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“A special plan of Ryde – the 1:2500
Special”

Rob Wheeler

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***A special plan of Ryde – the 1:2500 Special
Rob Wheeler***

The progressive scanning of NLS's 1:2500 sheets has made accessible¹ a special sheet whose existence has not previously been noted. It had been labelled long ago by NLS as 'Hants 91.9 & 10'. Such a description was regularly applied to a sheet on standard sheet-lines where a small extrusion allowed all that needed to be shown of an adjacent sheet to be included. In this case, the sheet consists of the eastern part of 91.9 and the western part of 91.10. Because publication at this date was by parishes and Ryde is inconveniently divided between two parishes, the sheet actually has four components.

1. Eastern part of Newchurch 91.9.
2. Newchurch 91.10 (excluding the inset, which is mostly sand).
3. Western portion of St Helens 91.10.
4. That part of Ryde pier which would properly belong on a 91.6 but which was published within an inset on Newchurch 91.10. Whereas the original inset was a large one occupying the blank space where St Helens parish lay, now merely the end of the pier is shown on the sand adjoining the rest of the pier, without any inset box.

Within the top margin is a title 'ORDNANCE PLAN OF RYDE. ISLE OF WIGHT.' The lower margin contains scales, etc. Otherwise the margins are blank except where a couple of names and a bench mark height need to continue into the RH margin. There is a small extrusion in the top margin where sand continues beyond the neat line.

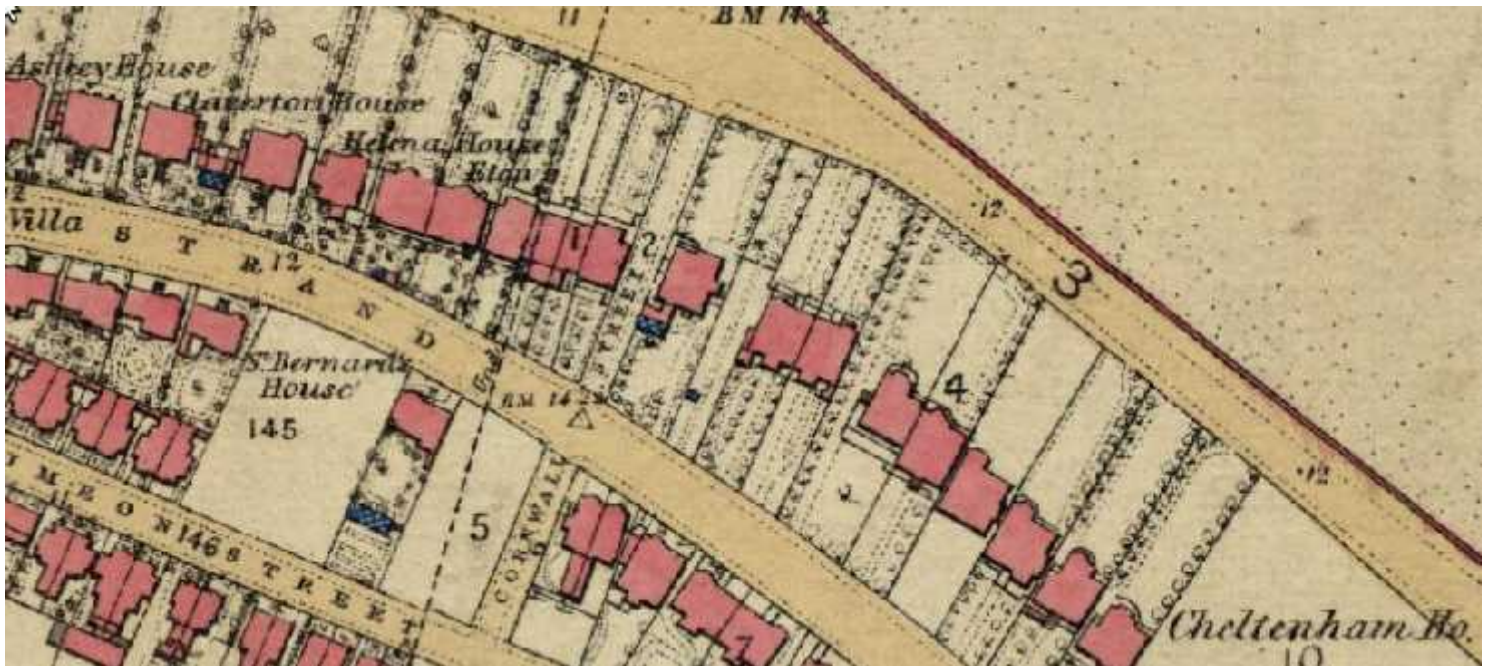


Fig 1: Join at parish boundary – note house names.

¹ <http://maps.nls.uk/view/105990355>

The whole thing is a cut-and-paste job. (I shall use this loose term rather than talk in terms of lithographic transfers, to avoid making any assumptions about the exact technology employed.) The join of (1) and (2) can be seen running along the front of Marine Villa in St Thomas Street and through its grounds northwards to the sea: features on one sheet are not always closed on the other, and lines do not always continue across the join perfectly.

