



KS2–KS3

TEACHERS' RESOURCE PACK

Osborne

This resource pack will help teachers plan a visit to Osborne, which offers unrivalled insight into the private lives of Queen Victoria and Prince Albert and the empire over which they ruled.

Use this pack in the classroom to help students get the most out of their learning about Osborne.



INCLUDED

- Historical Information
- Glossary
- Sources
- Site Plan

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Don't forget to download our **Hazard Information Sheets** and **Discovery Visit Risk Assessments** to help with planning:

- **The Adventures of a Victorian Explorer (KS2)**
- **Waiting on Hand and Foot (KS2)**
- **Story Mat (KS1)**

Share your visit with us on Twitter [@EHEducation](https://twitter.com/EHEducation)

Step into England's story

HISTORICAL INFORMATION

DISCOVER THE STORY OF
OSBORNE

Below is a short history of Osborne. Use this information to learn how the site has changed over time. You will find definitions of the key words in the Glossary.

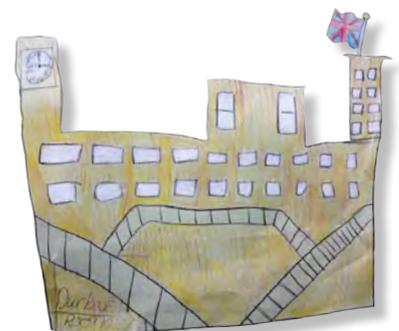
AN EXCELLENT HOME

In October 1843, Queen Victoria and Prince Albert were looking for a new country home for their ever-growing family. The royal couple visited the Osborne estate in 1844 and Victoria was delighted with how private it was: ‘...we can walk anywhere without being mobbed or followed.’ Best of all, it had its own beach where they could come and go by boat without being seen. She bought the house for just under £28,000 in May 1845 (roughly £1.25m in today’s money).

The old 18th-century house at Osborne was too small. Building work began to create more space. The Pavilion, the heart of the house, was finished by September 1846 and the family moved in. The household **wing**, where the members of the **royal household** lived and worked, and where guests would stay, was finished in 1851. Inside, the house was decorated in Italian **Renaissance style**. Victoria also bought more land for the estate – by 1864 the Osborne estate was more than 2,000 acres (about 809 hectares).



Osborne House was built of brick with a smooth cement layer on top to make the house look as if it were built of stone.



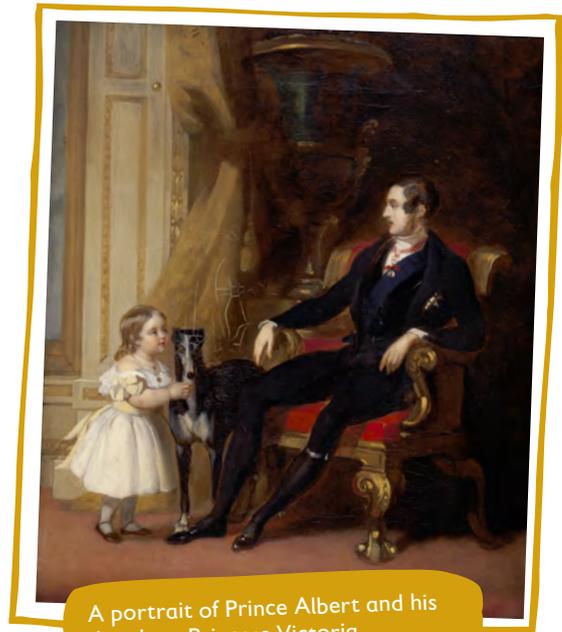
A pupil’s drawing of Osborne House.

