Victoria & Albert
Our Lives in Watercolour

Large Text Labels

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Victoria & Albert: Our Lives in Watercolour

Queen Victoria (r.1837–1901) and her husband Prince Albert spent many quiet evenings together compiling albums of watercolours, prints and photographs. Among these were nine volumes that Victoria described as ‘My valuable Albums ... containing most beautiful water color paintings by the first Artists, and some by Amateurs, collected by my beloved Husband & myself, and representing the different places we visited & scenes of our life etc’. Many of the works in this exhibition were originally arranged in these very personal albums.

The royal couple collected watercolours in different ways – direct commissions from artists, purchases at exhibitions, presents exchanged for birthdays or at Christmas, and gifts from others. The queen and
prince were proficient amateur artists themselves, and Victoria took watercolour lessons from some of the artists whose works they acquired. While Albert in particular engaged eagerly with the newly emerging technology of photography, that art form was not yet able to capture events with the same vivacity as watercolour.

These watercolours give us an insight into the public and private lives of Victoria and Albert, at home and abroad. They capture the pomp and spectacle of the British court, the shaping of a modern nation, and the close-knit family at the heart of it all.
The German artist Winterhalter was one of Europe’s most fashionable portrait painters, and a favourite of Victoria and Albert – there are more than a hundred paintings and watercolours by him in the Royal Collection. Winterhalter made these watercolour portraits during one of his regular visits to Britain, and the royal couple gave prints of them as gifts to their friends and relations.
Facsimile Album

Most of the watercolours in this exhibition were originally pasted into albums. By 1900 they had apparently become dilapidated, in part due to Victoria frequently looking through the volumes after Albert’s death, and they were dismantled and reorganised in the 1930s.

This facsimile of one of Victoria and Albert’s original albums was made in 2019 in the Royal Bindery at Windsor Castle. Its appearance is based on a surviving album of theatrical watercolours compiled by the couple, and the watercolours included (as modern digital prints) are taken from an early list of the contents of one of the albums. The accompanying film gives more information about the facsimile project.
Home & Family

Victoria and Albert collected many watercolour views of their homes, inside and out. These were settings for both domestic and court life, and the watercolours offer a glimpse of royal family life – private spaces such as bedrooms and sitting rooms, and family celebrations of birthdays and christenings.

The royal parents were also eager to document their growing family, and they kept sculptors, painters and photographers busy recording the appearances and activities of their nine children as they grew. Victoria and Albert kept some of these watercolours in a separate sequence of family portrait albums.
The royal children in costume for a Twelfth Night performance

Queen Victoria’s Journal, 6 January 1852
Caleb Robert Stanley (1795–1868)

The garden front of Buckingham Palace

17 August 1839

This was mounted as the very first work in Victoria and Albert’s series of nine watercolour albums. It was given to the queen by her mother, the Duchess of Kent, as a gift in 1839, the year before Victoria’s wedding to Albert.

RCIN 919891
Joseph Nash (1809–78)

The Grand Corridor, Windsor Castle

1846

The Grand Corridor at Windsor was built for Victoria's uncle, George IV, to display magnificent paintings, sculptures and furniture. Figures probably intended to be Queen Victoria and her second daughter, Princess Alice, are here seen just walking into view, illustrating the dual nature of the castle as both a royal residence and a family home.

RCIN 919781
Joseph Nash (1809–78)

Queen Victoria’s Bedroom, Windsor Castle

c.1847

In this most private space, the couple’s families were the focus of the decoration. The two largest portraits on the facing wall are of Albert’s mother and father, and opposite (not visible here) were paintings of Victoria’s parents. Portraits of grandparents, aunts and uncles made up the rest of the works in the room.

RCIN 919810
Prince Leopold, Victoria and Albert’s youngest son, was christened on 28 June 1853 at Buckingham Palace. The queen recorded in her journal that the baby ‘screamed a good deal while being baptized’. Leopold’s parents and godparents later attended a banquet in the Picture Gallery. The colour lilac, which decorates the gallery walls, was fashionable in the 1850s.
Every Christmas, the royal couple prepared tables of presents for one another, their children and the queen’s mother, the Duchess of Kent. The centrepiece of each table was a Christmas tree decorated with candles.
James Roberts (c.1800–67)

**Queen Victoria’s birthday table at Osborne House**

1861

Victoria and Albert also decorated present tables for family birthdays. They often gave one another works of art, and on both Victoria’s birthday in 1861 and for Christmas 1850 (see Roberts’s Christmas watercolour above), the prince bought his wife paintings by Emma Gaggiotti Richards, an artist they both admired. This was the last of the queen’s birthday tables captured in watercolour before Albert’s death.

RCIN 919874
Emma Gaggiotti Richards (1825–1912)

**Hope**

Oil on canvas, c.1850

RCIN 403584
Emma Gaggiotti Richards (1825–1912)

Aurora

Oil on canvas, 1861

RCIN 403744
Eugène-Louis Lami (1800–90)

The Stuart Ball at Buckingham Palace

1851

This watercolour depicts the last of three costume balls held by Victoria and Albert, which they hosted to support Britain’s textile industry. The theme of the ball was the reign of Charles II, and Lami worked closely with the couple to design their costumes. Victoria thought they were ‘really beautiful & so correct’, and her exquisite dress remains in the Royal Collection.

