

# Queen Victoria

**Paula Bartley**



Routledge Historical Biographies

# Queen Victoria

Paula Bartley's *Queen Victoria* examines Victorian Britain from the perspective of the Queen. Victoria's personal and political actions are discussed in relation to contemporary shifts in Britain's society, politics and culture, examining to what extent they did – or did not – influence events throughout her reign.

Drawing from contemporary sources, including Queen Victoria's own diaries, as well as the most recent scholarship, the book contextualises Victoria historically by placing her in the centre of an unparalleled period of innovation and reform, in which the social and political landscape of Britain, and its growing empire, was transformed. Balancing Victoria's private and public roles, it examines the cultural paradox of the Queen's rule in relation to the changing role of women: she was a devoted wife, prolific mother and obsessive widow, who was also queen of a large empire and the Empress of India.

Marrying cultural history, gender history and other histories 'from below' with high politics, war and diplomacy, this is a concise and accessible introduction to Queen Victoria's life for students of Victorian Britain and the British Empire.

**Paula Bartley** has published extensively on women's history. Her previous publications include *Emmeline Pankhurst* (Routledge Historical Biographies, 2002), *Votes for Women* (2007) and *Ellen Wilkinson: From Red Suffragist to Government Minister* (2014).

## ROUTLEDGE HISTORICAL BIOGRAPHIES

Series Editor: Robert Pearce

*Routledge Historical Biographies* provide engaging, readable and academically credible biographies written from an explicitly historical perspective. These concise and accessible accounts will bring important historical figures to life for students and general readers alike.

In the same series:

*Bismarck* by Edgar Feuchtwanger (second edition 2014)

*Calvin* by Michael A. Mullett

*Edward IV* by Hannes Kleineke

*Elizabeth I* by Judith M. Richards

*Emmeline Pankhurst* by Paula Bartley

*Franco* by Antonio Cazorla-Sanchez

*Gladstone* by Michael Partridge

*Henry V* by John Matusiak

*Henry VI* by David Grummitt

*Henry VII* by Sean Cunningham

*Henry VIII* by Lucy Wooding (second edition 2015)

*Hitler* by Michael Lynch

*John F. Kennedy* by Peter J. Ling

*John Maynard Keynes* by Vincent Barnett

*Lenin* by Christopher Read

*Louis XIV* by Richard Wilkinson

*Martin Luther* by Michael A. Mullett (second edition 2014)

*Martin Luther King Jr.* by Peter J. Ling (second edition 2015)

*Mao* by Michael Lynch

*Marx* by Vincent Barnett

*Mary Queen of Scots* by Retha M. Warnicke

*Mary Tudor* by Judith M. Richards

*Mussolini* by Peter Neville (second edition 2014)

*Nehru* by Benjamin Zachariah

*Neville Chamberlain* by Nick Smart

*Oliver Cromwell* by Martyn Bennett

*Queen Victoria* by Paula Bartley

*Richard III* by David Hipshon

*Thatcher* by Graham Goodlad

*Trotsky* by Ian Thatcher

Forthcoming:

*Churchill* by Robert Pearce

*Cranmer* by Susan Wabuda

*Gandhi* by Benjamin Zachariah

*Khrushchev* by Alexander Titov

*Stalin* by Christopher Read

*Wolsey* by Glenn Richardson

# Queen Victoria

Paula Bartley

First published 2016  
by Routledge  
2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN  
and by Routledge  
711 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10017

*Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group,  
an informa business*

© 2016 Paula Bartley

The right of Paula Bartley to be identified as author of this work has been asserted by her in accordance with sections 77 and 78 of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reprinted or reproduced or utilised in any form or by any electronic, mechanical, or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publishers.

*Trademark notice:* Product or corporate names may be trademarks or registered trademarks, and are used only for identification and explanation without intent to infringe.

*British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data*

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

*Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data*

Bartley, Paula, author.

Queen Victoria / Paula Bartley.

pages cm. — (Routledge historical biographies)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

1. Victoria, Queen of Great Britain, 1819–1901. 2. Queens—Great Britain—Biography. 3. Great Britain—History—Victoria, 1837–1901. I. Title.

DA554.B26 2016

941.081092—dc23

[B]

2015031871

ISBN: 978-0-415-72090-8 (hbk)

ISBN: 978-0-415-72091-5 (pbk)

ISBN: 978-1-315-64209-3 (ebk)

Typeset in Sabon  
by Apex CoVantage, LLC

**For Jonathan Dudley**

This page intentionally left blank

# Contents

<i>List of figures</i>	ix
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	x
<i>Chronology</i>	xii
 Introduction	 1
1 Becoming Victoria: 1819–1837	18
2 The young queen: 1837–1840	39
3 Leisure, love and family: 1837–1844	64
4 Revolutionary times: 1840–1851	87
5 Victoria and motherhood: 1842–1861	122
6 Queen Victoria, Palmerston and political interference: 1850–1860	145
7 Life after Albert: 1861–1868	176
8 Victoria, Gladstone and Disraeli: 1868–1880	202



9 Trading places – Victoria, Gladstone and Salisbury: 1880–1892	230
10 The last years: 1892–1901	265
Conclusion	293
<i>Select bibliography</i>	309
<i>Index</i>	313

