

The personal passions and public causes of Prince Albert, husband of Queen Victoria, are revealed, as photographs, prints and letters are published online to mark the 200th anniversary of his birth

More than 17,500 photographs, prints and private and official papers relating to Prince Albert, consort of Queen Victoria, are published online **today, 23 August 2019**, the majority publicly available for the first time. The new website '**Prince Albert: His Life and Legacy**' (albert.rct.uk) sheds fresh light on Albert's contribution as Queen Victoria's unofficial Private Secretary, a guide and mentor to some of the greatest national projects of his day, university chancellor, art historian, collector, and patron of art, architecture and design. It gives new insight into Albert's achievements before his premature death at the age of 42, his impact on Victorian society and his influence on our world today.



Roger Fenton, *Prince Albert*, May 1854,
1889 copy of the original

As part of the Prince Albert Digitisation Project, by the end of 2020 some 23,500 items from the Royal Archives, the Royal Collection and the Royal Commission for the Exhibition of 1851 will be published online. These include private and official papers, catalogues of Prince Albert's private library, his study collection of more than 5,000 prints and photographs after the work of Raphael, and 10,000 photographs collected and commissioned by Albert.

The Prince Albert Digitisation Project is supported by Sir Hugh and Lady Stevenson in honour of Sir Hugh's sister the late Dame Anne Griffiths DCVO, former Librarian and Archivist to His Royal Highness The Duke of Edinburgh, and by the Royal Commission for the Exhibition of 1851.

Tim Knox, Director of the Royal Collection, said, 'It is fitting that in the year in which we celebrate the 200th anniversary of Prince Albert's birth, we launch the website 'Prince Albert: His Life and Legacy', which reflects the contribution the Prince Consort made to 19th-century Britain and the wider world. We hope that the publication of material held in the Royal Archives and the Royal Collection and by the Royal Commission for the Exhibition of 1851 will increase awareness and understanding of the achievements of this extraordinary man. We are very

grateful to Sir Hugh and Lady Stevenson and the Royal Commission for the Exhibition of 1851 for their support of this important project.'

'Prince Albert: His Life and Legacy' is at albert.rct.uk.

'Prince Albert: A Victorian Hero Revealed' is broadcast on Channel 4 at 20:00 on Saturday, 24 August 2019. History largely remembers Prince Albert as Queen Victoria's German husband whose untimely death inspired decades of mourning. However, a wealth of new material, soon to be published online, suggests he played a profound role in shaping Victorian Britain. With access to Albert's private papers in the Royal Archives and thousands of photographs in the Royal Collection, Professor Saul David examines Albert's significant influence on British culture.

A selection of images is available from www.picselect.com. For further information and photographs, please contact the Royal Collection Trust Press Office, +44 (0)20 7839 1377, press@rct.uk.

Highlights of 'Prince Albert: His Life and Legacy'

Queen Victoria and Prince Albert

Having first met as teenagers, Queen Victoria and Prince Albert of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha, who were first cousins, were engaged on 15 October 1839. In a letter written to Victoria on the day, Albert declares, 'I ... can only believe that Heaven has sent down an angel to me, whose radiance is intended to brighten my life.' Victoria and Albert married in February the following year. The website includes notes and letters exchanged between the royal couple from 1836 to 1861. Fascinatingly, they corresponded in English until their engagement, after which they wrote to each other in German. Throughout their lives, Victoria and Albert regularly exchanged gifts of works of art and photography to celebrate special occasions. The website also includes Victoria's reminiscences of life with her beloved husband, written the year after his death, and the many photographs and works of art that she commissioned to memorialise him.

Prince Albert's Public Role

As husband of the British Monarch, Albert was keen to establish a public role for himself, one that combined the subjects of law, political economy, philosophy and the history of art that he had studied at the University of Bonn. At the same time, he was sensitive to his constitutional position as consort to the Queen. Albert began by assisting Victoria with government paperwork, creating filing systems and annotating documents to highlight key correspondence and the topics discussed. A number of official papers from the Royal Archives can be identified as being in Prince Albert's hand, and his speeches from 1840 to 1860 show his growing influence in official matters as his relationships with politicians developed.

Patron of the Arts and the Great Exhibition

Albert's enthusiasm for industry, technology and design put Britain on the world stage when his vision for the first international trade fair was realised in the Great Exhibition, co-organised with Henry Cole and the Royal Commission for the Exhibition of 1851. Between May and October 1851, more than six million visitors attended the exhibition in Hyde Park, a third of the population of Britain at the time.

The substantial profit generated by the Great Exhibition was dedicated to the purchase of land in South Kensington, and the Royal Commission aided the establishment of institutions such as the Victoria & Albert Museum, the Science Museum, the Natural History Museum and the Royal Albert Hall, known collectively as 'Albertopolis'. The website brings together the papers of the Royal Commission for the Exhibition of 1851 and Albert's own correspondence, more than 30

volumes and 2,000 documents in total, charting the genesis, implementation and legacy of this landmark exhibition.