RCIN 919904
Eugène-Louis Lami (1800–90)

**Queen Victoria’s costume for the Stuart Ball**

Silk, lace, gold braid, silver fringing, seed pearls, 1851

RCIN 74860
The queen and Prince Albert both enjoyed dancing and entertaining, and they hosted many balls at Buckingham Palace, attended by thousands of guests. The French artist Lami specialised in such glamorous society scenes – Victoria and Albert first discovered his work when they were given a present by the French king of an album including watercolours by the artist.
Eugenio Agneni (1816–79)

The children’s costume ball at Buckingham Palace

1859

Prince Leopold’s sixth birthday was celebrated with a party at Buckingham Palace. Leopold and his brother Arthur dressed as medieval princes (seen on the left, dancing with their sisters Louise and Helena, who wear dresses with blue skirts). Victoria and Albert watch the children from the stage at the back of the room.

RCIN 919909
Sir William Ross (1794–1860)

**Albert Edward, Prince of Wales, and Prince Alfred**

1847

William Ross painted many watercolour portraits of the royal children. The queen appreciated his ability to capture a good likeness and his relatively low prices. This double portrait of the two eldest princes in Highland dress was quickly reproduced as a print, which Victoria and Albert gave to members of their court as Christmas presents in 1847.

RCIN 913818
Franz Xaver Winterhalter (1805–73)

Princess Louise with her nursemaid, Eliza Collins

1850

This charming double portrait depicts Victoria and Albert’s fourth daughter, Louise, at the age of two with her nurse Eliza Collins, who married Prince Albert’s valet Rudolph Löhlein in the same year. Victoria and Albert had a keen interest in those around them, and compiled albums of photographs of royal staff, including the Löhleins and their children.

RCIN 913336
Hills & Saunders (1852 to date)

**Mrs. Löhlein. (Miss E. Collins)**

Albumen print, c.1864

RCIN 2910268
As a surprise organised by Albert, the princesses Victoria (known as Vicky) and Alice dressed up in these elaborate costumes and danced a minuet for their mother on her 31st birthday. The queen and prince had danced the same minuet at a ball five years earlier.
Queen Victoria’s Journal

From the age of thirteen, Victoria kept a detailed diary (which she called her journal). As well as recording her experiences in writing, she also often made small sketches in the margins of the pages. While the majority of Victoria’s diary is known through a copy in the Royal Archives, Windsor Castle, made by her daughter Princess Beatrice, the queen’s sketches or doodles were carefully cut out by Beatrice and preserved.

The images by Victoria on the panels introducing each section of the exhibition are taken from her journal – they give us a sense of her own perspective on her extraordinary life.
Queen Victoria’s Journal, 1 August 1832

Transcript:
This book, Mamma gave me, that I might write the journal, of my journey to Wales in it.
Victoria.
Kensington Palace. July 31st.
Osborne House

Victoria and Albert built Osborne House on the Isle of Wight between 1845 and 1851 to provide space and privacy for their young family. Prince Albert was heavily involved in the design of the residence, in the style of an Italian Renaissance palazzo. The queen described Osborne as ‘a little Paradise’: it offered fresh sea air, sunshine, and an ideal starting point for tours on the royal yacht. The family frequently visited Osborne during the spring and summer months, and enjoyed activities such as flying kites and planting trees together.

Victoria’s watercolour tutor, the Scottish artist William Leighton Leitch, painted many watercolours of life at Osborne for Victoria and Albert’s watercolour albums, some of which document the building of their new home.
Prince Alfred, Prince Arthur and Albert Edward, Prince of Wales, in sailor suits at Osborne

Queen Victoria’s Journal, 20 August 1853
Charlotte, Lady Canning (1817–61) and
William Leighton Leitch (1804–83)

The view from the unfinished terrace, Osborne House

c.1848

Leitch taught Charlotte Canning, one of Victoria’s ladies-in-waiting, who was a talented amateur watercolourist. Lady Canning recommended the artist to the queen as a tutor. This watercolour was attributed to Canning and Leitch in Victoria and Albert’s album, suggesting it was made during a lesson at Osborne.

RCIN 919848
Osborne House under construction

1847

The central building with the tower here is the pavilion wing, which housed Victoria and Albert’s private rooms and the royal nursery. On the left is the main wing, used by the older children, in a state of near completion. Work is also underway on the laying out of the Italianate terraces below.

RCIN 919842
James Roberts (c.1800–67)

The Marble Corridor, Osborne House

1852

The lively children – probably Princesses Louise and Alice and Prince Alfred – and a small dog provide a contrast to the static marble sculptures displayed on pedestals along the corridor. The waters of the Solent are glimpsed through the doors at the end.

RCIN 923463
William Leighton Leitch (1804–83)

The Swiss Cottage, Osborne

1855

The Swiss Cottage was built as a playhouse for the royal children in the gardens at Osborne House. Here they had their own space to learn skills such as gardening, cooking and sewing. A miniature dairy, which was used by the princes and princesses to make butter, cream and cheese, has recently been rediscovered in the cottage – its entrance had been blocked and plastered over.

RCIN 919867
Osborne House from below
the terrace

1851

The Italianate landscaping and massed planting of vibrant flowers undertaken at Osborne by Prince Albert were the latest fashion in garden design. Victoria recorded in her journal that Albert planted ‘very rare & exotic looking plants’ there, including the succulent *Agave americana* next to the lion on the left.

RCIN 919847
Edinburgh and the Palace of Holyroodhouse

‘Edinburgh made a great impression upon us; it is quite beautiful & totally unlike anything I have seen’, the queen wrote in her journal in September 1842. Victoria and Albert’s first visit to Scotland sparked a deep love for the country which was nurtured by several further tours. A recommendation by Victoria’s physician led to the couple visiting Deeside in Aberdeenshire in 1848, where they decided to create a second family home, Balmoral Castle.