# Figures

1	Victoria, Duchess of Kent, with Victoria	141
2	The Queen and Prince Albert at home	141
3	The royal cake: dividing up the world	142
4	The extended family of Queen Victoria	143
5	Queen Victoria	144

# Acknowledgements

My first thanks are to the series editor, Dr Robert Pearce, who commissioned *Queen Victoria*, steered me through Routledge's book proposal guidelines and edited the manuscript with style and wit. His comments were not just astute and well judged but also made with such wry humour that he even made revisions pleasurable. Thanks also to the four independent reviewers who recommended that my book proposal be accepted, and to Catherine Aitken and Laura Pilsworth at Routledge for their enduring patience, support and guidance. I would also like to thank Hamish Ironside for his extraordinarily assiduous proofreading skills; and Dr Megan Hiatt for her careful attention to detail while preparing the book for publication. Naturally, I take responsibility for any remaining errors.

I am grateful to Dr Diane Atkinson, Prof Maggie Andrews, Rosie Keep, Prof Angela V. John and Dr Kathy Stredder for their advice and encouragement, and to Cathy Loxton and Dawn Rumley for their apposite comments on early drafts of the book. Special thanks to Prof Sue Morgan for her reassuring and helpful observations on the final manuscript and to Prof Andrew August for his endorsement of the book. I should like to thank Colin and Libby Bennett for an unforgettable trip to Osborne House; and Myles and Alison, Earl and Countess of Bessborough, for sharing their knowledge of Henry Ponsonby with me. Thanks also to Dr Teresz Kleisz for helping me to understand Hungarian history.

This book could not have been written without the labours of previous biographers and historians who have written extensively

on Queen Victoria, her family and her times – so thank you to all those included in my bibliography. Thanks are due to Queen Elizabeth II for giving permission for the journals of Queen Victoria to be made available online and to the Bodleian libraries for helping to fund the website and make it free of charge to all users in the United Kingdom. Thanks to all those in Britain who pay their taxes for helping to keep such institutions flourishing.

A special thanks to the Royal Archives for giving me permission to quote from the journals and to one anonymous individual for some exceedingly useful comments on my manuscript. Victoria's journal entries were accessed online at [www.queenvictoriasjournals.org](http://www.queenvictoriasjournals.org). Subsequent quotations from the journals are cited according to the guidance listed at [www.queenvictoriasjournals.org/info/about.do](http://www.queenvictoriasjournals.org/info/about.do), using the code RA VIC/MAIN/QVJ (W) followed by the date of the entry. Between 1832 and 1840 I used Lord Esher's typescripts unless otherwise stated, and from 1840 onwards, Princess Beatrice's copies. These were all accessed between February 2013 and May 2015.

My final thanks are to my fantastic Dudley family, especially Jonathan, Edmund, Kata, Réka and Dóra, who individually and collectively provided me with the love and encouragement necessary to engage in the solitary pursuit of research and writing. The book is dedicated to my husband, Jonathan, whose emotional and intellectual support continues to be a source of strength to me.

# Chronology

<i>Date</i>	<i>Personal events</i>	<i>British events</i>	<i>World-wide events</i>
1819	Birth of Victoria, birth of Albert.	Peterloo massacre, Shelley's 'The Mask of Anarchy' and Scott's <i>Bride of Lammermoor</i> published, Factory Act.	
1820	Death of father, Duke of Kent; death of George III. George IV succeeded.	Cato Street conspiracy.	
1821	Coronation of George IV. Death of Queen Caroline.	<i>Guardian</i> newspaper launched.	Death of Napoleon I.
1822		Death penalty repealed for over 100 crimes. Precursor to the computer invented.	
1824		National Gallery opened. Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA) founded.	
1825	Victoria recognised as heir to the throne.	First public railway opened.	Nicolas I became Tsar.
1826	Victoria met George IV.		
1827	Prince Frederick died.	Canning appointed PM. Goderich appointed PM.	Treaty of London.
1828	Princess Feodora married.	Wellington appointed PM. London Zoo opened.	Russo-Turkish War.

1829		Catholic Emancipation Act. First Oxford–Cambridge boat race. Metropolitan police established.	
1830	George IV dies. William IV succeeded.	Grey PM. First intercity railway. Swing Riots.	Revolution in France. Louis Philippe crowned king of France. Belgian Independence movement.
1831	William IV crowned.	Factory Act forbade nightwork for those under 21. Darwin sets sail on HMS <i>Beagle</i> .	Leopold crowned first king of Belgium. Revolts in Italy.
1832	Tour of England and Wales. Victoria began journal.	Great Reform Act. Tennyson's 'Lady of Shalott'.	Greece recognised as an independent nation: Treaty of London. Bavarian prince appointed king of Greece.
1833	Princes Alexander and Ernst visited. Tour of south and west England.	Factory Act regulated hours of women and children. Slavery abolished in Britain. <i>Norma</i> opened in London.	
1834	Feodora visited.	Melbourne PM (July). Peel PM (December). Poor Law Amendment Act. House of Commons burnt down. Slavery abolished in British Empire.	Throne of Portugal seized. Palmerston sent British forces to re-instate legitimate heirs.

