membership is open to anyone who is interested in the heritage of the town of Ryde, Isle of Wight.

Research is centred on Ryde Cemetery, and the people who are buried there, their links to Ryde's past, their lives, homes, businesses, families and descendants.

### Website

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## The Royal Isle of Wight County Hospital, Ryde



### Ambrose Dodd - The Founder of the Infirmary

Ambrose Thomas Sturges Dodd, the son of Rev Moses Dodd, was born at Chichester on 16th January 1803. From early in his life he displayed the considerable intelligence, amiable disposition and strong character that were evident throughout his life.

As a young boy, he expressed a desire for the sea life and at the age of 13 years, he was allowed to take a voyage to China. He often recounted tales of this journey with pleasure and amusement.

Shortly after his return, he decided to become a doctor and commenced his medical studies with a Mr Lightford of Oxford Street. It was while he was there that he had a serious and dangerous illness; the actual problem was never properly diagnosed but it was an inflammation of the chest.

After he recovered, he went to Guy's Hospital in London where he distinguished himself as an intelligent and dedicated student. Within a few months he was appointed Curator of the Museum and Demonstrator of Anatomy. He stayed at Guy's Hospital for about five and half years.

In 1828 he was invited to join the practice of a general practitioner at Chichester and shortly after he was appointed surgeon to the Infirmary at Chichester, a situation he held with much success. When he eventually retired from the post, a public meeting was convened and he was presented with a commemorative plate and a magnificent sum of money as a token of the high esteem and respect in which he was held.

While at Chichester he had also taken a keen interest in the Literary Institute there and had delivered several interesting and instructive lectures. Also he was very active in the formation of the Institute Museum, and he collected and arranged the display for the ornithological department.

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In 1843 he became seriously ill again with chest problems, and while taking a change of air and relaxation by the seaside, he was attacked with haemoptysis (coughing up blood) and his health declined still further. During the next two years he undertook a voyage to America and visits to Ryde and Clifton, sometimes his health improved and he returned to Chichester and his medical practice, but there were also relapses and more attacks of haemoptysis. In 1845 he decided to give up his practice and moved to Ryde. This move resulted in some improvements in his health and an increase in energy, and in December 1845 he called a public meeting to discuss establishing an Infirmary for the Island. He personally accepted the duties of secretary for the project and soon a large sum had been subscribed for the purpose of building the Infirmary.

Unfortunately, Mr Dodd did not live long enough to see even the foundation stone laid. He died on 30th January 1847 at Ryde, aged just 44 years, leaving a widow and four children. Despite his early death, he was nevertheless acknowledged as being the founder of the Isle of Wight Infirmary.

Source: Provincial Medical and Surgical Journal 1847 (<http://books.google.com>)

## The Infirmary

Ryde was chosen as the most suitable site for the Infirmary as it was within 12 miles of four-fifths of the Island population. The land was made available by Miss Player and Miss Brigstocke who provided it for an initial period of 99 years at a nominal rent. The land was originally a sand pit and had little commercial value.

Thomas Hellyer of Ryde was appointed Honorary Architect in April 1847 and was also made a life governor. He submitted plans for a 20-bed hospital and Messrs Jolliffe were appointed builders. It was estimated it would cost £1630-11s-6d to build and approximately £600 per year running costs. A management committee consisting of 12 governors and a chairman was appointed and Queen Victoria agreed to be the Patron.

The hospital opened on 9th November 1849 for the relief of the sick and disabled poor from all parts of the Island. It had 25 beds with five of these reserved for paying patients. Admission was dependant on the patient obtaining a letter of recommendation from a hospital subscriber, except in the case of a sudden accident or emergency when admission was allowed at any time day or night. In its first year, 83 in-patients and 37 out-patients were treated, the numbers rising to 125 in-patients and 457 out-patients in the year 1850 - 1851.

Several types of patient were excluded and refused admission to the hospital – those with consumption, smallpox, venereal diseases, epilepsy and 'the Itch'; also those considered incurable, insane; those with inoperable cancer; women with advanced pregnancy and children under seven.

In the following years, many changes and extensions were made to the hospital by Thomas Hellyer. Starting in 1851, an out-patient department and laundry were added. In 1857 gas lighting was installed at a cost of £16 and by 1864 the number of beds increased to 38. In 1875, 293 in-patients and 1547 out-patients were treated.

