



## Isle of Wight Society Newsletter

November 2019

Issue 126



This year saw the celebrations of the **Bi-centenary of the Births of Queen Victoria and Prince Albert**. The main celebrations took place around May 24<sup>th</sup> 2019, Victoria's Birthday.

**East Cowes Heritage** held an exhibition at East Cowes Town Hall looking at the effect on the town as a result of Queen Victoria and Prince Albert living just up the road. Almost 1,200 people visited the exhibition over the three days, a very successful outcome.

Our thanks go to all those willing helpers who dressed as Victorians and made the three days such a success. We welcome three new stewards who joined our team at the Heritage Centre as a result of the exhibition.

It was most apt that **our AGM** should take place at Whippingham Church Hall, with a delicious cream tea first, followed by a talk in the church about Victoria and Albert and the rebuilding of the church between 1854 and 1861.

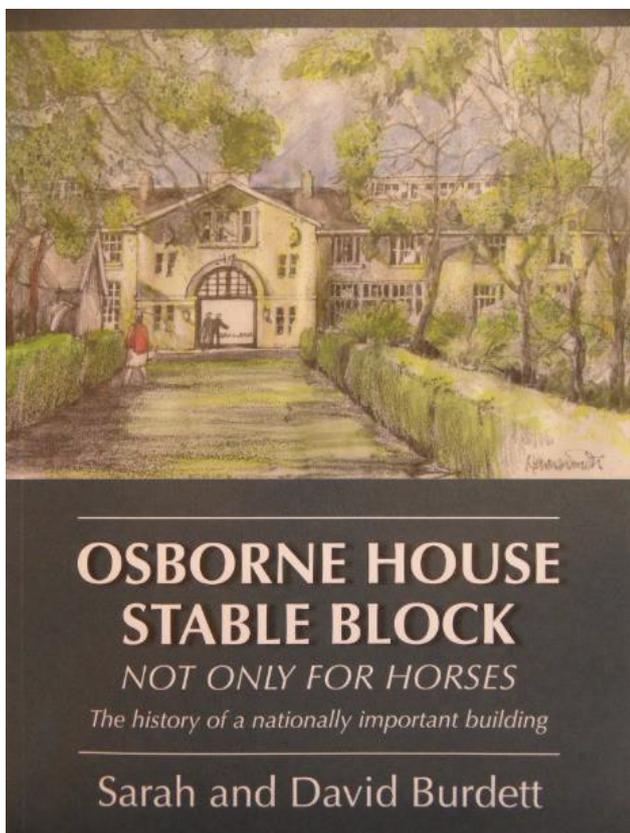
Sarah Burdett stood down as Chairman, but as nobody else wanted the job, her husband David Burdett took it on, together with his duties as Treasurer. Colin Arnold continued and Michael Paler joined the committee, Sarah took on secretarial duties, and later Paul Bingham and his wife from the IW Natural History and Archaeological Society agreed to come on the committee. That Society had been one of the co-founders of the Isle of Wight Society back in 1969, fifty years ago.

We are pleased to let our members know about events organised by the IWNHAS that they might find it interesting to attend.

***On Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> December from 14.00 – 16.00 there will be a talk by Debbie Tann of the Hampshire and Wight Wildlife Trust about the project to set up Nature Recovery Networks and links to protect existing wild life sites. Venue: Arreton Community Centre.***

**East Cowes Heritage Centre** continues to thrive, always busy and stewards never know who or what will come through the door next. This week saw a gentleman bring in about a hundred **original plans for hovercraft and helicopters!** Everything has to be catalogued and stored, a major task in the small space we have available.

**Those plans were drawn in what was Queen Victoria's Stable Block**, in use as their design office by Saunders Roe, then British Hovercraft and latterly Westland Aerospace.



This new book is available from the East Cowes Heritage Centre, priced at £10. It looks at the history of the stables as bought by Victoria and Albert, the building of the new stables in 1861, and all the subsequent uses of that building. These included the Royal Naval College where

Edward VIII and George V started their naval careers, training camps for Red Cross VAD nurses, and an RAMC hospital during WWII. Post WWII the courtyard was almost covered by the design office buildings, which have now been removed. Restoration is still ongoing.

If you would like to purchase a copy of the book by post, please email [burdett.sd@gmail.com](mailto:burdett.sd@gmail.com).

**Much of this newsletter is devoted to the major V&A Bicentenary conference hosted this November at Osborne House.**

.....  
***Subscriptions are due on 1<sup>st</sup> January.***

*The rates are:*

*Full membership £12, Joint Full membership £20,*

*Senior membership £10, Joint senior £18,*

*Corporate membership £20.*

***Subs should be paid direct to The Treasurer, or by Bank transfer to the Society Account:***

***Name: Isle of Wight Society Bank :Lloyds***

***Bank Code: 30-95-99 Acct Code: 00331217***

***Website : [www.isleofwightsociety.org.uk](http://www.isleofwightsociety.org.uk)***

***Email: [eastcowesheritage@gmail.com](mailto:eastcowesheritage@gmail.com)***

***Address: Isle of Wight Society,  
East Cowes Heritage, 8 Clarence Road, East  
Cowes, Isle of Wight, PO32 6EP***

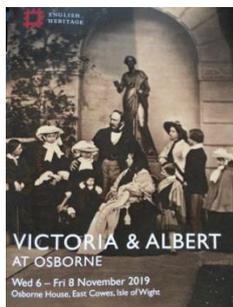
***Chairman and Treasurer : Mr D Burdett***