---

(continued)

(continued)

Date	Personal events	British events	World-wide events
1835	Tour of north of England. Leopold visited. Victoria confirmed. Victoria contracted typhoid.	Municipal Corporations Act. Melbourne PM (April)	English became official language of India.
1836	Princes Ferdinand and Augustus; Prince William and Alexander; Prince Ernest and Albert all visited.	Civil Marriages Act. <i>Pickwick Papers</i> serialised.	Queen Maria II of Portugal married Prince Ferdinand.
1837	Victoria celebrated 18th birthday. Death of William IV. Victoria became queen. Palace orchestra appointed.	Melbourne PM. Registration of Births, Marriages and Deaths Act. <i>Oliver Twist</i> serialised.	Rebellion in Canada.
1838	Victoria crowned.	Chartist petition. <i>Lucia di Lammermoor</i> opened in London. National Gallery moved to Trafalgar Square.	Pitcairn Islands became Crown Colony. First Anglo-Afghan war.
1839	Flora Hastings affair. Bedchamber crisis. John Conroy dismissed. Victoria proposed to Albert.	Custody of Infants Act. Rebecca riots began. First Grand National race. First telegraph sent. Anti-Corn Law League Founded.	Belgium recognised as independent country: Treaty of London. First Anglo-Afghan war. Egyptian rebellion against Ottomans. First Opium War.

1840	Victoria and Prince Albert married. Princess Victoria born. First assassination attempt. Albert appointed Regent.	Penny post established.	Canadian Act of Union. Beirut bombed by British and Ottoman troops. British claimed New Zealand.
1841	Prince Albert Edward born.	Melbourne resigned. Peel PM. Great Western railway completed. <i>Punch</i> magazine launched.	Convention of London. United Province of Canada proclaimed. Afghan war.
1842	Lehzen leaves. Victoria, Albert and Bertie vaccinated against smallpox. Victoria's first train ride. First visit to Scotland. Second and third assassination attempts.	Mines Act. Chartist petition. Railway Act. Robert Browning's 'My Last Duchess' published. Income tax levied for the first time in peace time. Chadwick's <i>The Sanitary Conditions of the Labouring Poor</i> published.	Opium War ended, Treaty of Nanking. Webster-Ashburton Treaty.
1843	Princess Alice born. Victoria's first visit abroad.	Rebecca riots ended. Opening of Thames tunnel. <i>News of the World</i> launched. First propeller-driven steamship launched. First commercial Christmas card.	Natal became British colony.
1844	Prince Alfred born, chloroform used for his delivery. Osborne House bought.	Factory Act. Bank Charter Act. Railway Regulation Act.	

---

(continued)



(continued)

<i>Date</i>	<i>Personal events</i>	<i>British events</i>	<i>World-wide events</i>
1845	Foundations laid for new Osborne House. Victoria visited Albert's birth-place.	Irish potato blight. Increase in Maynooth Grant. Last British duel fought. Disraeli's <i>Sybil</i> published.	First Anglo-Sikh War.
1846	Koh-i-Noor diamond acquired. Princess Helena born.	Repeal of Corn Laws. Peel resigned. Russell PM. Palmerston foreign secretary.	Oregon Treaty. Treaty of Lahore.
1847	New education system devised for royal children.	Ten Hours Act. Thackeray's <i>Vanity Fair</i> serialised. Charlotte Brontë's <i>Jane Eyre</i> published. Emily Brontë's <i>Wuthering Heights</i> published. Chloroform first used as anaesthetic.	
1848	Princess Louise born. Charles Kean appointed director of Windsor Castle theatricals. First visit to Balmoral. Royal family retreated to Osborne.	Habeas corpus suspended in Ireland. Revival of Chartism. Cholera epidemic. Public Health Act.	European revolutions. Spanish marriages. First Schleswig-Holstein war. First German National Assembly. Californian Gold rush. French royal family given asylum in Britain. Revolutions crushed.
1849	Fourth assassination attempt. Victoria and Albert visited Ireland. Albert devised rigorous educational programme for Bertie.		

1850	Prince Arthur born. Fifth assassination attempt. Brighton Royal Pavilion sold. Great Exhibition	Haynau incident. Factory Act. Tennyson appointed Poet Laureate. Peel died. Public Library Act. Ecclesiastical Titles Act. Kossuth incident. Palmerston resigned as Foreign Secretary. Mayhew's <i>London Labour and the London Poor</i> published. Russell resigned. Earl of Derby PM (February). Millais's <i>Ophelia</i> exhibited. Death of Wellington. First free public library opened. First pillar box erected. New Houses of Parliament opened. Lord Aberdeen PM (December).	Pope issued Bull. Don Pacifico incident. Colony of Victoria, Australia created. Coup d'état Louis Napoleon. Australian Gold Rush began.
1851			
1852	Balmoral bought. Victoria and Albert Museum opened.	Harriet Beecher Stowe's <i>Uncle Tom's Cabin</i> published. London Protocol established independence of Schleswig-Holstein.	
1853	Prince Leopold born. Swiss Cottage built at Osborne House. Foundations laid for Balmoral.		
1854	Victoria bought Frith's <i>Ramsgate Sands</i> . Crimean medal created.	John Snow established cause of cholera. Elizabeth Gaskell's <i>North and South</i> serialised. Florence Nightingale went to Crimea.	Crimean War began. British defeated Russians at Battle of Alma. Battle of Balaklava. Charge of the Light Brigade. Siege of Sebastopol. Battle of Inkerman.

