

Red text refers to images displayed via Powerpoint. Son Victor appears to project them through an epidiascope.

Good evening, Ladies and Gentlemen

It is very kind of your secretary to invite me along today to tell you something about my life which I hope you will find of interest. I intend to illustrate my little talk with this new invention, the epidiascope, and Victor, my son, whom many of you know – you will have seen him painting down by the river outside his studio - will manipulate it for me, hopefully without calamity!

My wife and I came to Newbury in 1890 with Victor and his family soon after I retired from the employment of Her Majesty Queen Victoria. We had lived for many years near **Windsor Castle at Datchet.**(Victor projects image upside down)

I was born in Derby in 1819, and came to Windsor as a boy of ten years, whither my father, also William and an artist, removed to execute commissions for King George IV., (and afterwards for King William and Queen Victoria).

The journey by coach from Derby to Windsor was one of my vivid recollections - the furniture being carried all the way by barge, along the now almost forgotten system of canals, to the Thames.

After studying in London and working in the evenings at the Life-School in Clipstone-street, which has years ago moved to rooms near the Langham Hotel, and now combines the Artists' Society with the Langham Sketching Club, I went to Germany in 1844 with my father, who was sent by Queen Victoria to paint for her in **Coburg**. She wanted copies painted of portraits of her relatives – and Albert's of course – they are cousins.

On my return the Queen purchased nearly all the sketches I'd made there, and from that time when I was 24 for nearly 40 years she gave me constant commissions for portrait and other work, at Windsor, Buckingham Palace, Osborne, and Balmoral. During these years I must have painted nearly four hundred pictures for the Queen. **Here's a copy I executed after James Roberts. The Princess Royal took the original with her to Berlin** when she was married to Prince Frederick William of Prussia.

In addition I exhibited works at the Royal Academy for many consecutive seasons, the first being in 1846; in 1847 I exhibited "Early Grief," a child mourning over a dead dog, painted from my pet dog which had been killed. "Indecisions," "The Windmill Seller," and "Queen Mab", were among other exhibited works.

Although I saw myself as a portrait and figure painter, I did a great deal of landscape work also, and attributed much of my knowledge and love of landscape to the friendship of **James Stark**, the well-known artist of the "Norwich School," who at one time was a neighbour, and worked a great deal in Windsor. **Here is a copy of one of his landscapes**

In 1848 I painted the portrait of **the Duke of Brunswick**, which hangs in the Waterloo Gallery at Windsor Castle, being assisted by the Prince Consort, himself a talented amateur, whose pencil sketches of details of uniform etc., were among my prized possessions. Besides many pictures for the Queen Dowager, and others for the Duchess of Kent (the mother of Queen Victoria), I painted a portrait of Lord Bridport, which was later engraved.

After this I was sent by Her Majesty to Lisbon, where I remained for four months. Originally I was asked to copy the portraits of the King (a cousin of Albert), and the Queen of Portugal. The portraits had been painted by Ferdinand Krumholz but after I arrived the Royal Couple decided they wanted me to execute new life-size portraits. **These now hang in the galleries of Buckingham Palace.**

I must tell you about an amusing experience I had there. Thinking a violin would increase my baggage, I had purchased what was then a new invention, a concertina, and had learned a few airs from an instruction book. Hearing of this new instrument the King asked to see it, and then insisted on dragging me into a room full of people, to play it before the Queen. Unable to think of anything to play I began the first air which came into his head, and had got half way through, when I was horrified to remember its anti-monarchical and revolutionary character - it was the "Marseillaise." It was too late to stop, but I often wondered if they thought it was done intentionally. This, too, was the summer of 1850, with the '48 *revolution de février* of Paris fresh in all minds.

About this time, when painting at Buckingham Palace, I frequently saw the Duke of Wellington, then a very old man, who died in 1852 a year memorable in Windsor by reason of a severe flood, which stopped the traffic on the South-Western Railway.

Among other portraits commissioned for the Queen was one of Prince Arthur, now the Duke of Connaught, in his first uniform, that of a Woolwich cadet. The prince arrived in the room one day for a sitting with a little fair boy pick-a-back on his shoulders, whom he introduced as "my nephew." That child was later to become the Emperor of Germany, and has now given up riding uncles!