RELAXED FAMILY VISITS

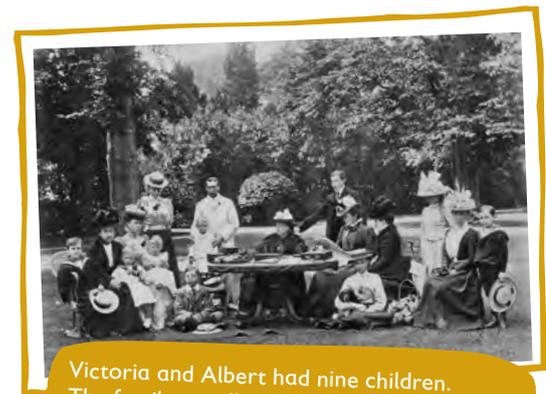
The royal family spent as much time as possible at Osborne and their other private home, Balmoral Castle. By 1850, Queen Victoria regularly came to stay at Osborne for between 80 and 100 days each year, mostly in the summer months. The family's time at Osborne was more relaxed than in most other palaces, and Victoria and Albert were able to spend more time with their children here.

The family loved their seaside home. Victoria was very keen on fresh air, so during the summer the family had breakfast outside as often as possible. She and Prince Albert often went riding in the park. She often worked outside – servants would set up tables and tents for her in the grounds so that she could work on government business. If the weather was too bad to go outside, she would exercise by walking up and down the **Grand Corridor**.

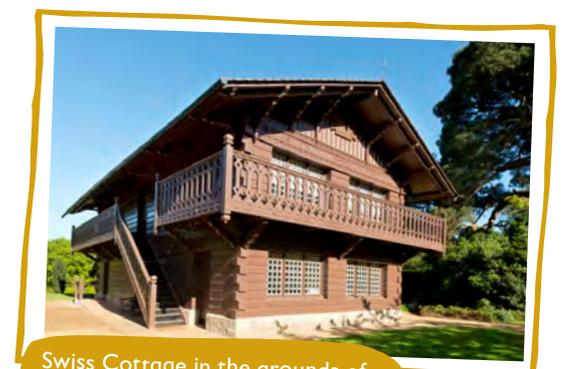
Prince Albert loved gardening and planned the gardens at Osborne. He also managed **Barton Manor farm** on the estate which provided food for the house. He modernised the farm, introducing steam engines and reorganising the fields, and he built drains to improve the soil. He created **Swiss Cottage** and its gardens for the children, a miniature world where he believed they could play and learn important lessons at the same time. The children each had their own garden plot where they grew fruit and vegetables, played in a miniature fort and collected objects for their own museum.



A portrait of Prince Albert and his daughter Princess Victoria.



Victoria and Albert had nine children. The family usually spent their summers at Osborne and loved living by the sea.



Swiss Cottage in the grounds of Osborne was given to Victoria and Albert's children in 1854.

LIFE AT OSBORNE

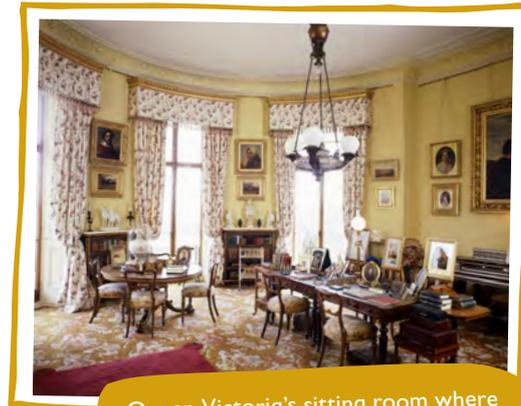
Victoria and Albert spent much of their days at Osborne dealing with **dispatch boxes** which contained messages from the government in London. They worked side by side at identical desks in the sitting room.

The queen had many **courtiers** and servants to run her household – more than 100 people travelled with the royal family as they moved between houses. Victoria had a dresser, several **private secretaries**, her own physician, and more than a dozen cooks and kitchen staff. Some senior members of the household like the **ladies-in-waiting** had their own servants.