---

(continued)

(continued)

<i>Date</i>	<i>Personal events</i>	<i>British events</i>	<i>World-wide events</i>
1855	Princess Victoria engaged to Prince Frederick of Prussia.	Palmerston PM. Abolition of Stamp Duty. <i>Daily Telegraph</i> launched. <i>Little Dorrit</i> serialised.	Sebastopol captured. Livingstone saw Victoria Falls.
1856	Prince Alfred sent away to study. Victoria gave audience to Florence Nightingale.	Mass production of steel began. County and Borough Police Act.	Crimean War ended. Peace of Paris. Second Opium War. Serbia and Romania became independent.
1857	Princess Beatrice born. Victoria awarded first Victoria Cross. V&A Museum moved to Kensington. Albert made Prince Consort.	Matrimonial Causes (Divorce) Act. Thomas Hughes's <i>Tom Brown's Schooldays</i> published.	Indian Mutiny. Cawnpore massacre. Relief of Lucknow.
1858	Princess Victoria married Prince Frederick. Prince Alfred passes naval exams.	The Great Stink. Public Health Act. Derby PM. Jewish Disabilities Act. First transatlantic telegraph. Hallé orchestra founded.	Government of India Act. Orsini attempted to assassinate Louis Napoleon.
1859	Victoria's first grandchild born. He later became Kaiser Wilhelm.	Derby resigned. Palmerston appointed PM. Peaceful picketing allowed. J.S. Mill's <i>On Liberty</i> , George Eliot's <i>Adam Bede</i> , Dickens's <i>Tale of Two Cities</i> , Wilkie Collins's <i>Woman in White</i> , Darwin's <i>Origin of Species</i> published.	Napoleon III declared war on Austria. Second Italian war of independence. Treaty of Villafranca.

1860	Granddaughter Charlotte born.	Food and Drugs Act.	
1861	Death of Victoria's mother, Duchess of Kent. Death of Albert.	First colour photograph. Mrs Beeton's <i>Household Management</i> published.	American Civil War began.
1862	Foundation stone for Royal Mausoleum laid. Princess Alice married Prince Louis of Hesse. Grandson Henry born.	Ladies Sanitary Association founded. Christina Rossetti's poem 'Goblin Market' published. Charles Kingsley's <i>The Water Babies</i> serialised.	
1863	Prince of Wales married Princess Alexandra of Denmark. Birth of granddaughter Victoria.	London Underground opened. Football Association formed.	Schleswig-Holstein question. Polish revolted against Russia. Māori war. First Ashanti war.
1864	Grandson Albert Edward, first son of Bertie, born. Birth of granddaughter Elizabeth.	First Contagious Diseases Act.	First Geneva Convention signed. Schleswig-Holstein invaded.
1865	Birth of grandson Prince George, later George V. John Brown appointed Queen's highland servant.	Elizabeth Garrett Anderson qualified as first English doctor. Russell PM. Lewis Carroll's <i>Alice in Wonderland</i> published. Death of Palmerston. Lister established antiseptic surgery.	Abraham Lincoln assassinated. Jamaica revolt.

---

(continued)

(continued)

Date	Personal events	British events	World-wide events
1866	Prince Alfred created Duke of Edinburgh. Princess Helena married Prince Christian of Schleswig-Holstein-Sonderburg-Augustenburg. Birth of granddaughters Victoria and Irene.	Derby PM. Sanitary Act.	Austro-Prussian War.
1867	Birth of granddaughter Louise and grandson Christian.	Dynamite patented in Britain. Second Reform Act. Bagehot's <i>English Constitution</i> published.	Canada became British Dominion. Abyssinian war.
1868	<i>Leaves from the Journal of Our Life in the Highlands</i> published. Attempt on life of Prince Alfred. Birth of granddaughter Victoria.	Disraeli PM (February). Last public hanging in England. Gladstone PM (December). National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies founded.	Māori war in New Zealand.
1869	Birth of granddaughter Maud, later Queen of Norway. Birth of grandson Albert.	Disestablishment of Irish Church Act. Girton College founded.	Dual Austro-Hungarian monarchy created. Suez Canal opened.
1870	Birth of granddaughters Sophie and Helena.	Education Act. Death of Charles Dickens. Irish Land Act. Married Women's Property Act. Cardwell's Army Reforms begin. Civil Service Reforms.	Franco-Prussian War. Napoleon defeated. Siege of Paris Commune. Napoleon III given asylum in Britain.