As you know, Prince Albert died an early and unexpected death in 1861 which plunged Her Majesty into deep mourning. She arranged the bedroom they had shared as a memorial to the Prince Consort and commissioned a painting of it so that she could remember it wherever she travelled. Until then the Queen had been an enthusiastic and talented amateur artist in watercolours, and I like to think I helped and encouraged her in this endeavour. However, on Albert's death, she vowed never to paint again and passed me her paint-box and brushes. These I keep to this day, a memento of the close relationship we had enjoyed.

Working so much at Windsor, I witnessed many historic scenes, from the visit of the King of the French (Louis Philippe), and that of the Emperor of Russia before the Crimean War, to the inspection of the troops after the Ashantee campaign, in which Sir Garnet Wolsey first loomed large in the public estimation. We now of course refer to the area of Africa under dispute as the Gold Coast. Here is a newspaper picture from the time.

The first visit of a Khedive of Egypt (then alluded to as the Viceroy) to Windsor was in 1869 as he gained support for the construction of the Suez Canal. This was the occasion of a water-colour painting, now in the Queen's possession, of the Guards brigade crossing a pontoon bridge at Datchet, after the review in the Great Park. A replica of this is in the possession of my son, Mr. Victor Corden.

It is not often, perhaps, that three generations, following the same profession, can boast having done work for the same sovereign. My father, William, and my son, Victor, have all had the honour of the Queen's personal patronage.

My recollections and anecdotes of Windsor matters are numerous, and some of them may be of interest to you.

Windsor, in George the Fourth's time was very different in many ways from its present condition. Houses crowded up to the Castle walls in Thames-street and High-street, where the green banks now are, and an inn stood among them near the foot of the "Hundred steps," which is worthy of notice because of one peculiarity. Half of it was in the parish of New Windsor, and half in the parish of St George's, Hanover-square, London (St. George's Chapel and some part of the Castle being in some wonderful way a part of the metropolitan St George's!) The dividing line between the two parishes was marked on the floor of the parlour, and here gentlemen in difficulties would sit and smile at the bailiff, who, though in the room, could not arrest them unless they crossed the magic line, which of course, they postponed until Sunday, when no debtor could be arrested, and when they could walk out and take the air.

In those days and indeed as long as there was no railway to take people to a London Theatre, the leading actors and actresses often played on the boards of the Windsor Theatre. I could reel off a list of names – great names in their day, but now sadly forgotten. **But here's one you will recognise:** when a boy I heard Paganini himself play at the Public Rooms in High-street, Windsor. His speed and agility on the violin was like no other before or since.

As a musical amateur myself, I like to think I achieved a reasonable standard on the violin and played for many years in the Windsor Society under the baton of Sir George Elvey, and frequently acted as leader of the orchestra. **Here is the painting I did of Sir George and his wife Mary**

One of my earliest concert recollections is of playing in this orchestra before King William IV, and Queen Adelaide in what is now the Albert Memorial Chapel in 1837. The old King went fast asleep most of the time, but the Queen did her best to make amends by requesting one of the items to be repeated.

My father passed to the Great Studio Above in 1867, and my dear wife, Elizabeth, went to her eternal rest just three years ago. We buried her near the Anglican chapel here at Newbury Cemetery.

On the other hand, our beloved Victoria, born in the same year as myself, will outlive us all, I'm sure.

At 81, I live quietly and contentedly now here in Newbury. Few people know me but to those who do, I like to think I have an endless fund of interesting and humorous anecdotes. And I enjoy seeing the young children who live near me and like to think they see me as a cheery friend.

When I go, as surely I must, I shall pass the interesting objects I've accumulated to my son - a set of studies of some of the gems of the collection at Windsor, made during the intervals of work, by the verbal permission of the Queen, and various interesting portraits and autographs of different members of the Royal Family.

I've been so fortunate and had a fascinating life. Enjoy yours and marvel at God's beauty. And God Save the Queen.