From 1850, the royal family stayed at the Palace of Holyroodhouse, the monarch’s seat in Scotland, on their annual journeys north. They often carried out civic engagements in the city, and enjoyed visiting landmarks such as Arthur’s Seat and Rosslyn Chapel. In 1854 the palace became a tourist attraction when
Victoria gave permission for the historic apartments to be opened to paying visitors.

Fisherwomen in Leith

Queen Victoria’s Journal, 3 September 1842
David Roberts (1796–1864)

The Ruins of Holyrood Abbey

1823

Victoria and Albert particularly admired the picturesque ruins of Holyrood Abbey, visible from the royal apartments, which they both sketched. Though painted 30 years earlier, this watercolour is inscribed on the back with the date ‘Sept 5/53’, and was probably added to an album in 1853 as a souvenir of the royal couple’s overnight stay en route to Balmoral.

RCIN 919572
James Duffield Harding (1797–1863)

The Palace of Holyroodhouse

c.1845–55

On their first day at the ‘interesting & ancient Palace of my ancestors’ in 1850, the queen and her family explored the building thoroughly, visiting the abbey ruins, the picture gallery and the apartments of Mary, Queen of Scots. The following morning they climbed Arthur’s Seat, seen in the background here, and Victoria declared that the ‘view at the top is very rewarding’.

RCIN 919566
Waller Hugh Paton (1828–95)

**Edinburgh with a distant view of the Palace of Holyroodhouse**

1862

Victoria and Albert patronised many Scottish artists, including the brothers Joseph Noel and Waller Hugh Paton. The queen requested that this view show Holyroodhouse as she ‘used to see it on approaching from the Station’. Paton was known for his sunset and moonlit scenes suffused with purple tints.

RCIN 919573
The palace’s royal quarters were extensively redecorated in advance of Victoria’s first stay. The ceiling here is richly painted to harmonise with the colours of the tapestry panels hung on the walls, which depict the story of the goddess Diana. The interior decoration was carried out by D.R. Hay & Co., the Edinburgh firm who had been employed by Sir Walter Scott at his residence Abbotsford, and had a reputation for experimental colour schemes.

RCIN 919568
Balmoral Castle

From 1848 onwards the royal family stayed at Balmoral in the Scottish Highlands for around six weeks every autumn. They rented the existing castle before purchasing it outright in 1852, but the queen and prince soon decided to build a new, bigger residence. ‘Albert the Creator’ (as Victoria called him) played a leading role in the design of this family home.

Victoria and Albert shared an idealistic view of Scotland, conditioned by the sentimentalising paintings of Edwin Landseer and novels of Sir Walter Scott, and embraced many Scottish traditions. They considered the Highlands and its people to be untouched by modernity, and envied what they perceived to be a better, simpler way of life, close to nature.
The royal couple admired the rugged scenery around Balmoral – ‘beautiful, so wild & grand’, Victoria enthused – and spent much time outdoors, sketching, walking, picnicking and shooting. They invited artists to Balmoral to record scenes from their life there as well as commissioning works from local painters, and included many Highland subjects in their watercolour albums.
A stag

Queen Victoria’s Journal, 18 October 1853
The Drawing Room, Balmoral

1857

In September 1853 Victoria laid the foundation stone of the new castle, designed by William Smith of Aberdeen, and the family first stayed there two years later. This is one of twelve interior views by James Roberts, who also painted watercolours of Osborne. Decorative elements include light-toned wood, thistle-patterned wallpaper, and the use of tartan as a furnishing material.

RCIN 919477
The completion of the cairn on Craigowan

1852

In October 1852 Victoria and Albert built a cairn to celebrate their purchase of the land on which the new Balmoral Castle would stand. The royal family wore tartan, a piper played and whisky was served. Victoria recorded that ‘Albert climbed up to the top of it & placed the last stones, after which three cheers were given’.

RCIN 919483
Victoria and Albert regularly hosted balls at Balmoral when in residence. The decoration of the ballroom had a strongly Highland flavour, with hanging swords, spears and targes (shields) draped in Royal Stewart tartan, and stags’ heads set on carved oval wreaths around the walls. Here Victoria, Albert and their party watch Lord MacDuff performing a sword dance.
Carl Haag (1820–1915)

**John Mackenzie with a dead stag on a pony**

1853

This naturalistic study, in which the gillie John Mackenzie appears to meet our eyes, is for a large watercolour which Victoria ordered as a present for Albert, showing him returning to Balmoral after a day’s shooting. The textured paper and broad brushstrokes Haag used contribute to the tactile depiction of the coats of the pony and the stag.

RCIN 920750
Lizzie Stewart and Mary Symons

1853

Lizzie and Mary were the daughters of the queen’s forester and a local merchant respectively, and both later entered royal service. Victoria had herself sketched the two girls the previous autumn, referring to them in her journal as ‘dear little lassies’.

RCIN 920747
Queen Victoria (1819–1901)

**Mary Symons and Elizabeth Stewart**

Pencil and watercolour, 14 and 18 September 1852

RCIN 980027.bx
Lochnagar

1850

Lochnagar, the name given to both a loch and a mountain near Balmoral, became a favourite beauty spot for Victoria and Albert. Following their first successful expedition to the top of the mountain together, Victoria described it as ‘one of the wildest, grandest things imaginable ... Albert thinks it very like the Crater of Mount Vesuvius.’ James Giles was an Aberdonian landscape painter who made many views of Balmoral and its surroundings for his royal patrons.