***Executive Committee members:***

***Colin Arnold, Paul and Jo Bingham, Michael  
Paler, Sarah Burdett***

## An English Heritage Conference at Osborne House 6<sup>th</sup>,7<sup>th</sup>,8<sup>th</sup> November 2019.

### Victoria and Albert at Osborne



This conference provided an opportunity to explore the wider significance of Osborne for the history of the Victorian monarchy and the broader Victorian society. Those lucky enough to attend, about 100 people, were treated to 21 lectures by renowned academics, and at the end of three days were suffering from brain-overload!

Many aspects were covered. We started with the building of Osborne, the design of the grounds and contents of the house. We looked at the technology involved in the house and living there, and how the house was presented to the public. One of the most interesting papers was the use made of Osborne to quietly sway political thought and cement the role of Osborne as the centre of the Empire, which of course it was when the Queen was in residence, which we, as Islanders, are proud to say at every opportunity.

**A.N.Wilson gave the key note speech.** He first looked at how Prince Albert embraced the scientific and technological advances of the 1840s and 1850s. At that time over 20% of the world's manufactured goods were produced in Britain. Landowners disliked the growth of the mercantile classes, finding it convenient to pretend that British greatness did not depend on industry. Albert's international Great Exhibition of 1851 supported the role of engineers and manufacturing, and was an outstanding success.

As a result, Prince Albert was invited to become Chancellor of Trinity College Cambridge. If they expected him to be just a figure head, they were mistaken. Within two years he had completely reformed the syllabus to encompass all the scientific and engineering subjects!

He was a great reformer of cultural life for the masses. In every new town that developed in Britain in the mid - 19<sup>th</sup> century, one of the key buildings was always a museum, with a library and a concert hall.

*[On the Island, shortly after his death, the Royal Albert Reading room and library was developed in East Cowes in Clarence Road, with the Queen and Royal children donating volumes for it.]*

### The Great Exhibition of 1851



**A few astounding facts and figures.....**The exhibition site covered 26 acres, and took just four months to build. The workforce grew to 2,260 workmen on the busiest day. The length of the Crystal Palace, designed by Joseph Paxton, was 1,848 feet. There were 13,937 exhibitors and over 100,000 exhibits. 6,039,195 visitors entered the Crystal Palace over the 141 days of its opening.

**A Royal Commission was set up to manage the proceeds of the Great Exhibition, £186,000. Land was bought and “Albertopolis” developed, covering a huge area of South Kensington.** Museums such as the Science Museum, Natural History Museum, and Victoria and Albert Museum were built there, as were the Royal Schools of Music and of Needlework, and what was to develop into **the Imperial College of Science and Technology.** The museums are now independently run.

Today, with assets that have grown to over £110 million, the Royal Commissioners continue to honour the spirit of innovation that informed the work of their predecessors. Today fellowships and studentships are awarded, worth £3million annually. There are also special project awards in science, engineering and design.

Consequently Albert’s plans are still bearing fruit. What a magnificent legacy.

*[To bring this nearer to home, Ray Wheeler, an East Cowes lad, attended post-graduate studies in aeronautics at Imperial College 1949-50. His aim at that time was to become the best aeronautical structural engineer in the country, which arguably he did. Working for Saunders Roe/BHC/Westlands, he eventually became Technical Director with an office in the Osborne Stable Block, and was granted the title of Royal Designer for Industry (RDI) which he held until his death in the summer of 2019. In Britain only 100 people hold this revered title at any one time. He was involved in the development of hovercraft and rockets and many other craft, a great Island designer. ]*



*Osborne as bought in 1845*



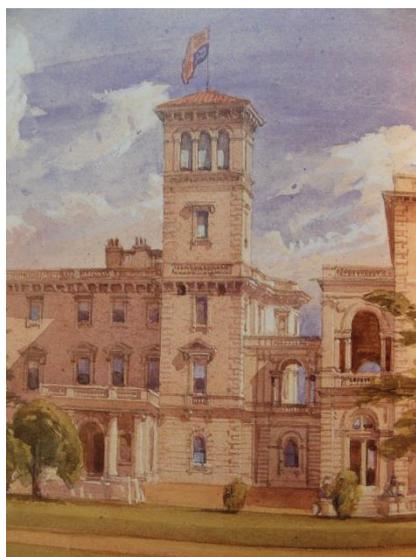
*Osborne family life, painted by the Queen*

While Albert and Victoria bought Osborne as a family escape from public life, it was soon apparent that affairs of state would impinge upon them wherever they were, and the household wing was developed adjacent to the new pavilion wing. Albert used the latest cast iron pillars and floor beams, rather than wood. Cement or plaster was used for skirting boards, and sea shells filled the voids between floors. All this was to give the building greater security from fire.