Social Reform

Albert's interest in social welfare led to his active involvement in philanthropic societies, including as the President of the Society for the Extinction of the Slave Trade and for the Civilisation of Africa. He was also instrumental in changing attitudes towards housing for the poor. As President of the Society for Improving the Condition of the Labouring Classes, he financed a model cottage intended for four families, first shown in Hyde Park for the Great Exhibition and then reconstructed in Kennington Park, where it still stands today. The plans for the dwellings, which included the innovations of running water and indoor lavatories, were widely copied.

Albert's concern for the working classes is reflected in his purchase of two daguerreotypes by William Kilburn of the Chartist meeting at Kennington Common, South London, in 1848. Calling for political reform, and spurred on by the recent February Revolution in France, the Chartist movement was seen by many as a terrifying threat to the established order. Fears were so great that on the eve of the meeting, the Duke of Wellington stationed troops across London, and the royal family was moved to Osborne House, their home on the Isle of Wight. In the event, the rally passed peacefully, and Prince Albert later spoke at a Chartist meeting about the royal family's sympathy and concern for the working classes.

Patron of Photography

Prince Albert enthusiastically embraced the new invention of photography, which combined his interest in art, science and technology. He believed in photography as an art form, at a time when many saw only its scientific value; he also advocated its importance as a documentary device and as a means of sharing knowledge. Both he and Queen Victoria became Patrons of the Photographic Society shortly after its foundation in 1853. Albert supported research by the Society, including contributing £50 to investigate the causes of the fading of photographs. He installed darkrooms at Windsor Castle, and his regular attendance at photographic studios and exhibitions was widely reported in the press.

The website brings together Prince Albert's extensive collection of photographs, including work by the pioneering photographers Charles Clifford, Roger Fenton, Oscar Gustav Rejlander, Charles Thurston Thompson and George Washington Wilson. Corresponding material from the Royal Archives, published for the first time, includes bills and receipts for photographic equipment, materials and photographs issued to Queen Victoria, Prince Albert and their children. Also included on the website are unique early glass plate negatives that show photographers' working methods.

Raphael Collection

Albert employed the new medium of photography for an ambitious project to record every work then regarded as being by, or after, the Italian Renaissance master Raphael, whom Albert greatly admired. Begun in 1853, the project was intended for public good, rather than private enjoyment, and as a resource for students. Albert's librarians wrote to collectors, photographers, museum curators and foreign ambassadors to explain the Prince's vision that the publication of these 'treasures of art' would make them 'accessible to Artists all over the world'. The publication on the website of the 'Raphael Collection', consisting of more than 5,000 prints and photographs, realises Prince Albert's vision for the first time. Three volumes and associated correspondence from the Royal Archives illuminate the history of this unique project.

Domestic and Family Life

Papers from the Royal Archives now published online show the value that Prince Albert placed on domestic life. His correspondence with his children reveals his concern about their education and his encouragement of their interests in art and photography.

Together Queen Victoria and Prince Albert used photography to document every aspect of their lives. They compiled five albums of 'Portraits of Royal Children', documenting the births, confirmations, marriages and trips abroad of their nine children. Among the family photographs published online are those by Frances Sally Day, the first woman to photograph members of the royal family.

Notes to Editors

Royal Collection Trust, a department of the Royal Household, is responsible for the care of the Royal Collection and manages the public opening of the official residences of The Queen. Income generated from admissions and from associated commercial activities contributes directly to The Royal Collection Trust, a registered charity. The aims of The Trust are the care and conservation of the Royal Collection, and the promotion of access and enjoyment through exhibitions, publications, loans and educational programmes. Royal Collection Trust's work is undertaken without public funding of any kind.

www.rct.uk

The Royal Collection is among the largest and most important art collections in the world, and one of the last great European royal collections to remain intact. It comprises almost all aspects of the fine and decorative arts, and is spread among some 15 royal residences and former residences across the UK, most of which are regularly open to the public. The Royal Collection is held in trust by the Sovereign for her successors and the nation, and is not owned by The Queen as a private individual.

The Royal Archives contain the official and private papers of the Sovereign and other members of the British Royal Family, together with the records of the Royal Household and the private Royal estates. This unparalleled collection reflects and records some of the most significant moments in British history and provides a fascinating insight into the lives of monarchs and their families.

The Royal Commission for the Exhibition of 1851 awards grants and fellowships in support of science and industry to the value of around £4m a year. First established in 1850 to stage the Great Exhibition, the Commission initially invested the Exhibition's profit by purchasing the land for development of the South Kensington cultural estate of museums, colleges and the Albert Hall. Details of the 1851 Royal Commission's awards are on its website www.royalcommission1851.org.uk. The Royal Commission's Archive contains material from 1849 onwards relating to the organisation of the Great Exhibition, the purchase and development of the 'Albertopolis' estate in South Kensington and the Commission's various awards schemes and their alumni. It is open to bona fides researchers by appointment.