RCIN 919624
The German artist Carl Haag came to Balmoral in autumn 1853 at Victoria and Albert’s request, after they had received a watercolour by him as a Christmas gift from relatives. He was given a studio, which his patrons visited to see his work in progress, and initially used Victoria’s painting materials as his went missing on the train north to Scotland. Haag accompanied the royal party to watch fishermen in action on 9 September.

RCIN 920762
In 1860 and 1861 the queen and prince made four ‘Great Expeditions’, travelling incognito to scenic spots in the Cairngorms and staying overnight in local inns. During the third expedition, the Duke of Atholl and his men escorted the royal party across the river by the Falls of Tarf at the head of Glen Tilt.

The group includes Victoria, Albert, their daughter Alice and her fiancé Prince Louis of Hesse, with two pipers leading the way. Victoria commissioned this work after Albert’s death, in memory of their
happy times in Scotland.

RCIN 919686
Egron Sellif Lundgren (1815–75)

The Highland Fête at Balmoral, 22 September 1859

c.1859

Already a royal favourite, the Swedish artist Lundgren was invited to Scotland in 1859. He painted watercolours depicting the events of the Highland fête hosted that autumn at Balmoral; the royal family had previously attended and enjoyed the games at nearby Braemar. Queen Victoria described the appearance of the festivities as ‘striking in the extreme’.

RCIN 919484
Queen Victoria as a watercolourist

Victoria was eight years old when she began weekly drawing lessons with the painter Richard Westall. After his death in 1836 she recorded that he was a ‘patient, agreeable master, & a very worthy man’.

Victoria often took those close to her, such as family members and pets (of which she was very fond), as her subjects. Her works also reflect her many enthusiasms. She enjoyed visiting the theatre to see operas and ballets, and often sketched the scenes and actors she admired.
From left to right:

Queen Victoria (1819–1901)

The Viennoises

1845

RCIN 980011.v
Queen Victoria (1819–1901)

Eos

4 October 1840

RCIN 816796
Queen Victoria (1819–1901)

**Arthur**

7 May 1853

RCIN 980024.dk
Travelling the Kingdom

Victoria and Albert travelled widely throughout Britain and Ireland during their marriage, both for duty and for pleasure. They were genuinely interested in visiting different parts of the country, and it was important that the public had the opportunity to see them. Private visits were made to the country estates of the nobility, and they travelled to cities such as Manchester, Leeds and Birmingham to open new civic buildings and witness industrial progress at first hand.

The royal family’s travels were extensively reported in the press, and some newspapers employed artists to illustrate their coverage. Victoria and Albert read the news stories and came to appreciate the work of these graphic artists, engaging some to paint watercolours for their own albums.
A woman in Welsh national dress

Queen Victoria’s Journal, 14 October 1852
William Leighton Leitch (1804–83)

Queen Victoria landing at Granton Pier, 1 September 1842

1844

Leitch emphasises the warm welcome that Victoria and Albert received when they arrived in Scotland on their first visit to the country. This watercolour was one of a set commissioned by the Duke and Duchess of Buccleuch, who hosted the royal couple at Dalkeith Palace, as souvenirs for their guests.

RCIN 919577
Mary Herbert (1817–93)

Killarney Middle Lake from Copper Mine Bay

c.1845–61

Mary Herbert and her husband Henry, Lord Lieutenant of Kerry, hosted the royal family on their trip to Ireland in August 1861. Like the queen, Mary painted in watercolours throughout her life and was a celebrated landscape painter – The Times newspaper even claimed that ‘among water-colour artists Mrs Herbert is held to be the most gifted amateur in the kingdom’.

RCIN 920254
Caleb Robert Stanley (1795–1868)

**Brocket Hall, Hatfield**

1841

Victoria and Albert visited the Prime Minister Lord Melbourne’s seat, Brocket Hall, during a tour of Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire early in their marriage. The focus of this watercolour is not the grand house, which Stanley places to the left of the composition, but its idyllic setting.

RCIN 920153
Richard Principal Leitch (1826–82)

Aston Hall, Birmingham

1859

On 15 June 1858 Victoria and Albert visited Aston Hall. As the queen recorded in her journal, the magnificent Jacobean house was to be ‘converted into a People’s Museum & Park’, as it remains to this day. The royal couple had lunch in the hall and met members of the public before the park was declared open.

RCIN 920244
William Wyld (1806–89)

St George’s Hall, Liverpool

1852

The subjects of these very different views of Liverpool and Manchester (in the centre) were probably specified to Wyld by his patrons, as they accord closely with Victoria’s journal entries for the couple’s visit to the two cities in October 1851. In Liverpool she and Albert particularly admired St George’s Hall, a newly built concert venue and court building.

RCIN 920219
In August 1853 Victoria and Albert visited the Irish Industrial Exhibition, to which they had lent several works of art. Hayes does not depict the royal couple but rather the onlookers, soldiers and policemen awaiting their exit outside the exhibition building.

RCIN 920229
William Wyld (1806–89)

Manchester from Kersal Moor

1852

Staying just outside of Manchester on her first visit there, the queen recorded seeing the ‘endless chimneys & factories rise around’. Wyld’s view of the great industrial city is heavily romanticised, with an idyllic pastoral foreground contrasting atmospherically with the smoking chimneys in the distance.