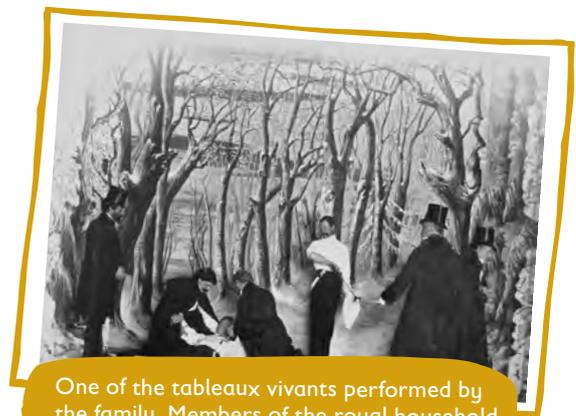
Dinner was served at 8pm, but the queen sometimes did not arrive for the meal until after 9pm. No one was allowed to sit down to dinner before she did; and as soon as she had finished, the plates were cleared away – even if other people hadn't finished their meal. After dinner the queen would often play cards, or play and sing at the piano.

Victoria sometimes organised 'treats' for her family: lectures, concerts and plays. Famous actors and musicians from the Victorian era came to Osborne to perform. After Prince Albert's death, the family performed their own **tableaux vivants** at New Year. The queen described one as 'not as successful as it might have been, owing to the ladies getting into giggles and shaking.'

The queen was well known for not feeling the cold – fires often weren't allowed. Even Prince Albert once wrote that the queen would be 'much hurt' because he had lit a fire before she got up.



Queen Victoria's sitting room where she and Prince Albert worked.



One of the tableaux vivants performed by the family. Members of the royal household were also often requested to take part.

DEATH OF PRINCE ALBERT

In 1861, Prince Albert grew ill with **typhoid** and died on 14 December. The queen immediately came to Osborne House to mourn in private and remained there until March 1862. She stayed in official mourning – wearing black and using writing paper and envelopes bordered with black – for the rest of her life. The prince continued to influence her; she wrote: ‘his views about everything are my law!’ She ordered nothing to be changed – for forty years after his death, servants continued to bring hot water up to Albert’s dressing room.



Queen Victoria and Prince Albert photographed in 1854 (Royal Collection).

VICTORIA AND ABDUL

In 1887, the year of Victoria’s **Golden Jubilee**, the queen wanted to show the world how loyal her Indian subjects were to the **British Empire**. She invited several Indian princes and princesses to England to celebrate with her.

The same year, two Indian servants joined the queen’s household. They were Abdul Karim and Mohammed Buksh. Abdul immediately impressed the queen – he cooked her curries which she had never tasted before. In 1888, he was promoted to the position of ‘**munshi**’ or tutor, teaching the queen how to speak and write in **Urdu**.

The queen became very fond of Abdul, and he was constantly by her side. The rest of the royal household and even the queen’s family became jealous of his influence over the queen, but she always protected him against their criticism.



Abdul Karim was 24 years old when he came to England from India in 1887 to serve Queen Victoria.

THE DURBAR WING

'Durbar' means a public reception held by an important person in India (and the room in which it happens). In 1876, Queen Victoria was given the title **Empress of India** by the British Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli. Between 1890 and 1892, the **Durbar Wing** was added to the house at Osborne for the queen's youngest daughter, Princess Beatrice, and her husband Prince Henry of Battenberg to live in. It would also be a reminder to the queen about the country of India over which she ruled but would never visit, as she was by this time an elderly woman. The Durbar Corridor is full of portraits of Indian people, rich and poor and of all ages, from the **maharajah Duleep Singh** to a nine-year-old boy carpet-weaver called Ramlal.

The Durbar Room was designed for receiving important visitors as well as the royal family. Its decoration is inspired by a mixture of **Islamic** and **Hindu styles** from north India. These styles were used by the famous **Mogul** rulers of India in the 16th and 17th centuries. The **dado panels** are decorated with vases of flowers made from plaster that are similar to the **pietra dura** design (inlay using hard stones) found on the **Taj Mahal**. The room has the Indian symbol of **Ganesh**, the elephant god of good fortune, over the door near the gallery. The **coffered ceiling** is inspired by the decoration of medieval temples in Rajasthan.

On display in the Durbar Room are gifts given to Queen Victoria from India and other nations in Asia. The gifts were given to celebrate her Golden Jubilee in 1887 and her **Diamond Jubilee** in 1897. The gifts show very high-quality Indian craftsmanship and many have messages of loyalty to the queen, their Empress.



The Durbar Room was decorated by Lockwood Kipling and carved by Bhai Ram Singh to create an impressive place to receive important guests.