The role model of the Royal Family was strongly developed, and Albert felt they should be seen as a perfect example. He became Patron of the newly formed Royal Photographic Society and photographs of the 1850s portray the family image, many taken at Osborne. While these were not always published, often engravings were made of the photographs and used in widely circulated magazines such as the London Illustrated News. From this the nation tried to copy the example set at Osborne.

Albert and Victoria set about establishing a future dynastic union between their own family and the rulers of many European nations, leading Victoria to be known as the Grandmother of Europe. However, despite Royal marriages, unity among nations did not always result.

A.N.Wilson felt that no other Royal figure can compare with Prince Albert. Thanks to his guidance, we are a civilised country with advanced technology. Albert also reminded the British that we are a European country!



The following lecturers gave us a potted history of the building of Osborne. Some Victorians decried Thomas Cubitt as “only a builder, not an architect,” but he suited Prince Albert as the Prince could have great input into the designs. The Pavilion wing took just 14 months to complete, and the Classical, Renaissance and Italianate features belonged to a frame of mind that was strongly Germanic. The idea of garden terraces Albert copied from his home, Rosenau, at Coburg. A Swiss Cottage, bathing house and miniature fort was also already in existence there from his childhood. The Queen complained that Albert was always transplanting trees and bushes, even all day on the last day of one of their visits. *“Albert directs everything.”* *“Osborne is so completely my beloved one’s creation.”*

There are 200 sketches and working drawings for the rebuilding of Whippingham Church in the Windsor Archives. It was Albert’s interest in classical art that helped to develop Osborne, (he took Art History at Bonn University as one of his courses.) However, at Osborne all their own pieces of art and sculpture were contemporary, modern pieces. The old masters stayed in the Royal Palaces.

**Samantha Stones is the Properties Curator for the South East of England for English Heritage.** She described the changing evolution of Osborne since the 1902 Act when Edward VII gave the property to the Nation as a memorial to his mother. From 1904 the ground floor State rooms were open to the public for limited opening hours. The Household wing was used to accommodate the Edward VII Convalescent Home patients. Sam queried whether reuse of some of the rooms, such as the royal nurseries at the top of the pavilion wing for the apartment of the House Governor, had devalued them, but felt that it was all part of the evolution of the building. By 1907 over 60,000 people a year were visiting Osborne House.

Talking to her later, Sam admitted that the Convalescent Home part of the story of Osborne has not been given adequate interpretation so far, and is on her “Wish list.” She felt some of the patient’s rooms could easily be returned to their original state. By the end of 1945, 15,000 convalescents had benefitted from staying at Osborne. Their impact on the building was considerable, from the paint used on the walls, (there were 7 layers of different beige or stone coloured paint in the household dining room) to the smoke that had to be cleaned from the Council chamber, which was designated the smoking room. Green paint used in

various rooms in 1897 was similar to that used by Princess Beatrice at her home, Osborne Cottage, in York Avenue East Cowes, possibly a left over batch?

Once the Convalescent home closed in 2000, the Royal nurseries could be returned to some semblance of their original state, copying a single original photograph. Cots were made to look like those in a very early photograph, and then one cot was found in an attic in Windsor, and returned to Osborne. So now there are two reproductions and one original. The 16 foot long wardrobe was found down in the cellars at Osborne, and returned to its place in the Nursery.

Externally the house originally had pigment added to the render, but this had discoloured over the years. Tests eventually established what colour the building should be, but it was not until 2017 that the lower terraces were also repaired and painted, giving the public access to them and allowing the entire building to sit properly in its landscape as Albert had intended. The sitting alcove there had been over painted white, with traces of something stuck on, leaving no clue to its original decoration. Reading the Queen's diaries, it was found she had recorded that a tame magpie had caused the decorators problems when it kept flying off with the shells they were applying to the alcove pattern, so the problem was solved!

Sam would like to start interpretation of the Servants' quarter at some stage, but the old kitchens present a problem as they now house the boilers for the heating system. *[In addition to the comfort of the staff, the heat is required to conserve the building and artefacts.]* The house has the ability to tell its own story, and work continues. I flagged up with her the problems of lack of care and interpretation of some of the Osborne Royal Naval College foundations within the grounds. *[Discussion about this will continue.]*

**Michael Hunter, Curator for the last 21 years at Osborne**, described how much of the art and sculpture collection at Osborne has survived intact. Granted some originals were removed to Buckingham Palace. Copies were made for Osborne of some of the most distinctive pieces of family portraiture, such as the Winterhalter in the dining room, but otherwise, what we see is what Victoria and Albert bought. They had a shared appreciation of art. Many artistic gifts were given from one to the other. Victoria was asked on one occasion whether she felt there was too much nudity. *"Certainly not!"* was the answer! The William Dyce fresco at the top of the stairs reflects their taste for the Nazarene School, and Albert helped with this by holding up the tracings when it was being applied. Work was completed using floor to ceiling scaffolding.



A gift from Victoria to Albert



The Dyce fresco, Neptune giving power of the sea to Britannia

The Queen felt that Landseer was, *"The cleverest artist that is!"* and had several of her pets painted by him. She was a good water-colourist herself, and had lessons from Leitch. While sitting for Winterhalter, she complained that she could not sit still. Winterhalter suggested that she should paint him while he painted her, and the result was an excellent painting of the artist!