In 1881 the British Medical Association held its annual conference in Ryde under the Presidency of Benjamin Barrow, former Honorary Surgeon of the Infirmary and Mayor of Ryde. The conference took place from 13th to 18th August, and during this week, any member of the BMA could visit the infirmary and convalescent home to see how it was run.



By 1892 there were 50 beds in the hospital with a further ten for fevers and ten in the convalescent home.

New buildings included a larger operating room, a new wing containing a sitting room, three bedrooms for nurses, new kitchen range and larder, a new ward of six beds for women, nurses' room, enlarged dispensary and four extra bathrooms.

Telephones were installed in 1898.

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In 1895 a covered spring van was made available for patients too ill to reach the hospital by any other means. There was no charge for the van itself but patients were expected to pay for the horse and driver. It was not until 1914, when a motor ambulance was introduced, free transport was available to patients. Even then, those who could afford to pay were still expected to make a contribution.

One of the traditions of the hospital was "Bromo", a terrier bequeathed to the hospital as a perpetual legacy, for the course of his life. He was quite a character and would accompany the nurses and doctors as they made their rounds. He regarded the House Surgeon's sitting room as his own. The "Nursing Record" dated 16th February 1895 says: "House Surgeons may come and House Surgeons may go, but with each and every one Bromo disputes and maintains his right to make their room his headquarters".



The foundation stone for a children's ward was laid on 30th August 1897 by Princess Henry of Battenberg, better known locally as Princess Beatrice. Designed by Messrs Young and Hall of Southampton Street, Bloomsbury, and built by Charles Langdon of Ryde, it was opened on Friday 19th July 1899 by Queen Victoria.

She was handed a silver button that she pressed and this, completing an electric circuit, opened the doors to the ward.

The ward had 10 cots, five named after the principal donors, Battenberg, Worsley, Gassiot, Davey and Polson, who had endowed £1000 each. A further cot, called the Mothers' cot, was endowed by Mr Menzies.

Waiting for Queen Victoria's arrival (arrow shows the button on the table)

The ward also had a large sun room with a glass roofed veranda, bathroom and entrance lobby on the ground floor with nurses' bedrooms and bathrooms on the first floor.

Earlier on the same day, Princess Beatrice unveiled a bust of Queen Victoria, sculpted by E Onslow-Forbes RA, which was mounted above the ward entrance.



Queen Victoria arriving in her carriage

Following reports from Professor Colefield and T W Cutler, an independent architect, on the poor sanitary conditions at the hospital in 1903, the committee awarded a contract to Henry Curtis of Southampton for improvements costing £5,000. The hospital had been criticised as having inadequate ventilation, heating and drainage and no fire escape. It was also noted there was no cellar for the wine and beer!

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Part of the refurbishment included a new out-patient department with consulting rooms for the physician and surgeon, a fire escape, a dispensary, a covered waiting porch, isolation wards, nurses' changing room, a mortuary and post-mortem room, a chapel of ease and a small room for pathological investigations. A mobile bath that could be wheeled between wards and beds was also purchased. Princess Beatrice opened the new and refurbished buildings in 1907.

The eye ward was opened in 1914. An electric lift and x-ray room were built about the same time. In the years before World War Two, a new pathological laboratory was built in Swanmore Road and the King George V Nurses' Home in Adelaide Place was opened. Built by Messrs Rice of Brighton to a design by Seely and Paget, the cost was estimated to be £20,000, much more than the £8,000 to £9,000 originally budgeted for. The outbreak of the war delayed the opening ceremony planned for 9th September 1939 although the home was already in use by this time.

The hospital finally closed in the 1990s.

Source: Dr Laidlaw's book A History of the Isle of Wight Hospitals and Roy Brinton. Photographs: Roy Brinton.

## George Dash – Servant of the Infirmary for over 70 years

The headstone for George Dash in Ryde Cemetery states that he was “For many years dispenser and faithful servant at the Royal Hospital, Ryde”. In fact, he worked at the Infirmary for over 70 years and was over 90 years of age when he finally retired.

He was born in London in 1824 and tragically both his parents died before he was 13 years old. In 1837 he travelled to the Island to live with his uncle in Newport. As soon as he could he joined the Royal Navy but was invalided out in 1845.

George was appointed the Gardener and Porter to the Ryde Infirmary before it opened in 1847 - 1848. Among his duties in the early years, was pumping water from the well near the front gate up to the tank in the roof. He had to do this twice a day and this heavy work led to marked muscular development. He was known for being fit and strong and was accustomed to carrying patients whenever necessary.