The Durbar Room has peacocks, other animals and flowers in its decoration. It was very unusual at the time to have an English room decorated in Indian style.



The Durbar Room today.

THE QUEEN'S FINAL DAYS

The queen kept up her daily routine at Osborne House for more than 50 years. As she grew older, her eyesight began to fail and her private secretary was told to write larger letters in darker-coloured ink so she could read them.

On 17 January 1901, the queen suffered a minor stroke and on 22 January she died in her bedroom in the Pavilion at Osborne, surrounded by her family. Outside, the press waited to break the news to the world. Her body was moved to the dining room, where it lay in state.

On 1 February, the queen's funeral procession began at Osborne. Her coffin was carried from the house by sailors from the royal yacht and placed on a gun carriage. The procession walked through East Cowes to Trinity Pier, where the coffin was placed on the royal yacht 'Alberta' on its way to Windsor, where Albert had also been buried.



As she aged, Queen Victoria needed to be pushed around in her 'rolling chair'.

OSBORNE IN THE 20th CENTURY

On his **coronation day** in 1902, Victoria's son, King Edward VII, promised that Osborne House would open to the public for ever, in memory of the queen. He did not, however, believe the public should have access to the queen's private rooms and built large iron gates inside the house to block these rooms off.

In 1903, part of the grounds was used as a college for naval cadets. The Royal Naval College, Osborne trained boys from 13 years old to be naval officers. By the First World War, 500 boys were training at Osborne. By 1920, the Navy had plenty of men and the college closed in 1921.

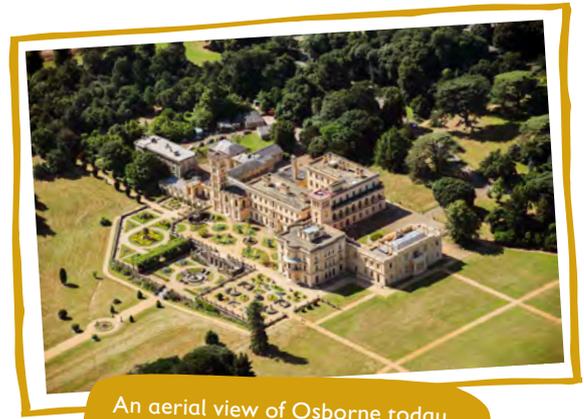
In 1904, the Edward VII Convalescent Home for Officers opened in part of Osborne House. Rooms were adapted into bedrooms and bathrooms for military officers who were recovering from illness or injury. A golf course was laid out in the grounds. The war poet and author Robert Graves and A A Milne (author of **Winnie the Pooh**) were patients at Osborne.



The royal family in naval uniform, including Victoria and Albert's son (the future Edward VII) and grandson (the future George V), on board the royal yacht c.1899.

OSBORNE OPENS UP

Queen Elizabeth II gave permission for Queen Victoria's private rooms to be opened up in 1954. In 1986, English Heritage took over the management of Osborne House from the Department of the Environment (a government department). English Heritage continues to work with the **Royal Collection Trust** to present the house as it looked during Queen Victoria's lifetime. English Heritage has restored much of Prince Albert's planting and woodland, and the estate is a home to many protected animals such as red squirrels and buzzards.



An aerial view of Osborne today. The house and grounds are cared for by English Heritage.

Discover amazing **drone videos of Osborne House**
(1 min 2 secs)

[www.youtube.com/
watch?v=qvlvvyb7C7k](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qvlvvyb7C7k)



GLOSSARY

TRICKY TERMS AND
THEIR MEANINGS

Below is a list of words you might come across while exploring Osborne House. Use this Glossary to find out what they mean.