Other lecturers also talked about the Queen's collection of sculpture and art. The sculpture was displayed throughout Osborne house, in niches along the corridors in a homely domestic decorative fashion. The scheme before this period was that grand houses should have a sculpture hall, such as that at Chatsworth, and all the sculptures were displayed together in one place. Albert and Victoria set a different fashion.

Sculptures of the Royal children as they had appeared in "Tableau Vivants" were made, with the children dressed as the different Seasons. Copies of these were made for the wider public, giving glimpses of Royal home living. They represented the private Queen to her people, and encouraged the sentimentality aspect of Victorian Life. The life sized sculptures of the arms and feet of the Royal children are always an abiding memory of a visit to Osborne.

The complete assemblage of art here at Osborne is what is so important, portraying personal gifts and acquisitions on a private and domestic scale. The collection is thoughtful and coherent, intellectually far better than any previous Royal displays of art.

On the second day of the Conference **Toby Beasley, Osborne's Head Gardener**, talked about the creation of the garden and its restoration after 2000 to the style of 1861. When Victoria and Albert bought Osborne it was in a very naturalistic setting. There were Ha-Has to keep the animals from invading the pleasure grounds. Old oaks dotted the landscape. The Queen mentioned sadly in her journal that one of these would have to be felled to make way for the pavilion, so never would the view be the same again.

The walled garden from the previous house was very near the Pavilion, so Albert had the north and east walls raised and decorated. The original Osborne House front door was inserted facing the new Pavilion wing. The walled garden was used for bringing on bedding plants, shrubs, trees and flowers for the house. Vegetables and fruit were sent from the much larger garden at Windsor. In Victorian times a walled garden of one acre, the size of that at Osborne, was considered adequate to supply a family of nine people, and presumably all their house servants too.

The greenhouses had a good heating system, but two of the four had to be demolished after the 1986 hurricane. The heating passed through the potting sheds, a system much appreciated still by the present gardeners during the winter. Today the walled garden is quite different to its original state, but provides authentic Victorian planting, [*with new arches made at the Queen's forge at Whippingham.*]

It was estimated that the landscaping work around the grounds would cost £800, but this rose to over £5,000. Even before the terraces were completed Albert was planting the magnolias up the walls in 1851. Seasonal bedding on the parterres showed off the wealth and expertise of the owner, or his gardeners, and Albert was no exception. He wanted all the latest trends.

Trees and shrubs were planted to provide privacy, shelter and conceal outbuildings. The main road from the Sovereign's Gate had two bends in it so that the house could not be seen until one was almost upon it. Memorial trees were popular, whether it was in memory of a birthday or visit. There are 260 of these memorial trees at Osborne. Often they were very recent imports, such as a Sequoia planted only 18 months after the first one arrived in Britain, and the Chusan palm two years after it first arrived. Cork Oaks were planted in 1857, possibly the oldest planting of these in Britain, and they are still doing very well. Specimen trees and shrubs were planted close to the paths, so that visitors did not have to go on the wet lawn to appreciate them.

400 miles of drainage pipes were laid on the total estate, nine feet apart. [*The pipes were all made at the Queen's brickyard near Alverstone Farm.*] Prince Albert had a system of filter beds constructed to deal with the sewage from the house. While it was appreciated that this was an improvement on the old system of discharging straight into the sea, especially as they enjoyed sea bathing from the beach, the main purpose was to utilise the manure on the fields.

After the death of the Queen, the parterre gardens were soon grassed over for easy maintenance, and bushes uprooted. Different trees were planted. The main drive to the Sovereign's gate was replanted in the 1970s with Holm oaks, as before, but the alternate Monkey puzzle trees were not replanted. Only 29 of the original Cedars are left.

The parterre gardens were restored to their 1861 state after the closure of the Convalescent Home in 2000. Each parterre bed had a layer of chalk at two and a ¼ spade spits down, to aid drainage, so recreating the pattern was easy. The Chusan palm on the lower terrace planted by Queen Victoria in 1864 eventually died in 2003. A new one was ceremonially planted in 2004 by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, with help from Alan Titchmarsh and the second gardener, and is doing very well.



The restored lower terrace



The restored parterre

**Dr. Brent Elliott**, formerly of the Royal Horticultural Society and for 21 years a member of English Heritage Parks and Gardens Committee, described how Prince Albert gave the royal seal of approval to the Italianate garden, with the return to terraces and parterre gardens near the main house. In 1800 natural gardens had been all the rage, but by 1845 the formal and exotic had their place. Head gardeners loved the style as they could “do” bedding plants. This created a debate in the 1840s. Should there be bright clashing colours in adjacent beds, or, the preferred option, complimentary colours. The other alternative was that every bed should have the same colour!

It was only in 1897 that Osborne grounds were described in the Royal Horticultural Journal. This may have been a deliberate attempt at privacy, as the Barton Manor grounds had been described in 1857. Mr Nobbs, the Head Gardener at Osborne, in 1897, had to produce 60,000 bedding plants annually, not only for Osborne but also Albert Cottage, Osborne Cottage and several other Royal properties in East Cowes.