In 1858 he was given permission to marry but he and his wife had to live in the lodge which was built in the grounds of the hospital. In 1860 a bell was fixed to ring in his home when anyone came to the gate or main door at night, and so his duties then included those of a Night Porter.

In 1867 the Management Committee found out that George was in the habit of extracting teeth and dressing wounds if patients presented themselves when there was no House Surgeon on duty. They resolved that although George was only being helpful he should not carry out this work except in the presence of the House Surgeon and, in 1873, they decided he should not carry out these services under any circumstances. The problem of dental extraction was partly solved when Mr Harrington of Ryde wrote to the Committee to inform them that he was willing to extract teeth if patients were sent to him from the Infirmary.

Some time later George took on the role of Dispenser for the Infirmary, he even suggested that the Dispenser's salary was increased to £65 per year, and he held this post for about 15 years. Eventually the Committee decided that the legal responsibility for running the Dispensary should be with the House Surgeon and in 1898 it was decided that “George Dash, an old and respected servant of the hospital, was to act in future only as the General Porter and not as Dispenser”.

Although by 1900, when he was 76, he had more or less given up regular work, he still lived in the lodge with his wife and was pleased to help any of the staff in any way he could. He still kept the front of the hospital and the garden tidy. By 1919 his wife had died and he finally retired completely and left the lodge, to live with one of his three married daughters in Carisbrooke. By that time he had continuously served the hospital for over 70 years.

He died on 28th December 1923 in his 100th year.



## George Fellows Harrington - Surgeon Dentist

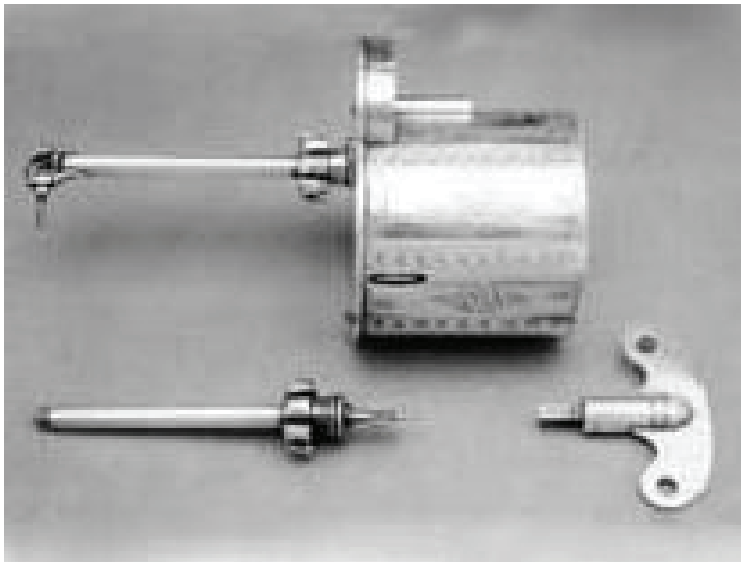
George Fellows Harrington was born in Wednesbury, Staffs in about 1811 but spent much of his life in Ryde. In 1851 he had a Masonic Work published entitled "Harrington's Desideratum for the Age". It made some rather grand claims: "*wherein The First Principles which constitute Nature are explained as well as certain other natural phenomena: The Cause of Poverty and Distress (That dire disease which is now preying on the vitals of mankind), shewn, and the remedy that will remove this disease, and restore all to health and happiness, pointed out.*"

This book can be downloaded for free from Google Books <http://books.google.com>.

He had a number of other works published: in 1855 "New Theories of Light and Heat"; in 1857 "Systematic Philosophy, and New Theories of Light and Heat;" also in 1857, when he was living and working in Portsmouth, "A Specification for Artificial Teeth"; in 1858 (he had moved to Ednam House in Ryde) "A specification for the Manufacture of Artificial Teeth"; in 1864 (he was at Sedgeley House, Ryde and described as a Surgeon Dentist) "A Specification for Drilling Teeth"; in 1869 he gave a lecture entitled "The Sun Not the Source of Heat and Light to the Solar System"; in 1887 with Joseph Longland he published a pamphlet entitled "The Sun not the source of Light and Heat to this World"; and in 1891 "Natural Civilization, to Humanize Humanity".

In the late 1940s he was living and working in Ryde as a dentist at Suffolk Towers, George Street. He was a very inventive man and in 1849 he patented mineral false teeth and later plates of tortoiseshell.