Barton Manor farm – the home farm on the Osborne estate, which provided food for the house

British Empire – the collection of countries under the rule of the British Crown (the king or queen) from the 16th century to the 20th century

coffered ceiling – a ceiling with sunken square panels



The coffered ceiling of the Durbar Room at Osborne.

courtier – a person who attends a royal court as a companion or adviser to the king or queen

coronation day – the day that a new king or queen is crowned

dado panels – panels along the lower part of a wall, used for decoration and for protecting the wall from being knocked by furniture and people passing by

Diamond Jubilee – the celebration of the 60th anniversary of a king or queen taking the throne

dispatch boxes – red wooden boxes used to send important documents and letters from the government to the **monarch**

Duleep Singh – the [15-year-old] Indian maharajah who stayed at Osborne House in 1854 after being exiled from his homeland



Duleep Singh's portrait in the Durbar Corridor.

Royal Collection Trust/© Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II 2017

Durbar Wing – a new wing added to Osborne House from 1890 to 1892 for Victoria's daughter Princess Beatrice to live in with her husband and family. Parts of this wing, the Durbar Corridor and the Durbar Room, were decorated to remind the queen of India.



Empress of India – an empress is a female ruler of a great power, usually an empire (many countries under one ruler). The British Crown (led by Queen Victoria) ruled India from 1858 and Victoria was given the title Empress of India in 1876.

Ganesh – a religious god worshipped by Hindus who is a symbol of wisdom, new beginnings and removing obstacles. He is often pictured with the head of an elephant.

Golden Jubilee – the celebration of the 50th anniversary of a king or queen taking the throne

Grand Corridor – the long corridor decorated with statues linking the household wing and the Pavilion at Osborne House

Hindu style – a style of architecture with geometric shapes and patterns, soaring towers and decorative sculpture of gods, animals and flowers

Islamic style – Islamic decorative style often has niches (gaps in a wall), geometric (regular) shapes, detailed patterns, flowers, and calligraphy

ladies-in-waiting – personal attendants to a queen

maharajah – a Sanskrit title for a great ruler or king

Mogul – the Mogul Empire was ruled by a Muslim dynasty from central Asia and ruled India from the 16th century to the 19th century

munshi – a Indian word for a tutor or language teacher



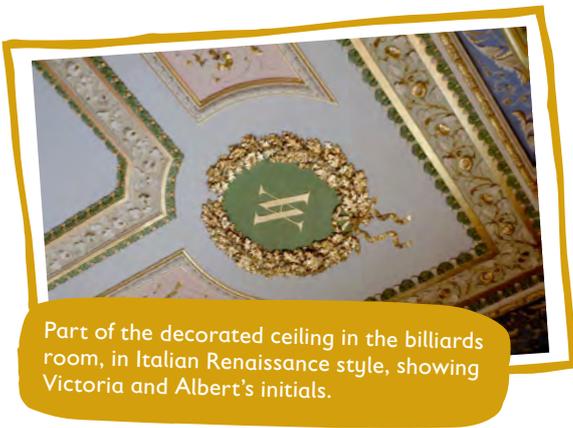
monarch – the ruling king or queen

pietra dura – mosaic designs using semi-precious stones, typically for table tops and other furniture

private secretary – a secretary who deals with the personal and confidential business of an important person, for example a king or queen



Part of the ceiling in the Durbar Room decorated in the Islamic style.



Part of the decorated ceiling in the billiards room, in Italian Renaissance style, showing Victoria and Albert's initials.

Renaissance style

– style of art and architecture inspired by ancient Rome that was popular in Europe from the 14th century to the early 17th century

Royal Collection Trust – objects that belong to Queen Elizabeth II, many of which are on display in royal homes like Osborne House

royal household – the servants and attendants providing for the needs of the monarch and their family, and supporting the monarch in their duties

Swiss Cottage – the timber playhouse in the grounds of Osborne that Prince Albert designed for his and Victoria's children where they learnt about cooking, keeping a house tidy and entertaining guests

tableau vivant – French for 'living picture,' describes a group of silent costumed actors, carefully posed with scenery and props to show a scene or tell a story

Taj Mahal – a white marble mausoleum on the Yamuna River, central India. It was built in 1632–43 by the emperor Shah Jahan in memory of his beloved wife, Mumtaz Mahal.

typhoid – an infectious fever

Urdu – the same spoken language as Hindi but written in different lettering

wing – part of a large building, especially one that is built joined onto the main block



Swiss Cottage on the Osborne estate.