RCIN 920223
Frank Dillon (1823–1909)

The Britannia tubular bridge over the Menai Straits

1852

Dillon’s view of the innovative Britannia Bridge between North Wales and the island of Anglesey emphasises the structure’s monumentality. Designed by the celebrated engineer Robert Stephenson, who showed the royal party the bridge on their visit in October 1852, Victoria thought it ‘stupendous’.

RCIN 920228
Joseph Nash Junior (1835–1922)

The Town Hall, Leeds

1859

Victorian civic pride was expressed in a wave of new public buildings across the country. Victoria opened the new town hall in Leeds in September 1858. She commissioned this souvenir view of the building from the son of one of her and Albert’s favourite artists – possibly as a gesture of support for the family, as ill health meant the elder Joseph Nash was unable to work.

RCIN 920246
Paul Jacob Naftel (1817–91)

**Queen Victoria and Prince Albert landing at St Pierre, Guernsey**

1846

Naftel, a Guernsey-born artist, had his studio in St Peter Port, where Victoria and Albert disembarked on their first visit to the island in August 1846. His depictions of their arrival published in the Illustrated London News were probably seen by Victoria and Albert, who then commissioned Naftel to paint this watercolour for their album.

RCIN 920182
The queen and prince admired the Welsh scenery as they travelled by sea up to west Scotland in 1847. Accompanied by their children, the Prince of Wales and Princess Royal, they stopped several times along the Welsh coast to sightsee. The soft, muted palette in Richardson’s watercolour contributes to the picturesque appearance of the ruined castle.
The royal group visited Dumbarton Castle on 17 August 1847, sailing up the Clyde from Greenock. Victoria noted the castle’s royal associations with William Wallace and Mary, Queen of Scots. Hildebrandt, court painter to the King of Prussia, visited Britain in early 1848 to make watercolours of Windsor Castle for his patron. Queen Victoria saw Hildebrandt at work and commissioned her own series of views related to her sightseeing the previous summer.

RCIN 913664
Richard Principal Leitch (1826–82)

Gorey Castle, Jersey

1860

The son of Victoria’s watercolour tutor William Leitch, Richard painted three views of Jersey ‘according to the Queen’s requests’ in 1860, which suggests Victoria specified the subjects. One such view was this romanticised scene of the medieval Gorey Castle (Mont Orgueil) with a sleeping fisherman on the quay, where the royal yacht had anchored for a night during a tour the previous summer.

RCIN 920248
Germany, Albert’s Homeland

In August 1845 Victoria and Albert made their first visit together to Coburg, the birthplace of both Albert and the Duchess of Kent, Victoria’s mother. Keen for a record of their travels, the royal couple acquired works by several German artists. Victoria’s lady-in-waiting, Lady Canning, was also asked to (in her words) ‘draw all day long’ during the trip, and fourteen of her views were mounted in the watercolour albums.

Victoria and Albert made two further visits to Germany together to visit their eldest daughter Vicky, who in 1858 married Prince Frederick William of Prussia. That summer the queen and prince stayed with the young couple at Potsdam and went sightseeing in Berlin and the surrounding area. Two years later, Victoria and Albert met their
first grandchild – the future Kaiser Wilhelm II –
at Coburg and were ‘so happy to see him at last’.

Queen Victoria’s drafts, 20 August 1845

Transcript:
Wednesday – August 20. Rosenau
How happy, & how joyful we felt on awaking to feel ourselves here, at the dear Rosenau, my dearest Albert’s birth Place – & favourite place! –
Prince Albert was born at the Rosenau, a country residence of the Dukes of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha in Bavaria. This view exaggerates the size of the small building. Morison worked extensively for Victoria and Albert in Britain and Germany, painting views of Buckingham Palace and Coburg and Gotha.

RCIN 920430
Carl Graeb (1816–84)

The Small Knights’ Hall,
Schloss Stolzenfels

1847

This watercolour was part of an album of views of Germany, presented to the royal couple by the King of Prussia two years after their tour. In her letter of thanks, Victoria said that the gift reminded her of ‘all the charming places’ they had visited in Prussia. At Stolzenfels Castle, on the Rhine, they enjoyed tea and supper in this hall, painted with scenes from German medieval history.

RCIN 920422
Albert’s older brother Ernest, to whom he was very close, is depicted here with his wife Alexandrine and others outside his hunting castle near Gotha. Victoria and Albert stayed at Reinhardshbrunn in 1845; the queen thought it ‘a lovely place’. The Black servant in green livery serving drinks, prominently placed at the centre of the composition, may be Maximilian Leon Wilhelm Philipps, whom Victoria singled out in her journal for being ‘so attentive’ to her and Albert during their visit.

RCIN 917552
Egron Sellif Lundgren (1815–75)

The wedding of the Princess Royal and Prince Frederick William of Prussia

1858

Prince Albert gave this watercolour as a gift to his wife. Lundgren, who was probably present, captured the intimacy of the marriage service, which Albert described to his stepmother as ‘very solemn and affecting’.

RCIN 919928
Carl Graeb (1816–84)

The view from the terrace of the Casino, Schloss Glienicke

c.1858–9

Victoria and Albert admired this view when they visited this palace outside Berlin, home of their son-in-law’s aunt and uncle, and the hosts commissioned a depiction of it as a gift for their guests. The striped awning lends an intimate feel to the watercolour, placing us as spectators on the terrace looking out at the view.

RCIN 920705
Max Michael (1823–91)

Unter den Linden with the statue of Frederick the Great, Berlin

c.1858

On her first visit to Berlin, Queen Victoria admired the boulevard of Unter den Linden, which she described as ‘the Bond St of Berlin, a broad street, with trees ... very fine & gay, with pretty shops’.