1871	Princess Louise married Marquis of Lorne. Prince of Wales contracted typhoid.	Edward Lear's 'The Owl and the Pussy-cat' published. First Rugby Union international. Royal Albert Hall opened. University Test Act. Trade Union Act. Abolition of the purchase of Commissions. Republican Clubs founded. Secret ballot. First Football Association Cup Final. Licensing Act. Public Health Act.	German union proclaimed. Paris Commune.
1872	Thanksgiving for Prince of Wales' recovery. Fifth assassination attempt on Victoria. Albert Memorial unveiled. Granddaughter Margaret born. Birth of granddaughters Marie and Alix, who would marry Nicolas, Tsar.		
1873	Victoria gave audience to Shah of Persia.	Judicature Act.	Second Ashanti War.
1874	Prince Alfred married Grand Duchess Marie Alexandrovna of Russia. Birth of grandson Alfred and granddaughter Mary.	Thomas Hardy's <i>Far from the Madding Crowd</i> serialised. Disraeli PM. Licensing Act. Public Worship Regulation Act.	

---

(continued)

(continued)

Date	Personal events	British events	World-wide events
1875	Prince of Wales toured India. Birth of granddaughter Marie, who later married the King of Romania.	Climbing Boys Act. Artisans Dwelling Act. Peaceful picketing allowed. Public Health Act. Sale of Food and Drugs Act. First man swam English Channel.	Disraeli purchased shares in Suez Canal. Bosnia-Herzegovina rebelled against Ottoman Empire.
1876	Victoria awarded title of Empress of India. Birth of granddaughter Victoria.	Education Act. Merchant Shipping Act. Disraeli created Earl of Beaconsfield.	Alexander Graham Bell patented telephone. Bulgarian massacres.
1877		First Wimbledon tournament. Anna Sewell's <i>Black Beauty</i> published. Annie Besant and Charles Bradlaugh published pamphlet on birth control.	Russia declared war on Ottoman Empire. Transvaal annexed.
1878	Death of Princess Alice.	Gilbert and Sullivan's opera <i>HMS Pinafore</i> opened. Factory and Workshop Act.	Thomas Edison patented the phonograph. Congress of Berlin. Treaty of San Stefano. Afghan war.
1879	Prince Arthur married Princess Louise of Prussia.	Electric light bulb patented. Irish Land League formed.	Zulu War.
1880	Princess Alice died of diphtheria.	Gladstone PM. Employers' Liability Act. First Eisteddfod Association.	Henry James's <i>Portrait of a Lady</i> published. First Boer War.
1881	Death of Disraeli.	Natural History Museum opened. Irish Land Act. Education Act made school compulsory up to ten.	Assassination of Tsar Alexander III. Anti-foreign riots in Egypt. Boers attacked British army.

1882	Sixth assassination attempt. Prince Leopold married Princess Helen of Waldeck-Pyrmont. Prince Arthur awarded medal for gallantry. Birth of granddaughter Margaret, who later married the Crown Prince of Sweden.	The Ashes Cricket began. Married Women's Property Act. Phoenix Park murders. Coercion Act.	Tchaikovsky's <i>1812 Overture</i> performed. Egyptian rebellion defeated.
1883	John Brown died. Birth of grandson Arthur and granddaughter Alice.	Robert Louis Stevenson's <i>Treasure Island</i> published. Corrupt and Illegal Practices Act.	
1884	Death of Leopold. Birth of grandson Charles. More <i>Leaves from a Journal</i> published.	First part of <i>Oxford English Dictionary</i> published. Third Reform Act.	General Gordon and army sent to Khartoum. Siege of Khartoum. Convention of London returned independence to Boers. Death of General Gordon.
1885	Princess Beatrice married Prince Henry of Battenburg.	Modern bicycle invented. Salisbury PM. Redistribution Act. Gladstone converted to Home Rule.	
1886	Birth of granddaughter Victoria and grandson Alexander.	First motor car patented. Liberal Party split. Liberal Unionists founded. Gladstone PM (February). First Irish Home Rule Bill. Salisbury PM (July).	Berlin conference. Gold discovered in Transvaal.

---

(continued)



(continued)

<i>Date</i>	<i>Personal events</i>	<i>British events</i>	<i>World-wide events</i>
1887	Golden Jubilee. Arrival of Abdul Karim. Birth of granddaughter Victoria, later Queen of Spain.	Redistribution Act. Independent Labour Party founded. Criminal Law Act.	
1888		Contagious Diseases Acts repealed. Match-girls' strike. County Councils Act.	Prince Frederick crowned German Emperor. Death of Frederick, Wilhelm II crowned. First Kodak camera patented.
1889	Victoria became patron of newly created National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children. Birth of grandson Leopold.	Prevention of Cruelty to Children Act. London Dock Strike.	
1890		Oscar Wilde's <i>The Picture Of Dorian Gray</i> published.	Bismarck resigned as German Chancellor.
1891	Death of Prince Albert Victor, Bertie's eldest son. Birth of grandson Maurice.	Fee Grant Act made education free. Death of Charles Parnell.	Revolt in Manipur, India.
1892	Death of son-in-law Prince Louis.	Gladstone PM.	
1893	Prince George, son of Prince of Wales, married Mary of Teck. Prince Alfred appointed Duke of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha.	Elementary Education Act for blind and deaf children. Defeat of second Irish Home Rule Bill.	Third Ashanti war.