SOURCES

PEEK INTO THE PAST

A historical source is something that tells us about life in the past, such as a document, a picture or an object. It may be a primary source from the time, or a secondary source created later. Experts at English Heritage have chosen these sources to help you learn about the history of Osborne House.

‘Rather a dull morning, but misty when we walked to Barton before breakfast. It cleared up very much later, & became very fine. We took another little walk. — At 11 went to Whippingham, which is such a nice quiet little Church, & the people behave so nicely. The service was over by ½ p. 12. — I did Vicky’s religious lesson with her, when we came back. — In the afternoon walked with Albert by Barton wood & down to the seashore, where we sat for some time, as it was so very lovely. It was high water & the sea so smooth, & as clear as glass, the view so fine & the air so pure & balmy. We drove up again & dawdled about till 7. — No one extra to dinner.’

“”

This source is an extract from a journal entry from Sunday 27 July 1845 by Queen Victoria.



‘Hot water was actually brought to his [Prince Albert’s] dressing room at dressing time 40 years after his death... I have again and again had talks to her there before dinner with the hot water actually steaming.’

“”

This source is an extract from the journal of Randall Davidson, who was Queen Victoria’s chaplain from 1883 to 1891.

ROYAL TABLEAUX

The front cover of the album 'Royal Tableaux, Osborne' and a photograph showing one of the tableaux vivants performed by the royal family and the royal household at New Year at Osborne House.



'I take a little lesson every evening in Hindustani and sometimes I miss writing by post in consequence. It is a great interest and amusement to me. Young Abdul (who is in fact no servant) teaches me and is a vy. strict Master, and a perfect Gentleman. He has learnt English wonderfully – and can now copy beautifully and with hardly any faults. He will I hope remain and be vy. useful in writing and looking after my books and things...'



This source is an extract from a letter written in 1878 from Queen Victoria to her eldest daughter Victoria (Vicky), Princess Royal and Empress of Germany.

MAGAZINE ARTICLE

'A few years ago her Majesty desired to have a house of exclusively Indian design built for her in the Isle of Wight...It is a beautiful building intended for the reception and entertainment of the Queen's Oriental visitors when the Court happens to be at Osborne...She has in her service three Indian attendants who look to her personal comfort, and one Indian cook, who presides at the royal Oriental kitchen... The great scheme for female medical aid to the women of India owes its origin and inspiration to the Empress-Queen. Female education and, in fact, everything which tends to advance the moral and material condition of the women of India, receive constant support from her'

This source is taken from *The English Illustrated Magazine*, Volume 18, 1897/1898. The article is called: 'The Queen's Personal Interest in India,' pp. 507–512.