RCIN 920689
Carl Graeb (1816–84)

A distant view of Potsdam at sunset

1858

Graeb’s theatrical sunset view of Potsdam, framed by trees at left and right, was a present from Prince Albert to his wife at Christmas in 1858. During their stay in Germany earlier that summer, the queen recorded in her journal that ‘Potsdam lit up by the setting sun looked splendid’.

RCIN 920706
France

Prince Albert travelled in Europe as a teenager, spending time in Italy and Switzerland, but the queen’s first chance to venture abroad came thanks to an invitation from the French king Louis-Philippe in September 1843. Victoria and Albert sailed across the English Channel to Normandy to stay with their host and his family at the Château d’Eu. The experience seemed like a ‘dream’ to Victoria, and an affectionate relationship developed between the two royal families, strengthened by further reciprocal visits.

But 1848 saw profound political upheaval in Europe, and Louis-Philippe’s abdication. The Crimean War in the mid-1850s made it necessary for Victoria and Albert to forge an alliance with Louis-Philippe’s successor, the Emperor Napoleon III. Despite initial reservations, the queen and prince came to admire
the emperor. He and his wife visited Windsor in April 1855, and Victoria and Albert made a return state visit to Paris that August. According to Albert, Victoria greatly enjoyed their trip and ‘won the hearts of all by her endeavours to make herself agreeable to the people’.
A French postillion rider

Queen Victoria’s Journal, 6 September 1843
Eugène-Louis Lami (1800–90)

The arrival of Queen Victoria at the Château d’Eu

c.1843–4

During their seven-day stay in France, Victoria and Albert enjoyed exploring their surroundings and getting to know the French court. Louis-Philippe organised entertainments for his guests including picnics, concerts and drives in the countryside in charabancs, the type of carriage seen here.

RCIN 919998
Eugène-Louis Lami (1800–90)

Marie-Amélie, Queen of the French, greeting Queen Victoria at Le Tréport

c.1843–4

Victoria and Albert were welcomed to France on 2 September 1843 by Louis-Philippe and his wife, Queen Marie-Amélie. Louis-Philippe (wearing red trousers and a sash) turns to Albert standing beside him as Victoria and Marie-Amélie greet one another. Their clasped hands, the focus of this scene, symbolise the close friendship that Louis-Philippe hoped to enjoy with Britain and its monarch.

RCIN 919996
Joseph Nash (1809–78)

Queen Victoria driving out with Louis-Philippe from the Quadrangle, Windsor Castle

1844

Louis-Philippe made a return visit to Windsor in October 1844. Here Victoria, Albert, the Duchess of Kent and the guest of honour depart the castle for a drive in a charabanc (a present from the French king). In her journal the queen described the public’s interest in Louis-Philippe, and Nash includes onlookers who line the path and perch on the mound of the Round Tower.

RCIN 920031
The Order of the Garter is the oldest and most senior Order of Chivalry in Britain, and Louis-Philippe was delighted to be awarded the honour – the queen recorded in her journal that he thanked her and Albert repeatedly. The ceremony took place in the Garter Throne Room at Windsor Castle, which continues to be used for that purpose.

RCIN 919793
George Housman Thomas (1824–68)

**Napoleon III and Prince Albert in Boulogne**

1854

In 1854 Albert visited Boulogne to inspect troops stationed there, further demonstrating the Franco-British alliance against Russia during the Crimean War. The emphasis here is on the cheering people welcoming the prince. Albert commissioned this work as a Christmas gift for Victoria, who had not accompanied him.

RCIN 920050
According to Victoria, all was ‘in a state of bustle, excitement & expectation’ when the dashing Emperor Napoleon III and his glamorous wife Eugénie arrived for a State Visit in April 1855. This scene shows the couples followed by Victoria and Albert’s two eldest children about to ascend the Grand Staircase, with Yeomen of the Guard standing to attention. The young Prince of Wales appears to look outwards, as if at us, with curiosity.
On the fifth day of the visit, Victoria and Albert took the emperor and empress to the Crystal Palace at Sydenham to the south-east of London. This innovative structure, which Albert called ‘a real work of art’, was first erected in Hyde Park for the Great Exhibition of 1851, and then dismantled and rebuilt at Sydenham as a centre for leisure and entertainment. Victoria recorded that their guests were ‘delighted & much surprised at it’.

RCIN 920231
Here Victoria and Albert enter Paris, through a grand triumphal arch and amidst cheering crowds, at the start of their ten-day sojourn in August 1855. But after delays to their journey it was in fact nearing twilight when the procession took place, and many spectators were unhappy after a long wait to see the British royal family.
Jean-Baptiste-Fortuné de Fournier (1798–1864)

**Queen Victoria’s drawing room at Saint-Cloud**

1855

The Château of Saint-Cloud, to the west of Paris, was Victoria and Albert’s home during their visit. No effort was spared in ensuring the queen’s comfort; the empress even arranged for paintings and furniture to be brought from the Louvre museum to furnish their rooms. One of Napoleon III’s favourite residences, Saint-Cloud was destroyed fifteen years later during the Franco-Prussian War.

RCIN 920064
Eugène-Louis Lami (1800–90) and Jules-Pierre-Michel Diéterle (1811–89)

The supper in the Salle de Spectacle, Versailles

1855

The emperor and empress organised a packed programme of entertainment for their royal guests, including this supper and ball in the theatre at Versailles. Victoria wrote enthusiastically in her journal that it was ‘quite one of the finest & most brilliant sights we ever witnessed’. This watercolour was originally in a souvenir album which Victoria received with delight from Napoleon III and Eugénie for Christmas that year.