1894	Birth of Prince Edward, eldest son of Prince George, the heir to the throne. Alexandra, Victoria's granddaughter, married Prince Nicolas of Russia. Prince Albert George, second son of Prince of Wales, born.	Rosebery PM. Rudyard Kipling's <i>Jungle Book</i> published. Local Government Act. Death duties introduced.	Olympic Games re-established. Nicolas appointed Tsar.
1895		H. G. Wells's <i>Time Machine</i> published. Salisbury PM. First car journey in Britain.	Renewed tensions in the Balkans. Ashanti war. Jameson raid; rebellion in Transvaal.
1896			Nicolas and Alexandra crowned tsar and tsarina. First modern Olympic Games held in Athens. Anglo-Zanzibar War.
1897	Diamond Jubilee.	First wireless message sent. Bram Stoker's <i>Dracula</i> published. National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies founded. Workmen's Compensation Act.	Fashoda incident. War between Ottoman Empire and Greece.
1898		Death of Gladstone.	Battle of Omdurman. George Curzon appointed Viceroy of India.
1899			Second Anglo-Boer War.
1900	Death of Prince Alfred. Victoria visited Ireland.		Kimberley, Ladysmith and Mafeking relieved. Boxer Rebellion.
1901	Death of Queen Victoria.		

This page intentionally left blank

# Introduction

On 28 March 1819, a seven-months-pregnant German princess left her home in Amorbach, Bavaria, for a 427-mile horse-drawn coach journey to England. She travelled with her husband, her daughter from a previous marriage, a lady-in-waiting, a midwife, a doctor, a governess, cooks, servants, two lapdogs and a cage of birds. The group trekked across the bumpy pot-holed roads of Europe in an assorted caravan of post-chaises, barouches and baggage carts and arrived in Calais on 18 April. Here they waited until the weather was fair enough for them to cross the Channel. A month later, safely installed in Kensington Palace, the Princess gave birth to a baby daughter, a 'pretty little Princess, as plump as a partridge'. The baby was delivered by a female obstetrician, was breastfed by her mother and vaccinated against smallpox. Eighteen years later, in 1837, this daughter was crowned Victoria, Queen of Great Britain.

## Britain in 1819

Victoria was born into a Britain where most people still lived and worked in the country. But it was a countryside in flux. The Enclosure Acts of the eighteenth century had broken up most of the old open fields and shared commons, land which was then hedged, ditched and fenced. Most small farmers could not afford the costs of these transformations so were forced to sell, sometimes becoming landless labourers, sometimes moving to the new towns. Life may have been harsh for the newly dispossessed smallholders but the enclosures allowed wealthier farmers to buy

## 2 *Introduction*

more land, and to introduce new methods of farming, new machinery and new ways of breeding pedigree herds. As a result, food production increased substantially, which led in turn to a dramatic growth in population. Families in 1819 were large: giving birth to nine children, as Queen Victoria would later do, was not unusual.

In other respects, too, Britain was undergoing momentous change as technological developments transformed the way in which people lived and worked. Cotton replaced wool as the material of choice. It was cheaper to produce, easier to keep clean and comfortable to wear. More and more workshops, factories, mills and mines used water and steam power rather than human muscle to make cotton cloth. This resulted in factories increasing in size as the installation of large, heavy and expensive machinery made it necessary to employ more than just a few people. Soon these new towns and cities became densely populated and exceedingly dirty as the coal-fired steam factories polluted the air people breathed and turned buildings black. These new factory workers needed to live somewhere, so houses were quickly – and often shoddily – built to accommodate them. Back-to-back houses were the norm in industrial cities. Most people did not have an inside lavatory let alone a bathroom: they used earth closets outside. Many families shared one earth closet – in one factory town about 7,000 people shared 33 such closets – which frequently overflowed into the street. Not surprisingly, health problems such as cholera, typhoid and other related diseases were the results, all caused by poor sanitation. These types of illnesses affected all classes: Queen Victoria and her eldest son, Bertie, the Prince of Wales, became seriously ill from typhoid; many believe Prince Albert died from it.

In 1819 the Factory Act forbade children to work under the age of nine but the Act was unenforceable and owners generally ignored it. Conditions in the factories were often harsh. Every textile factory was damp, dusty and noisy: many workers stood in their bare feet in puddles of water; fluff and cotton dust was everywhere; and the noise of the weaving and spinning machines was deafening. In addition, factory workers were regimented and subjected to petty rules; many employers fined their workers to make sure they behaved themselves and worked hard. Finable

offences at Strutts Mill in Belper included 'idleness and looking thro' window; noisy behaviour; being off with a pretence of being ill; and riding on each other's back'. Children worked as 'scavengers' picking up the bits of thread and cotton underneath the machines or as 'piecers', joining together the ends of broken thread. The textile industry depended on slave-grown cotton to provide the raw materials to make its cloth. In 1807 the British government abolished the slave trade but slavery remained widespread at the time of Victoria's birth.