Prince Ludwig & Princess Alice of Hesse



Prince Frederick (later King) of Prussia

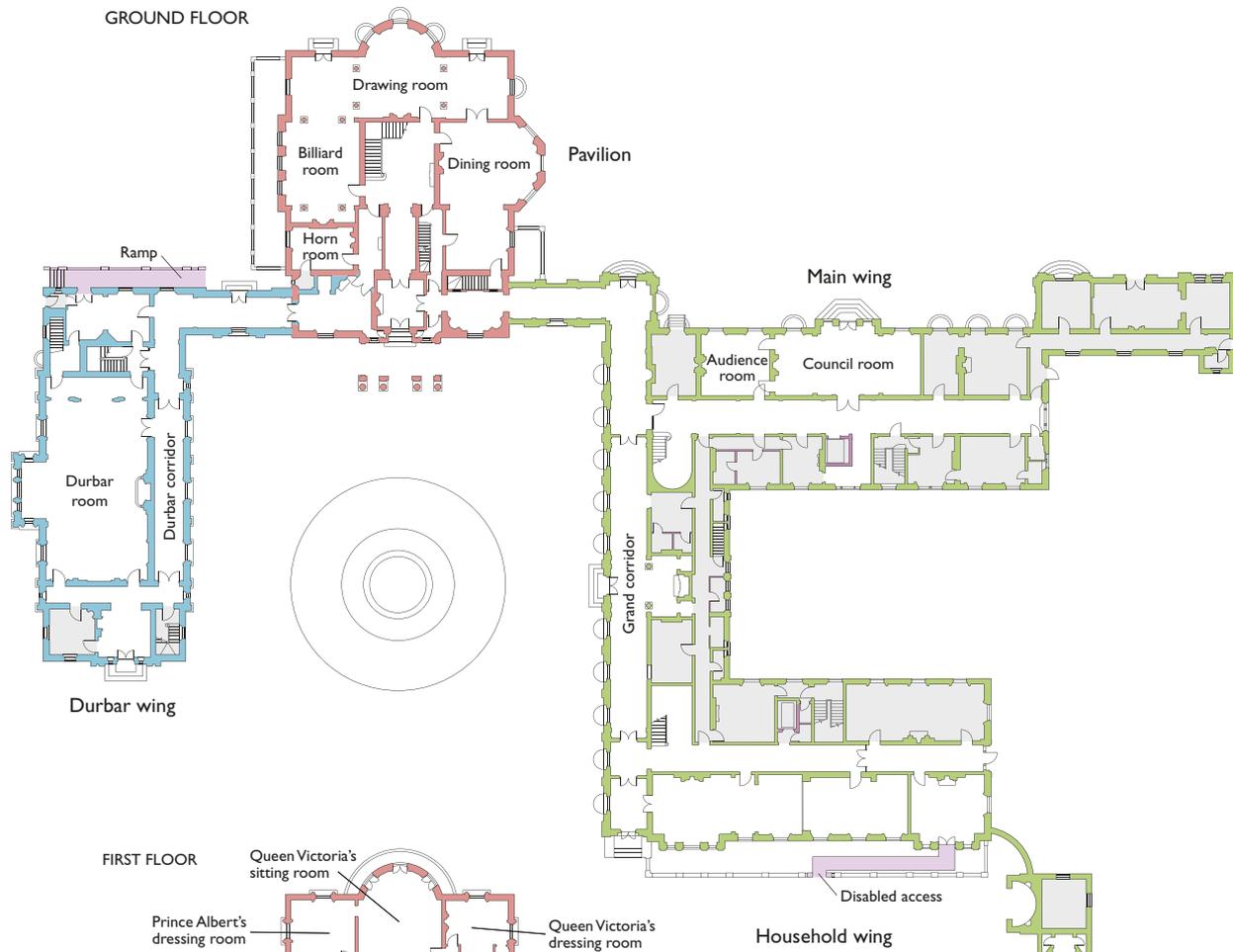


This source is taken from the royal Ryde photograph album. It shows photographs of the royal family at Osborne House.

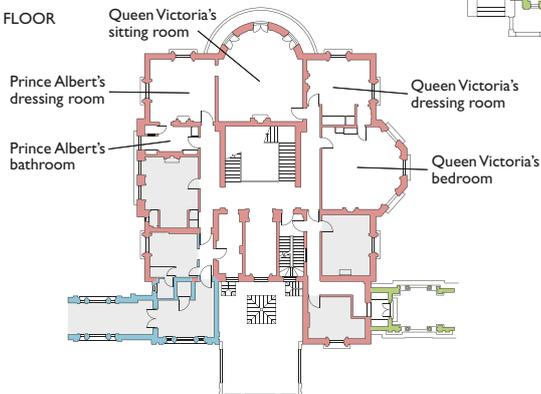
SITE PLAN

OSBORNE HOUSE

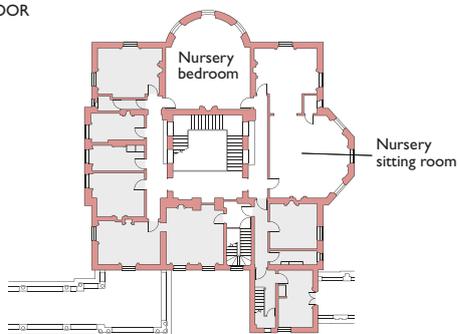
GROUND FLOOR



FIRST FLOOR



SECOND FLOOR



- 1845-46
- 1847-51
- 1890-91
- 20th century
- not accessible to visitors

0 25m



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ENGLISH HERITAGE