RCIN 920097
Max Berthelin (1811–77)

**Illuminations at the Hôtel de Ville**

1855

Victoria and Albert were guests of honour at a ball hosted by the prefect of the Seine, Baron Haussmann, on 23 August. Almost 8,000 guests attended, though 50,000 requests for invitations were received. The magnificently illuminated façade of the Hôtel de Ville is on the left, with the cathedral of Notre-Dame visible in the distance beyond the line of carriages arriving at the ball.

RCIN 920073
The suburban park depicted here was renovated at Napoleon III’s command. The emperor had previously lived in England and admired informal English parks and gardens, and the design of the Bois de Boulogne was based on Hyde Park in London. Victoria and Albert rode through it in their carriage almost every day on their way into Paris, and thought it ‘quite beautiful’.

RCIN 920068
Queen Victoria as a watercolourist

Queen Victoria was keen to improve her watercolour skills, possibly inspired by the example set by some of her artistic ladies-in-waiting. After a short series of lessons with Edward Lear, she was taught by the Scottish landscape painter William Leighton Leitch for 22 years. Leitch was a thorough teacher, instructing his royal pupil in composition, light, shade and colour, as can be seen here in the queen’s own practice sheet, accompanied by his detailed instructions on painting a moonlight scene.

Victoria’s early love of painting endured throughout her life – the Royal Collection includes more than 50 sketchbooks and albums filled with her work. She enjoyed painting in nature, sketching frequently
on her annual visits to Scotland and travels in Europe. Leitch observed that the widowed queen achieved some solace through her sketchbook and colour box.

From left to right:

William Leighton Leitch (1804–83)

**The Moonlight Lesson:**
a three-stage watercolour demonstration

c.1846–65

RCINs 919718–919720
Queen Victoria (1819–1901)

Monte Rosa from the railroad returning from Monza

18 April 1879

RCIN 980050.i
Queen Victoria (1819–1901), probably copying William Leighton Leitch (1804–83)

**Watercolour practice sheet**

c.1846–50

RCIN 981350
The Crimean War, 1853–6

In 1854, Britain and France joined the Ottoman Empire in a war against Russia, following disputes over territorial control and religious freedoms. Like the rest of the country, Victoria and Albert followed the Crimean War closely from its inception and engaged practically with the war effort, encouraging their older children and household to follow suit. The royal couple sent supplies including food, soap, blankets and reading material to the Crimea, pressed the government to provide adequate care and facilities for wounded soldiers returning from the front, and made unprecedented visits to military hospitals in Britain. In the midst of the conflict, the queen wrote to her uncle: ‘My whole soul and heart are in the Crimea’.

Victoria and Albert’s concern for the welfare of
British soldiers is reflected by the inclusion of almost 40 watercolours relating to the war and its aftermath in their albums.

Sketches of wounded soldiers at the military hospital, Chatham

Queen Victoria’s Journal, 3 March 1855
George Housman Thomas (1824–68)

The farewell to the Scots Fusilier Guards at Buckingham Palace

1854

This was the first of many works relating to the Crimean War in Victoria and Albert’s watercolour albums. Painted at an early stage of British involvement in the conflict, it is brightly coloured and contains individual portraits of soldiers parading before their queen, striking a note of optimism and patriotism.

RCIN 916781
Queen Victoria reviewing the Royal Artillery at Woolwich on their return from the Crimea

1856

Following the defeat of Russia at the siege of Sevastopol, peace was declared in March 1856, and British soldiers soon began to return home. The Royal Artillery disembarked at Woolwich to be inspected by the queen. Victoria’s first impressions on encountering the returning soldiers were recorded in her journal:

‘I cannot describe the emotion Albert & I felt ... The whole sight gave one a real idea of what the life and appearance of the men, on service
out there, must have been’.

RCIN 916787
In March 1855 Victoria and Albert and their two eldest sons visited the military hospital at Fort Pitt, Chatham, and met some of the 450 soldiers who had returned there from the Crimea. The queen made detailed notes and sketches of many of the men in her journal. She later wrote to Lord Panmure, Secretary for War, criticising the hospital buildings for their high windows, small wards, and lack of a dining room.
The Scutari Monument, a 100ft (30m) obelisk in the British cemetery in Istanbul, commemorates the 22,000 British soldiers who lost their lives in the Crimean War. This watercolour shows the queen, the prince and Victoria’s cousin George, Duke of Cambridge (a commander in the war), presiding over a ceremony at Sydenham unveiling a full-sized model of the monument.
Ceremonial & Spectacle

In addition to the more private ‘scenes of our life’, Victoria and Albert included watercolours of public events in the albums they compiled together. The period of their marriage encompassed events of great national and international importance. The royal couple were intimately involved with many of these; Albert, for example, was a driving force behind the Great Exhibition of 1851, often regarded as the first ‘world fair’.

In many of these watercolours, Victoria and Albert themselves are small figures, with more emphasis on the event than the couple’s participation. To a degree this can be explained by the likely vantage point of the artist, who may have been high up to get a good overview of the scene, perhaps at some distance from the royal party. But Victoria
and Albert were clearly receptive to illustrations that offered a wider view of an occasion.