Textile factories relied on coal to power the new machines. In 1819, coal mines employed men, women and children: the male collier hewed the coal; women, harnessed like animals, carried it to the pit-brow; and children worked as trappers, opening and shutting the underground doors for ventilation. Hours were long and the work was arduous and dangerous. Explosions, roof falls and accidents were common. When she was 13 years old, Princess Victoria wrote of having just 'passed through a town where all coal mines are . . . The men, women and children . . . are all black. But I can not . . . give an idea of its strange and extraordinary appearance. The country is very desolate every where.'<sup>1</sup>

Britain had changed spectacularly in the period just before Victoria's birth but it was to experience more unprecedented technological, political, economic and social change throughout the nineteenth century. Such dramatic changes posed challenges to government as it sought to ameliorate or contain the social dislocation which ensued. When she became queen, Victoria would need high levels of political skill to handle the changing needs and demands of her subjects brought on by this progressively accelerating industrialisation.

## **Government and politics**

When Victoria was born, a small elite ruled Britain. At the top of the hierarchy was the Crown, represented by 'mad' George III, but because of the King's incapacity his disreputable and profligate son, George, became the Prince Regent, governing in place of his father. The Prince Regent created a world of such unbridled extravagance and luxury for himself that he was nicknamed Falstaff after the notoriously dissipated – yet

## 4 Introduction

attractive – character in Shakespeare's *Henry IV* plays. In 1820 King George III died and his son replaced him as King George IV. British sovereigns were not absolute rulers; they were constitutional monarchs empowered to rule according to an unwritten constitution, not by divine right.

The United Kingdom, unlike the United States and many other countries, has no single written constitution. Instead, the British constitution is a matter of custom, expectation and usage. It is uncoded, incremental and embodied in Parliamentary laws, court judgements and treaties, all of which have been pieced together over time. The real beginning of constitutional monarchy dates back to the Magna Carta 1215 when King John, under pressure from his barons, agreed that sovereigns must rule by law, not by personal inclination. In 1689 these principles were reinforced and developed when the British parliament invited William of Orange and Mary to become joint sovereigns after King James II fled the country. William and Mary's claim to the throne was therefore not directly hereditary since it depended on an Act of Parliament for its legitimacy. This Act established the principle that monarchs owed their position to parliament as much as to inherited right. In addition, the 'Glorious Revolution' confirmed parliament as the chief law-making body; from then on the supreme power in Britain was parliament not the sovereign. The coronation oath, where the king or queen promises to govern according to the law, reinforces this principle. As queen, Victoria would object to any further strengthening of the parliamentary system, particularly if it affected her constitutional rights.

In 1819 parliament was composed of an unelected House of Lords and an elected House of Commons. The main political parties, the Whigs (Liberals) and the Tories (Conservatives), consisted largely of male Anglican aristocrats: Catholics, Quakers and Jews could not become MPs.<sup>2</sup> Whigs had helped engineer the 1689 Revolution and were strong supporters of the Hanoverians when that dynasty succeeded to the British throne. Princess Victoria's parents were both Whigs: she was surrounded by Whigs in her youth and throughout her life maintained that she held to Whig principles. Whigs believed that monarchs must govern with the consent of the nation and that ultimately sovereignty rested with the people, principles that Queen Victoria would often find

hard to respect. Naturally, the Whigs sought to extend the franchise in order to strengthen parliament, and their own influence, even more. They were also committed to the defence of liberties and religious toleration. In contrast, the ideological hallmarks of the Tories were the principles of divine monarchical right, hereditary succession and commitment to the Anglican Church. Not surprisingly, a large number of Tories opposed the 1689 Revolution, were against any extension of democracy and tended to squash radicalism wherever and whenever they could.<sup>3</sup>

At the time, the state was small with the government mainly focusing on defence, the control of trade through customs and excise, and the maintenance of law and order. Britain was a country under pressure. The triple challenges of a population explosion, industrialisation and urbanisation had created multi-layered tensions, particularly in vulnerable areas. In 1815, after Napoleon was defeated at the Battle of Waterloo, the demobilisation of hundreds of thousands of soldiers – who had no pension or government support – led to increased unemployment and deepening distress for the very poor. And when the government passed the Corn Law Act 1815, which banned the import of foreign corn until the price of British corn had reached £4 a quarter, the poorer section of society which relied on bread as their staple diet suffered. Victoria's birth coincided with a time of significant poverty and suffering for the working class; in contrast, there appeared to be a marked escalation of privilege and prosperity for the upper classes.

In August 1819, just a few months after the birth of Princess Victoria, a meeting was held in St Peter's Fields, Manchester to call for parliamentary reform. At the time only a small minority of men – and no women – were allowed to vote. The meeting was broken up by a voluntary cavalry force, the Manchester Yeomanry, and at least 11 people were killed and 400 injured in the *mêlée*. It was soon called the Peterloo Massacre. The English Romantic poet, Percy Bysshe Shelley, wrote *England in 1819* in response to this event. The poem is politically radical: it encapsulates the anger of people against their royal family and what was considered to be a perfidious government. It talks of an 'old, mad blind, despised and dying king, . . . Rulers who neither see, nor feel, nor know, but leech-like to their fainting country



cling. . . . A people starved and stabbed.’ In the same year Shelley also wrote ‘The Mask of Anarchy’, a poem which has been described as the greatest political poem ever written in English and one often quoted by Gandhi in his campaigns against the British in India. ‘The Mask of Anarchy’ is an anthem to freedom, liberty and equality, and ends with an exhortation to the people to ‘Rise Like Lions after slumber’ against injustice, as ‘ye are many – they are few’. Many people agreed with Shelley and did indeed ‘rise like lions’. As queen, Victoria would face periods of social and political unrest and be forced to accept the reforms brought in by her government in response to this turbulence.