On the west side of Osborne House the roads were sunk down two feet below the lawns. This gave a vista of grass. **Toby Beasley** felt that today it was very difficult to envisage the setting of Osborne as the many visitors pass along the roads, and these levels are not as originally planned. In Victoria's day posh tea parties or breakfasts could be had in shady parts of those lawns, beneath the Cedars, free from any intrusion.

Delegates were given excellent guided tours around the immediate grounds, in perfect weather. House tours were also arranged, more interesting for those who had not been over the house before. We had delegates from America and Germany, and distant parts of Britain!

On Thursday afternoon the first lecturer looked at comfort and convenience at Osborne, and did not think that Prince Albert had really thought things through. It was 100metres from the kitchen to the dining room, so food had to be kept warm on its journey. However, the heating and ventilation were innovative. There was a coal fuelled low pressure boiler, with a heat exchanger, and many large hot air pipes in large voids ducting warm air around the house, the heat often coming out of vents in the plaster skirting boards. It was unfortunate for her guests that Victoria liked cool rooms.....

The water closets were sophisticated, with special air vents for the toilets, ducting up to the roof. Lighting was initially by oil lamps or candles. This form of lighting continued even after gas was installed at the house from East Cowes Gas Works in the early 1860s. The Queen would not have gas in the grander Royal apartments, but it was used for lighting in the kitchens and stables.

Electricity was practical in the 1880s, and initially Osborne had its own generator. A dynamo was installed in 1899. For long distance communication there was the electric telegraph. This was installed in the basement. [*George Warren was the Queen's telegraphist for 35 years and is buried at Whippingham Church.*]

There was a piped hot water system throughout the house, and fixed baths from 1846, an early innovation. Most other houses of this period still used hip baths. Osborne is also very modern in having shower facilities, those supplied for Albert and Victoria are some of the earliest examples in Britain. As a final comment, we learnt of the novel door lock on the Queen's bedroom, which could be operated from the bed!

**Michael Eckstein** from Germany described the great similarities of Callenberg Farm and Barton Manor Farm. Callenberg Castle was built by Prince Albert's father, Duke Ernst I, and was inherited, along with three other castles, by his eldest son Ernst II. Prince Albert built Barton Farm, and encouraged his brother to build on a very similar plan, as he had found Barton worked well. There were many labour saving devices, such as rail tracks from the feed preparation sheds to the stock sheds, just as at Barton. Excellent drainage was installed for the pig sheds, and feeding troughs that were filled externally. Water troughs were replenished by a ball valve, a new innovation. There was good ventilation in the stock sheds, with vents in the roof and under the eaves.

A tall chimney was common to both farms, with an 8 horse power steam engine for numerous purposes, threshing, cutting feed etc. At Barton, Albert tried out a Howards and Beckford steam plough system, which involved two stationary steam engines pulling a wide plough crossing the fields. Albert sent one of these systems to Ernst, where it was less successful. They required light well drained soil and large fields, which were present at Barton but not at Callenberg.



Callenberg Castle

Prince Albert tried out new inventions. He was a good networker and invited people to see how things he trialled had worked in practice.

**Oliver Walton** from the Royal Collection Trust felt that Osborne House changed after Albert's death from a family home to a house of mourning. All 52 female servants were each given material to make mourning clothes, and 4 yards of black ribbon. Those who were already widows became her companions. All objects were photographed, and when they had been dusted had to be replaced exactly in position. Life at Osborne had a very complicated privacy. The layout was not palatial, more of a villa with a hotel for the staff.

On many occasions Osborne House was the seat of Government and the political centre of the Empire. Graphs were presented showing the frequency and duration of the Queen's visits to Osborne, with a minimum of 60 days a year and a maximum of 150 days. There were an average of 5 Privy Council meetings here each year and it was normal for official business to be carried on. From the 1870s Investitures were held at Osborne. The Queen had her boxes of official papers to read and sign daily. Life in Osborne was outward looking, bringing the domain of the empire into the house. Osborne House was complementary to their public role, as Victoria wrote in 1851, "*A haven of peace and rest, and I feel that we need a quiet time.*" However, it allowed foreign royalty visits and patronage of artists to be conducted out of the London limelight. It allowed comfort, independence and safety.

**Annie Grey**, author of "The Greedy Queen," gave us an amusing insight into Queen Victoria's diet and cooking during that period. When the Queen got married in 1840, she weighed 7stone 2 pounds. Corsetted, her waist was probably 18 or 20 inches. At her death, she had a 45inch waist!

The kitchens at Osborne were typical of any high class house. While gas hobs were introduced in the 1860s, gas ovens at that time were a failure. Pipes had to be re-laid within ten years. The roasting kitchen still relied on coal fires. Chaffing stoves were of charcoal, and these resulted in respiratory failure for the staff. Between eleven and fifteen staff were working in the kitchen, most of them moving around the country with her, but it was felt that the food here was better than at Balmoral.

The dining room was typical of the upper classes, with family portraits on the walls. Middle class families had landscapes on the walls, but the lower classes had none. Hence the dining room at Osborne was ideal for the lying in state when the Queen died!