The join of (2) and (3) is shown at figure 1. Again, lines do not continue across the parish boundary as smoothly as they might, but any irregularity is made less noticeable by the presence of the boundary symbol. What I want to draw attention to is a difference between the two parishes in deciding which names are worthy of inclusion. To the west of the boundary every other villa along the sea-front is named: the final name, 'Eton', has presumably lost the 'House' because this was drawn in the empty space corresponding to St Helens. To the east of the boundary, nothing is named until Cheltenham House is reached; the motivation was perhaps not so much that Cheltenham House was any grander than its neighbours, as the presence of empty space adjacent to it.



Fig 2: Further south from Fig 1.

One can also see a difference in the drawing of the garden trees: Newchurch trees are decidedly heavier than St Helens ones. And if one looks at the bench mark height in figure 2, one sees that the '3' is drawn with an angular upper lobe: all the St Helens '3's in height figures are like that, while all the Newchurch ones have a rounded upper lobe.

Doubtless all these differences can be found on the parent sheets in the main 1:2500 series. I have checked the specimens in the Bodleian Library bound volumes – though I confess I did not examine the finer points of draughtsmanship. A cut-and-paste job – surely no more need be said. And

yet, contrary to everything one might expect, there turn out to be differences between the Ryde Special and its parent sheets. I first noticed these when comparing the sheet against the 6-inch – a comparison one can do on-line – and I am indebted to Richard Oliver and Roger Hellyer for pointing out that the differences I had spotted were actually updates made at the 1:2500 scale. The differences from the six-inch I had spotted are shown by red numbers in figure 3.

(1) & (5) concern garden ornament. In this era the 1:2500 relies on actual detail to show gardens; the six-inch uses ornament, placed according to the annotations on the Field Examiner's trace. So these are not real differences; they certainly do not correspond to any difference between the Ryde Special and the standard 1:2500.

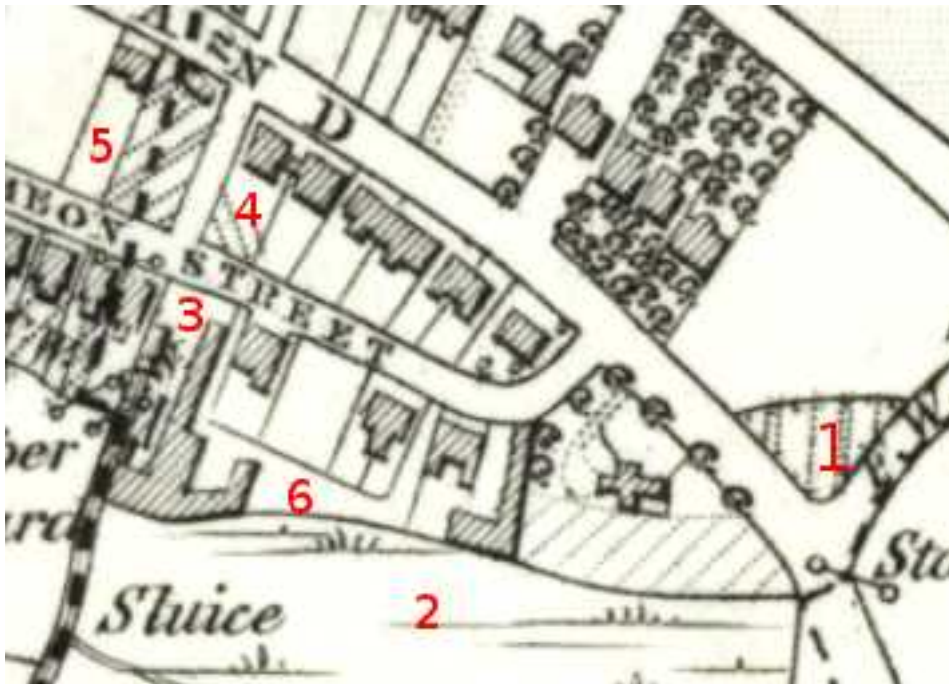


Fig 3: Extract from Record Map state of Hampshire XCI (1st edition). For annotations, see text.

(2) is another case of land-use ornament. The regular 1:2500 (though not the special sheet) carries a pattern of short blue lines; the area book² describes it as 'Pasture etc (subject to floods)'. I presume the blue lines indicate 'subject to floods'. In contrast, the six-inch gives it a 'marsh' symbol. While marshes are often subject to floods, and land subject to floods is often marshy, the two categories are by no means synonymous and the two scales convey significantly different information. The difference between the 6-inch and the standard 1:2500 is a puzzle that cannot be resolved here. The difference between the two 1:2500 versions may represent no more than a lapse in the hand-colouring process.



