

# **Collaborative Doctoral Award: Westminster on Sea: the political and cultural significance of Osborne House, Isle of Wight**

Research area: Historical Research

Supports: NHPP Supporting Actions - Public Participation and Enjoyment

## **University Partner**

Kings College London

## **Project Summary**

The aim of this research is to understand better the relationships between place, politics, culture and the monarchy through the analysis of the social networks that were created and reproduced at Osborne House. As one of the critical spaces of the monarchy, Osborne House functioned both as a domestic residence and a place of cultural reproduction and, more significantly, as a political space in which to discuss matters of state beyond the confines of Westminster. The importance of this latter function has recently been revealed as a result of a pilot collaborative Masters internship project between English Heritage and King's College London (MA in Nineteenth Century Studies). This pilot research focussed on a sample of years and, through a detailed analysis of newspaper reports, demonstrated the complex pattern of visits relating to cultural and political topics and events. As part of that project, an evaluation was made of the Illustrated London News and The Times newspaper as sources for this work.

The research will revolve around the suggestion that domesticity - represented most strongly by Queen Victoria as 'mother' of the nation and head of the empire - was a crucial component in understanding state politics. Constructing the image of domesticity, and investing Osborne House with the function of a domestic residence, allowed matters of state to be discussed and alliances to be forged in what appears to have been a place removed from political connotations. Rather than being seen as separate to politics, however, royal domesticity was arguably central to the political process.

The key objectives of this research are:

1. To identify the kinds of political and cultural relationships that were created between the monarchy and visitors to Osborne House.
2. To evaluate the political and cultural significance of those relationships
3. Through comparison with a variety of sources, including personal papers and the Queen's journals, to establish the importance of those relationships in terms of the creation of social networks within and between the monarchy and other individuals.

## **Contact Details**

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