Annie had arranged the meals for the conference, which included a cucumber soup one lunchtime. All the ledgers for the food served at Osborne exist, but not all the menus. The first evening we were given Servants' Hall fare, roast beef, Yorkshire pudding, roast potatoes and sprouts, with spotted dick pudding and custard. In the servants hall horn beakers were in use until the 1880s. The second evening there was more elaborate food, but we did not extend to the possible eleven courses! The Queen would suit her meals to the persons present. Thus when Gladstone was at dinner the meal would last half an hour with little conversation. With guests she liked, the time spent at dinner could stretch to two and a half hours. She would indulge in "soft" politicking.

**Joanna Marschner** is the Curator of Kensington Palace, and compared how each building was presented to the public. Osborne became a retrospective memorial of the life of Victoria. Kensington Palace was bought by Queen Victoria as apartments for members of the Royal family, as well as a Royal museum. The Kensington state apartments were opened in 1899, on Victoria's birthday, 24<sup>th</sup> May, at the suggestion of Ponsonby, her Private Secretary. She visited the exhibition just before it opened. There were portraits of past monarchs, as well as Victoria, and three rooms relating to the Queen's childhood were on display, simply furnished. The Queen had been christened at Kensington. Queens Alexandra and Mary saw it as a family museum, an exhibition space for the Coronation robes worn by Edward VII etc. It was a new style of presentation but with little authenticity. Queen Mary had new wall paper put in the rooms, and little notes about the artefacts. She felt herself the curator of Kensington.

**Helen Trompeteler**, from the Royal Collection Trust, felt that Osborne played a strong role in the popularity of photography. The first photograph of Prince Albert was taken in 1842. 700 photographs of many subjects were shown at the Great Exhibition in 1851. Caldesi's photograph of the Royal family (Page 1) at Osborne

taken in 1857 was the first of the Royal pictures to be published, although first as an engraving. It projected the image of the Royal family as a relatable middle class family, and began the relationship between the royal family, photography and the media.

Julia Margaret Cameron made her home on the Island, and while she never photographed the Queen, Victoria did buy several of her photographic works in the 1860s. In 1867, the Disderi album of coloured photos was unique to Osborne. Jabez Hughes set up studios in Ryde, and was commissioned to make a photographic record of Osborne House and its numerous related buildings. He catalogued the Queen's negative plates. Princess Beatrice had her own dark room set up at Osborne, where she could process her own photographs. Osborne was a place of photographic creativity.

**Sally Goodsir** from the Royal Collection Trust gave us a quick gallop through the Queen's animals as depicted at Osborne. The Queen and Prince Albert rode out regularly and the Royal children started their riding in basket carriers, learning to ride at an early age, as did the grandchildren. The girls would never ride astride, always with a side-saddle. During pregnancy, the Queen would never ride on horseback after the first three or four months, nor for six weeks after the birth. However carriage riding was felt to be beneficial. Highland ponies were sent to Osborne in 1844, surefooted animals on the rough terrain. Carriages were soon being purchased by the Queen from Chevertons of Newport. The model of "Jessie", the Queen's horse for many years, shows the type of side saddle the Queen used, and the "slipper" stirrups, felt to be safer than conventional stirrups. She last rode Jessie in 1887.

Their personal pets helped to project their image of the model family. Very often the larger dogs would be left behind when they came to the Island for short visits, but smaller dogs were brought here, such as her Pomeranians and Dachshounds. These, and her collies, were shown at Crufts, where invariably the Queen would win prizes. "Noble" was a name given to several of her collies, often more than one at a time. We know the friendly statue of Noble in the corridor at Osborne near the front door.

At Barton, Albert had Alderney cattle, which produced good cream cheese. A cow, named Victoria, was a Jersey, given to the Queen in 1846. In a painting of the animal, the artist introduced dock leaves in the foreground, to which Albert objected! The 30 to 40 Galloways were not painted as pictures, as they were just fattened for meat. Black pigs, a breed now extinct, were used for pork, and Southdown sheep were close croppers. Albert tried crossing these with Dorset horns. Clydesdales were used on the general farm work, as they had no feathers. There were 13 on the estate in total, including a stallion.

**Lee Butcher** of Kings College, University of London, felt that Osborne had influence on the department of state. Osborne was in no manner removed or isolated from governmental activity, but rather was an important hub that vital communication travelled to and from, and where key activities took place. He produced more graphs showing the frequency of visits from the Prime Minister, and Privy Council meetings here. In between these, her Private Secretary would be sent to London to talk to people and return with news for the Queen. Royal opinions were formed in private rooms, then sensitive discussion at Osborne enabled others to hear the Royal views. The Audience room next to the Council Chamber allowed intimacy.

The Queen's role as Empress of India from 1876 allowed Osborne to eventually take on the role as an Indian Palace. Indian loyalists were encouraged, and nationalism later promoted. Her maternalistic approach encouraged admiration rather than just respect. While the Durbar room was fitted out with rather dated taste, Osborne sat in the centre of the Empire, and her subjects came out of their way to visit her here.

**Rowena Willard-Wright** previously of English Heritage, now with the National Trust, reiterated the significance of the allegorical fresco by William Dyce at the top of the stairs in the pavilion. It shows Neptune resigning the power of the seas to Britannia. This painting signalled the proximity of the sea to Osborne, and the routes to a wider political world through trade and dominion.