The hearse carrying the Duke of Wellington
Queen Victoria’s Journal, 18 November 1852
The funeral procession of the Duke of Wellington passing Apsley House, 18 November 1852

Arthur Wellesley, 1st Duke of Wellington, was a colossal figure of the early Victorian era; fêted for his victory at the Battle of Waterloo in 1815, he served as Prime Minister from 1828 to 1830. Victoria and Albert greatly admired the Duke and gave his name to their third son, Arthur. This watercolour, showing Wellington’s funeral cortege passing his London residence Apsley House, conveys the magnitude of the public response to the death of a national hero.
Queen Victoria driving to open Parliament

1861

This watercolour shows Queen Victoria travelling with Prince Albert in the Gold State Coach to attend the State Opening of Parliament at Westminster – she noted in her journal that there were ‘many people out’. After Albert’s death, Victoria attended the ceremony much less frequently.

RCIN 920251
The Great Exhibition of 1851

‘This day is one of the greatest & most glorious days of our lives, with which, to my pride & joy the name of my dearly beloved Albert is for ever associated!’

Queen Victoria’s effusive journal entry for 1 May 1851 did not exaggerate the significance of the inauguration of the Great Exhibition. The aim of this exceptionally ambitious project was to showcase British industry alongside that of the rest of the world, with other contributors including Russia, America, Spain and Turkey. It was a huge success, encompassing over 100,000 exhibits and attracting more than six million people during its five-month run. Victoria herself visited in excess of 30 times. The exhibition took place in an innovative, purpose-built glass building in Hyde Park, London, which was nicknamed the ‘Crystal Palace’.
Both Victoria and Albert were eager to have this temporary spectacle captured in a permanent visual record. They commissioned two favourite artists, Joseph Nash and Louis Haghe, to paint 49 watercolours that were then reproduced in two volumes published in 1854. This and several other publication projects supported by Albert used chromolithography, a new technology of colour printing in keeping with the ethos of the exhibition.
Copy of a letter from Queen Victoria
to Sarah, Lady Lyttelton, 8 May 1851
Royal Archives VIC/MAIN/F/24/144

Transcript:
1st of May – the proudest & happiest day of,
as you truly call it, my “happy life”.
Joseph Nash (1809–78)

The Great Exhibition:
the stained glass gallery

1852

RCIN 919941
Joseph Nash (1809–78)

The Great Exhibition: India no. 4

c.1851

RCIN 919942
Joseph Nash (1809–78)

The Great Exhibition: the exterior

1851

In a courtyard outside the Crystal Palace, visitors could examine raw materials such as coal as well as large manufactured objects including obelisks, as Nash shows.

RCIN 919931
Louis Haghe (1806–85)

The Great Exhibition:
moving machinery

c.1851–2

RCIN 919979
Joseph Nash (1809–78)

The Great Exhibition: Sheffield hardware

1851

RCIN 919936
William Wyld (1806–89)

The ball at the Guildhall

1851

Two months after the Great Exhibition opened, Victoria and Albert were the guests of honour at a ball held by the Lord Mayor of London on 9 July to celebrate its success. Victoria described the Guildhall as ‘beautifully decorated & crowded with people’. This watercolour was probably presented to them as a memento of the occasion.

RCIN 920218
Prince Albert’s closing address at the Great Exhibition, 15 October 1851

1852

The queen wrote in her journal after the closing ceremony that ‘to think that this great & bright time, is past, like a dream ... seems incredible & melancholy’.

RCIN 919975
Memorialising Albert

Queen Victoria was distraught at Prince Albert’s death, at the age of 42 in December 1861. While she continued to have an interest in the arts, much of her subsequent patronage was devoted to perpetuating her husband’s memory, both publicly and privately. She focused her energies on the design and decoration of the mausoleum in which Albert was interred, and the erection of statues and monuments to the prince, including here in Edinburgh.

During her widowhood, the queen surrounded herself with objects and mementos of her marriage, including the royal couple’s watercolour albums – though with her husband’s death their compilation ended, in Victoria’s emphatic words, ‘for ever’.
Albert wearing a shooting cap

Queen Victoria’s Journal, 23 September 1844
George Housman Thomas (1824–68)

Queen Victoria at the unveiling of the statue of Prince Albert in Coburg

1865

Victoria wanted a memorial to her beloved husband in his home town of Coburg and so commissioned this colossal bronze statue, designed by William Theed. She chose the site herself on a visit to Germany in 1862. The unveiling ceremony, depicted here, was the first occasion since Albert’s death on which all of his and Victoria’s nine children gathered together.

RCIN 914747
Queen Victoria at the unveiling of the statue of Prince Albert in Edinburgh

1876

The queen chose the design by John Steell for the equestrian statue of Albert in Charlotte Square, Edinburgh, knighting the sculptor after the unveiling ceremony. The side panels of the monument illustrate scenes from the prince’s life, including his marriage and the Great Exhibition. Albert’s last public appearance took place in Edinburgh, when he laid the foundation stones for both the Industrial Museum of Scotland (now the National Museum of Scotland) and the General Post Office on 23 October 1861.

RCIN 920791
British sovereigns and their consorts were usually buried in Westminster Abbey or in St George’s Chapel at Windsor, but Albert’s (and later Victoria’s) final resting place was, in the German tradition, a private mausoleum in the grounds of Windsor Castle. The colourful decoration was inspired by Albert’s love for the Italian Renaissance, particularly the works of Raphael. Victoria regularly visited what she referred to as ‘our mausoleum’, confiding to her journal after one occasion, ‘being there did me good, & quieted me’.

RCIN 919746
Queen Victoria (1819–1901)

Our Mausoleum, Frogmore

Pencil and watercolour, 1865

RCIN 980039.bf