*Fig 4:
Further south from fig 2*

(3), (4) and (6) are the key alterations. At (3) the Ryde special 1:2500 adds a masonry building fronting the street; one can see it on figure 4. At (4) it adds a rear wing (?) to what seems to be a pair of houses – see figure 2. At (6) it adds an open-sided structure of timber or iron, and it realigns the fence such that it can be accessed from the pasture/marsh. These three alterations correspond to differences between the special and regular 1:2500. Despite a thorough examination I failed to find any others. For all three substantive changes to lie immediately east of the parish boundary is unlikely to have come about by chance.

Before putting forward an explanation for this, it may be helpful to run through the process by which 1:2500 plans were surveyed and drawn.³

² Consulted at the Bodleian Library.

³ JB Harley, *The Ordnance Survey and Land-Use Mapping* (Historical Geography Research Series, 2, Dec 1979) p15.

1. A lower-order triangulation established a network of trig points.
2. A chain survey, controlled by these trigs, provided a sufficiently dense network for all detail to be located by measured offsets.
3. From the surveyor's notebooks from (2), an outline plan was drawn in the office.
4. A field examiner was provided with traces, in sections, of this plan. He checked its accuracy and added names (recording authorities in the Name Book). By annotation, he recorded land-use, and categorised certain types of road. He added certain types of detail, including 'improvements' - changes on the ground made since (2). By means of his annotated trace, he effectively designed the finished map.
5. The actual drawing of the map, with the addition of ornament, marginalia, etc, was done by a draughtsman in the office.
6. There was then a process of final examination and checking.

During the period of publication by parishes, it seems likely that stages (2) to (6) went ahead separately for each parish. In the case of Newchurch and St Helens, the contrasting treatment of house names, mentioned earlier, shows that, at the very least, stage (4) was separate. Publication of the Newchurch plans took place 15 months after the St Helens ones, so it is likely that there was a corresponding interval between field examination for the two parishes. When the trace was produced for the Newchurch examiner, there will already have been a St Helens plan in existence and the practice, certainly by the 1880s, was that the Newchurch examiner will have been provided with detail extending at least four or five chains outside his area.⁴ The logic for this would seem to be that in making checks and recording improvements he would be employing the type of graphical methods later to be used for revision, and for this purpose detail outside his area might improve his fixes. I have never seen any instruction that field examiners should record improvements outside their area (in this case, *parish*), but the same logic would suggest that, if they affected the immediate surroundings of buildings within his parish, they ought to be recorded on his trace. Thus, it would seem likely that changes (3), (4) and (6) on figure 3 were noted in the course of the field examination of Newchurch parish.⁵

How those changes were drawn on the Ryde Special is a more difficult question. The rear extension to the houses in figure 2 deserves careful examination. Not only is that extension shaded to its south and east but the shaded line of the 'old' back wall of the house has been 'unshaded' where the extension joins it.⁶ The manner in which this house is drawn is every bit as clear as that of the adjoining house. That might lead one to suppose that the 1:2500 fair

⁴ Instruction of 12.3.84 recorded in CCSA IM 401 5.

⁵ I am indebted to Richard Oliver for this suggestion.

⁶ Those interested in these matters will observe that the line is thickened to the inside of the building: so shading does not increase the apparent dimensions of the building.

drawing had been altered; but in that case, why was it not used in producing the six-inch? Perhaps, then, the change has been made by some form of litho-drawing, even though that technique usually produces less satisfactory results.

Special sheets like this are rare: the Survey saw them as requiring extra preparation and storage without any concomitant increase in sales. So why was Ryde treated in this way? First we must remember that Ryde was extremely fashionable: the *Fashionable List* in the Isle of Wight Observer for 28 Dec 1861 (to take an out-of-season example) includes for Ryde: 4 members of the nobility, 4 knights, 4 unaccompanied Ladies (mostly Dowagers), 3 mere Honourables, 2 General officers, 3 Admirals and 10 Colonels.

The sheet is undated but the corresponding six-inch bears a survey date (referring of course to survey at large scale) of 1862, so it is possible that this special sheet was produced in 1862 or early in 1863.⁷ Sir Henry James was seeking authority for the 1:2500 resurvey of southern England – granted in March 1863. If he wanted a sample sheet to show those in positions of influence, Ryde would make an admirable choice. Or perhaps it represents a short-lived policy from the era of publication by parishes, of producing special sheets wherever a town was unnaturally split in the manner of Ryde.

The special sheet appears not to have been deemed to require copyright deposit and it does not appear on the Bodleian Library's 1:2500 index bound with the Hampshire six-inch sheets; however, this index appears from the state of railways to date from the 1870s, so it is possible the plan appeared on earlier indexes. At any rate, it carries a price statement, suggesting that it was at least intended to be placed on public sale.

The explanation advanced for the incorporation of improvements adjacent to the parish boundary does not depend on the Ryde sheet being a politically-sensitive special sheet. It is quite possible that field examiners regularly recorded such changes immediately outside their area. Such changes would have been available for incorporation when the single-parish versions of the plans were filled to the neatlines in the modern manner. Was this ever done? It certainly suggests that a comparison of the two versions in the vicinity of parish boundaries might be worthwhile.

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⁷ Since the standard Newchurch plans did not appear until March 1864, this would imply something of a backlog in routine publication.