While the Queen was unable to visit her distant overseas dominions, the Prince of Wales did so. When in Canada he invited the Mi'kmaq first nation people to bring their grievances to him. They also brought gifts, and only the British Museum has more items from that group of people than the Swiss Cottage Museum. Visitors to the Queen included Maori Chiefs, bringing a cloak and belt of world significance, a textile before spinning. This is also housed at the Swiss Cottage museum.

**Andrew Lambert**, of Kings College, London, showed Osborne as the seat of Imperial Destiny on the world ocean. Requiring a sea voyage to reach it, with Portsmouth Naval Base within sight, Osborne made the monarchy maritime. King William IV had encouraged his niece Victoria to understand sea power. While it was the "British" Army, it was the "Royal" Navy. This had been so since Henry VIII created it.

The Queen attended the launch of HMS Trafalgar at Woolwich in June 1841, a 1<sup>st</sup> Rate Ship, and described it as, "*The most imposing sight I can remember.*" Prince Albert was at the launch of the SS Great Britain. In 1845 he bought Nelson's coat for Greenwich Naval Museum. Prince Albert became Master of Trinity House from 1852. His children were the first Victorian children to wear little sailor suits, made for them by the crew of the Royal Yacht on the occasion of a visit to the Channel Isles. The rest of the nation followed suit!

Fleet Reviews became important in the deterrent factor of the Navy. Reviews had been for the monarch to physically inspect their ships, one by one. In 1897 at the Diamond Jubilee review, the Queen watched from Osborne while the Prince of Wales sailed up and down the lines of 165 British ships. (And that was without withdrawing any vessels from the Mediterranean or other key places such as the Baltic.)

The Solent became a maritime stage for displaying Monarchical Power. There were 16 Reviews in the 28 years prior to 1913. Between 1773 and 1887 there had only been 8. Spithead Reviews were ostentatious, spectacular performances for the public to watch from the shore. For a deterrent to work, it had to be felt and seen.

**Andrew Hann** of English Heritage had had the idea of this conference, and it fell to him to give the closing remarks upon considering the lectures in their totality. Firstly he was increasingly aware of the global connections at Osborne. While the heart of Osborne was a repository, it was also a show of power. Secondly there was the distinction between Osborne as the private residence of a domestic family and at the same time Osborne as a centre for Imperial discourse. Thirdly, Prince Albert was in charge here as a patriarch, while after his death it became more of a work place. Fourthly, Andrew was struck by the modernity of the house, with the royal family buying modern art for the house and garden. They were buying from catalogues, showcasing modern building techniques, industrialisation and factory production. **This is a time to re-evaluate and re-interpret the house, using this conference as a springboard.**

**Written from notes taken at the conference by delegate Sarah Burdett, November 2019.**

## Chairman's Notes

We all know that nothing stays the same for ever. The IoW Society is fifty years old this year and a lot has changed during this period. Initially we were a voice for the community in a period when there was no local representation to the County Council through town or parish councils. Now we have the internet and everyone has the option of using a mobile telephone or computer to speak to the world through emails or social media.

In all this the aims of the Society have not changed. We seek to support good planning, design and build in new developments. In addition to this we have become increasingly active in promoting the fascinating history of our Island through our work at the East Cowes Heritage Centre. The Society regularly has a representative at the six-monthly meetings of the Island History Forum where voluntary groups and Island Council Heritage Services staff meet to exchange information. Hence the main article in this Newsletter is an extensive summary of a wide ranging conference that looked at the national and global impact of Victoria and Albert at Osborne House.

The major importance of History is that it shows what has been tried in the past and what has been successful. However these lessons are no guarantee that those actions can be repeated successfully. On the Island, circumstances led to our industry being at the forefront of our nation's development of technology. We cannot replicate that period of our history. Therefore we have to debate the future of the Island.

Over the years the Society's membership has declined so that we do not have an active work force. Our main strength is maintaining communications with other varied organisations. We regularly meet with CPRE and other organisations, both local and national. We must ensure that we have a good awareness of the facts before we make public comment.

The Society does not comment on individual planning applications as much as it used to. However we still believe that the good operation of the planning system is essential to ensure that the right decisions are made now, to ensure a good quality of life for Island residents in the future. Therefore we commented extensively in the public consultation about the next long-term plan, the Island Strategy plan. Through the on-line council website many Islanders contributed to the debate. We shall be closely monitoring the next phase, which is the amended plan that will be produced in response to these comments.

All this debate about planning is guided by the Government's national policies. These are subject to political priorities which frequently lead to changes in the system. The national policies guide the development of County policies. These tend to be broad brush documents that cannot recognise local community needs. With the introduction of the Localism Bill a few years ago the government sought to encourage town and parish councils and local residents groups to draw up Neighbourhood plans that, when approved, will affect the decisions made on planning applications in their area.

These Neighbourhood Plans involve considerable work and some expense that has put off some communities from taking action. We cannot stress too much how important these plans can be. We wish to encourage all communities to produce a plan to protect their area from inappropriate development.

