

*Deacon's Court Guide* was a bit of county history, a social register, a directory, a gazetteer and an advertising annual. It was republished every few years with updated information. This is from the 1881 edition and is the entire section on Rye. I have added some much needed paragraph breaks but haven't altered it in any other way. SWC.



DEACON'S  
COURT GUIDE,  
GAZETTEER,  
AND  
County Blue Book :  
A FASHIONABLE REGISTER AND GENERAL  
SURVEY OF SUSSEX

Rye is a cinque-port, parliamentary and municipal borough, polling-place, urban sanitary district, market-town and parish, the head of a union, locally in the hundred of Gostrow, rape of Hastings, diocese of Chichester, E. division of the county, on the navigable river Rother, 76 miles E. by N. from Chichester, 10 N.E. from Hastings, and 83 S.E. by E. from London.

The borough has received a succession of charters, of which the earliest that can be traced is from Richard I., reciting and confirming some previous privileges that have been further ratified and extended in succeeding reigns up to that of Charles II. Rye has exercised the elective franchise from the earliest period. It formerly returned two barons to Parliament, who assisted in supporting the royal canopy at coronations; but only one member is now elected. This place, which belonged originally to the monastery of Feschamp in Normandy, was, in the reign of Henry III., together with Winchelsea, annexed to the cinque-ports of England, in all the charters granted to which these towns are invariably styled "ancient towns."

In the reign of Edward III., Rye was surrounded by a strong wall with several gates, of which that called the Land Gate is the only one remaining, and now forms a beautiful entrance to the town from the London and Dover roads. It was also defended by a tower on the south, erected in the twelfth century, by William of Ypres, a quadrangular structure, with circular towers at the angles, and which is still tolerably perfect.

An inundation of the sea having formed a natural harbour, which was subsequently much improved by a similar occurrence, the town began to flourish, and soon became so considerable a port, that it furnished nine ships of war towards the invasion of France in the reign of Edward III., and was the place at which that monarch landed on his return from the Continent. In the following reign it was burnt and plundered by the French, from which calamity and others it subsequently experienced, it suffered so much that, in 1464, Henry VI., to indemnify the Corporation for their losses, annexed it to Tenterden, which he separated from the county of Kent. From this time the town began to revive,

and was a place of considerable importance in the reign of Elizabeth, who on a visit to this place, where she was entertained by the Corporation with every demonstration of loyalty and affection, invested the inhabitants with several additional privileges, and confirmed all preceding charters.

The town is built upon a hill, the sides of which from south to south-west are rocky and precipitous, and is sheltered on the north and west by hills of no great elevation, but which command a pleasing view. The River Rother skirts the town on the east, and flows into the sea about a mile and a-half to the south; and on the south-west is a channel which receives the streams of the Brede and Tillingham, which unite with the Rother previous to its influx into the sea. Rye consists of several regular and well-formed streets. The houses in general are indifferently built and of antique appearance, and command fine views of the Channel and the surrounding country, which abounds with interesting scenery.

The town is well paved and lighted with gas. A Literary and Scientific Institution was established in 1839. An embankment was constructed along the sides of the harbour, the marshes in the neighbourhood, formerly covered by the tide, being drained, and a good road was made to the seaside. The natural advantages of Rye should contribute greatly to its prosperity as a watering-place. A considerable trade is carried on in corn, coal, hops and timber. Rye is a bonding-port for French wines. Chalk is obtained from Beachy Head, for the purpose of being burnt into lime. Large quantities of wool are exported to France and Ostend. Vessels of 200 tons can now enter the port.

Ship-building is carried on to a considerable extent, the neighbourhood abounding with excellent oak. There are several breweries. Rye is the port for Tenterden, Cranbrook, and the valley of the Rother, and has access to Romney Marshes by means of the Royal Military Canal. A line of railway exists from the town to the harbour, which conveys coal and other goods for transmission to Hastings. Large quantities of mackerel and other fish are caught off the coast in the summer months.

Ypres Tower, to which an additional tower has been added, is now the Borough Gaol. The Church of St. Mary is a spacious and handsome cruciform structure, partly Norman, and partly in the Early English style, with a central embattled tower, in which is a clock of peculiar mechanical construction, said to have been taken from the Spanish Armada, and given to the town by Queen Elizabeth. The building contains nave, aisles and side chapels. The register dates from 1538. The east window, in the Later English style, is of large dimensions and of elegant design, and was embellished with stained glass, at the expense of J. H. Lardner, Esq. The vicar is the Rev. David Gladstone, M.A., of Wadham College, Oxford, and the Duke of Devonshire is patron. The Church of the Holy Spirit was erected for the Coastguard and their families. It has an ornamental tower and one bell, and is a Chapel-of-Ease in Icklesham parish. A National School, Library, &c., is attached. There are places of worship for Baptists, Independents, Wesleyans, &c.

A Free Grammar School was founded, in 1664, by Mr. Thomas Peacock, who endowed it with a rent-charge of £36, the interest of £50, and a school-house; and in 1702, another school, which has since been amalgamated with the former, was established by Mr. James Saunders, who assigned to it estates producing £100 10s. per annum. A new school-house was built in 1838. Board Schools have been erected at a cost of over £2,250, to accommodate about 350 children. A market is held every alternate Wednesday. There is a Custom House and Town Hall.

A monastery of friars of the order of St. Augustine was founded near the town, prior to the reign of Edward III., of which the principal remains have been converted into a storehouse. An arched

gateway, leading into the town from the London road, is in tolerable preservation; and some portions of the ancient walls are also remaining. Samuel Jeakes, an eminent antiquary, and the author of the "Charters of the Cinque Ports," was a native of this place.

The area of the Registration Sub-district of Rye comprises 15,626 statute acres, and in 1871 contained 1,352 inhabited houses, with a population of 6,456 persons. The last Census Returns, (1881), show 1,397 inhabited houses, and a population of 6,673 persons, being an increase of 45 inhabited houses and 217 persons during the last 10 years. In 1871, the Municipal Borough of Rye, the limits of which are co-extensive with those of the Urban Sanitary District, contained 847 inhabited houses, with a population of 3,865 persons; the Parliamentary Borough 1,763 inhabited houses, with a population of 8,290 persons. The last Census Returns, (1881), show 887 inhabited houses, and a population of 4,220 persons in the Municipal Borough, being an increase of 40 inhabited houses, and 355 persons within the last ten years; and in the Parliamentary Borough 1,794 inhabited houses, and a population of 8,409 persons, being an increase of 31 inhabited houses, and 119 persons in the same period.