In 1864 he patented a clockwork dental drill which he demonstrated before a meeting of the Odontological Society of Great Britain in 1865. He described it as suitable "for drilling, cutting, grinding and polishing teeth while in the mouth."



The "Erado"

It was wound, like a clock, with a large key and was called the "Erado" (Latin for "I scrape out"). The drill ran for two minutes per winding and sold for six guineas, a fair sum at the time.

After watching the demonstration, the Society's president declared the noise it made very objectionable.

Harrington however countered that he had used it in his practice for twenty-two months with few complaints. Nevertheless he set to work making it quieter, and five years later he demonstrated to the same Society his new, improved noiseless drill.

Convinced that his invention was the thing of the future he set sail in 1871 for America to market it. Unfortunately for him, just as he was crossing the Atlantic the greatest dental drilling advance yet was unveiled to the profession, the foot-treadle drill. This new drill was so successful it completely outshone Harrington's invention so his trip to America could not have been very successful and he returned to England.

In addition to his dental inventions he also patented a method of sewer ventilation.

George Fellows Harrington took an ardent interest in the municipal affairs of Ryde. He was at one time an Alderman for the borough and mayor in 1869, and again in 1882. He was also a Justice of the Peace for the borough. George Fellows Harrington died at his home Hurdholm in Pellhurst Road, Ryde on Saturday 2nd February 1895 aged 83 years and is buried in Ryde Cemetery.

## The Milligan Convalescent Home



The Milligan Convalescent Home

Miss Sophia Milligan of East Ridge, Ryde proposed building a convalescent home at the hospital in 1877 as a memorial to her mother and father, her father having fought in the Battle of Waterloo.

Miss Milligan donated over £5000 towards the cost of building and running the home. Thomas Hellyer of Ryde was the architect.

A memorial tablet above the entrance in West Street reads 'In loving memory of Robert and Elizabeth Milligan, this building is erected by their daughter Sophia Milligan AD 1880'.

There were five beds on each side of the ward and patients were admitted for three weeks. Residents were charged 7s per week, and non-residents 10s 6d per week. The home opened in 1881.



Memorial Tablet

## Dr James David Davies OBE - Consulting Surgeon and General Practitioner

Dr James David Davies OBE served the people of Ryde for nearly forty years primarily in practice with his lifelong friend Dr Evelyn Rich, and also as Consulting Surgeon to the Royal Isle of Wight County Hospital.

Born in 1857 in Merthyr Tydfil, Dr Davies was educated at Christ's College, Brecon and Guy's Hospital. He took his LRCP and LM at Edinburgh in 1880 having graduated as a Member of the Royal College of Surgeons, England, the previous year. He was for a time Ophthalmic Assistant and Assistant Surgical Registrar at St George's Hospital, London. Later he became a Surgeon-Captain in the Army in Ireland. From 1882 to 1885 he served in the Egyptian Campaign, and was at Tel-el-Kebir for which he received the Khedive's Star and the Egyptian medal with the clasps "Tofrek", "Suakin" and "Tel-el-Kebir".

On retirement from the army in 1895, he joined his friend Dr Rich as a partner in the practice where he was later joined by Dr F J Wadham and subsequently Dr E L Horsburgh. When Dr Rich retired in 1919, James became the senior partner, a post he held until his own retirement. The practice extended as far as St Helens and Bembridge and he became a familiar sight in the neighbourhood, as in the early days he covered his round on horseback. Dr Davies was described as a doctor of the old type, having a genial manner and much personal charm, but not averse to calling a spade a spade.

During the First World War he was principal Medical Officer at the Hazelwood Hospital at Swanmore, and in recognition of his services he received the OBE, the Medaille du Roi Albert, and the British Red Cross Society's medal.

For most of his professional career in Ryde Dr Davies resided at Belmont, George Street, Ryde. He moved to Petersfield for a short time, before returning to take up residence at Grosvenor Lodge, Queens Road, Ryde.

Apart from his professional activities he was also known as a fine horseman hunting with the Hambledon Hounds and later with the Isle of Wight Foxhounds, of which he was the oldest member. He also took an interest in the Isle of Wight Beagles and was an Honorary Member of the Royal Victoria Yacht Club.

After his wife Eleanor's death he moved to Kingsclere, Newbury, to live with his daughter Mrs Eleanor Stanford, where he died in his 83rd year. His remains were brought back to Ryde Cemetery where they were laid beside his wife on Friday 16th June 1939.

Source: Isle of Wight County Press, Saturday 17th June 1939

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