David Burdett - Isle of Wight Society Chairman

## **CIVIC VOICE LAUNCHES MANIFESTO AND CALLS FOR AN ABC PLANNING SYSTEM WITH COMMUNITIES AT THE HEART NEED FOR AN ACCESSIBLE, BALANCED AND COLLABORATIVE (ABC) PLANNING SYSTEM**

Civic Voice – the national charity for the civic movement – is today calling for all political parties to make a firm manifesto commitment: “To give communities a meaningful voice at every stage of the planning system” and in doing so, “create an Accessible, Balanced and Collaborative Planning System, which ensures we move from talking to the ‘already engaged’ to having ‘everyone engaged’”. The call was made as Civic Voice’s Chair, Joan Humble launched our manifesto for the General Election 2019, emphasising an urgent need for a rebalancing of power within the planning system. *The Isle of Wight Society is affiliated to Civic Voice.*

The manifesto is available at: <http://www.civicvoice.org.uk/manifesto>

Speaking at the launch of the manifesto, Joan Humble, Chair of Civic Voice said: “Recent research undertaken by Grosvenor Britain & Ireland found that the public has a significant distrust of the planning process. Just 2% of the public trust developers and only 7% trust local authorities when it comes to planning for large-scale development. We can either ignore this research and carry on as we are and continue to face the same challenges in building the homes the nation needs, or we can accept that the system is not working for local people and do something about it.

Our call is simple. We are calling for an Accessible, Balanced and Collaborative Planning System to ensure everyone has a meaningful voice to shape where they live.

Humble added: “We need to move away from ‘consultations’ to ‘conversations’ and open the planning system up to ‘collaboration and participation’. If we give citizens a genuine meaningful voice in the planning process, we can increase confidence and trust in the decisions being taken. Whether right or wrong, people believe that the decisions impacting their local area are not made locally, but by outside interests, who, once the development has finished, move on. By calling for a meaningful right to participate at every stage of the planning system, we can change this. With the use of new planning technology, there is no reason why this cannot happen.”

Alongside calling for an “ABC Planning System” Civic Voice is also calling for the next Government to:

- Introduce a ‘pre-application community consultation stage’ and a ‘limited community right of appeal’ into the planning system.
- Strengthen Statements of Community Involvement (SCIs) so that the statements set out, in accessible Plain English, how the local authority and developers will be expected to meaningfully engage with local communities on planning.
- Introduce an ‘Office for Public Participation’ to oversee standards and consistency in public consultations. For major developments it would be an independent ‘honest broker’ to carry out the pre-application consultation with the local community, removing any perceived conflict of interest for the developer.
- Utilise planning technology in decision making so that we go from talking to the ‘already engaged’ to having ‘everyone engaged’ in shaping our towns, cities and villages.

Ian Harvey, Executive Director of Civic Voice, finished by saying: “We have a planning system that may not be completely broken, but it certainly needs re-balancing and fixing to work better for communities. Doing so will ensure we build a modern planning system with communities at the heart. With these changes, we believe we can build the homes that we need and ensure that everyone in England can say, ‘we care about where we live’.”

**Civic Voice works to make the places where everyone lives more attractive, enjoyable and distinctive. We speak up for civic societies and local communities across England. Civic societies are the most numerous participants in the planning system.**

## Isle of Wight Society Conservation Awards 2020

Shortly we will be asking architects and builders for their nominations for the Conservation Awards 2020. Entries will close on February 14<sup>th</sup> 2020 and should be made on line. Details can be found on our Isle of Wight Society website, under Conservation Awards.

We do not have specific categories of entry, apart from the RIBA New Build Award, which RIBA run in conjunction with our event. In addition, the CPRE often present their Good Lighting Award at our presentation evening.

We are looking for properties or developments, small or large, completed within the last five years which have been restored, conserved, renovated, found a new use, repaired, rescued, or generally improved. They may enhance the street scene, have saved an old building from collapse, be a new build that fits into the neighbourhood, given an old building a new use or any combination of these.

Following shortlisting by a panel of judges, who include professionals and lay people, judging will take place in April, before a presentation on May 15<sup>th</sup> to which all entrants receive tickets. Some of our winners have gone on to the Civic Voice National competition with great success.

So if you know of anyone who has been doing some restoration work, let them now about the Conservation Awards. We will congratulate those who are caring for our Island buildings at our Awards Evening at the Royal Yacht Squadron, Cowes on **Friday 15<sup>th</sup> May 2020, tickets £10.**



Shanklin War Memorial, and the Barrington fountain at Newport Quay were examples of smaller restoration projects entered in the past, and many church conservation projects, such as Wroxall Church, shown here, have delighted the judges.

So much expert craftsmanship is still being carried out all over the Island. Keep your eyes open, and please let any builders and architects know about the Isle of Wight Society Conservation Awards.

---

*The Isle of Wight Society is a Registered Charity, No. 276986.*

*We were formed in 1969 to stimulate interest in the beauty, history, and character of the Island, and to encourage high standards of planning, building development and Conservation.*

**Recent winners of our Isle of Wight Society Conservation Award**



2011 Villa Amanti, Ventnor, restoration



Ryde Castle 2013, restored after the fire



Northwood House, 2017, conservation



Heath Cottage, Brighstone 2012, restoration



Yarmouth Station 2015, excellent additions.



The Bandstand, Sandown 2016, conversion



Northwood Cemetery Chapels 2018, restoration



Golden Hill Fort, 2013 Heritage Award, restoration and new use.