Censorship, both overt and covert, was common. Sometimes political writers such as Shelley found it difficult to find a publisher;<sup>4</sup> sometimes publishers were prosecuted for printing revolutionary texts. In October 1819 Richard Carlile was convicted of blasphemy and seditious libel, and sent to prison for publishing Tom Paine’s *The Age of Reason*, a book that challenged institutionalised religion and the legitimacy of the Bible. The book was a best-seller in the United States. Of course, not all art was political: in the same year John Keats wrote ‘La Belle Dame sans Merci’, a love ballad drawn from medieval tales, and Walter Scott’s historical novel *The Bride of Lammermoor*, probably now better known as Donizetti’s dramatic opera *Lucia di Lammermoor*, was published. Walter Scott was to become one of Queen Victoria’s favourite novelists, and the opera a much treasured piece of music. The art and music world was thriving too. On 23 April 1819, to co-incide with his birthday and the birthday of the Prince Regent, the best-loved British artist, J.M.W. Turner, exhibited his painting *Richmond Hill*. In the same year, Rossini had four of his operas performed in London. Britain seemed to be the cultural capital of the world. Certainly, at the time of Victoria’s birth, Britain was the world’s greatest power. It had the largest navy, the biggest share of the world’s trade, the most developed industry and London as the world’s financial capital. In 1837 Victoria would be queen of it all.

## Historiography

Queen Victoria is one of the most studied women in history – over 500 books have been published on her life – so that biographies

sometimes read like a historical tiered cake, each author stacking ever more obscure facts onto previous layers and often repeating the same old facts expressed slightly differently. New books about Queen Victoria appear regularly, often written by biographers rather than historians, often emphasising the monarch's personal lifestyle at the expense of her political influence and often aimed primarily to entertain general readers. There are psychological biographies, literary biographies, chatty biographies, biographies that deal solely with Victoria's family, her prime ministers, or her courtiers.<sup>5</sup> There are books about young Victoria, married Victoria, widowed Victoria and even imperial Victoria. There are, commented the historian Fassiottto, 'so many Victorias. Old Victorias, dignified Victorias, charming Victorias, angry Victorias, Victorias in white satin and Victorias in black silk'.<sup>6</sup>

Lytton Strachey, often regarded as the father of modern biography, wrote the first scholarly biography, *Queen Victoria*.<sup>7</sup> For a man with a fondness for taking a rude and irreverent approach to his subjects, Strachey's book is strangely adulatory; it also focuses on the Queen's early life and pays scant attention to her later reign. Other biographers have written exhaustive cradle-to-grave narratives. Elizabeth Longford's long, authoritative, sympathetic, yet unsentimental biography *Victoria*<sup>8</sup> remains the best. However, her avoidance of sexually contentious issues and her minimal treatment of the Queen's constitutional role are drawbacks to an otherwise splendid book. Nonetheless, it remains, as Giles St Aubyn notes, 'the envy and despair of those who venture to follow her'.<sup>9</sup> Cecil Woodham-Smith's superb, sympathetic *Queen Victoria: Her Life and Times, Volume One 1819–1861*<sup>10</sup> sets the life of Victoria within the history of the period exceptionally well but stops at the death of Albert. Stanley Weintraub's best-selling scholarly, descriptive and readable *Victoria: Biography of a Queen*<sup>11</sup> is less reverential, providing a life-like portrait which is both critical and sympathetic. Yet even so, the historical background to her reign remains slight and the book is of a length which is off-putting to many. Later interpretations such as Christopher Hibbert's *Queen Victoria*<sup>12</sup> paint a different portrait of the monarch as a shy, diffident and vulnerable yet sensual person rather than the rather capricious, censorious and morally repressive one of popular imagination. A.N. Wilson's *Victoria*<sup>13</sup> creates a fresher, yet sympathetic, Victoria for the twenty-first century.

Wilson draws on new evidence from German archives to enrich his portrait of the Queen as an unconventional, volatile yet kindly and unsnobbish woman. His witty biography is an enjoyable and captivating read, full of gossipy anecdotes about royal life, but as with other accounts the focus remains on the personal, rather than the political story.

Other writers have written shorter and differently focused biographies. Frank Hardie's *The Political Influence of Queen Victoria, 1861–1901*<sup>14</sup> was the first to challenge the myth that Queen Victoria took little interest in politics. On the contrary, he argues, the Queen had a pervasive influence particularly over foreign policy, the Church and legislation. Hardie provides a frank exposition of Victoria's behind-the-scenes royal influence, revealing how the Queen promoted legislation, campaigned and intrigued against policies of which she disapproved and tried to influence the composition of governments. Throughout her life, he argued, she preferred to take an active role in government rather than take part in ceremonial occasions. Queen Victoria wanted to rule not just reign.

Some have sought to interpret Victoria theoretically. Dorothy Thompson's *Queen Victoria*<sup>15</sup> analyses the role of the monarch through the prism of gender, arguing that the presence of a woman in the highest political spheres affected the lives of all her subjects. Thompson's feminist leanings, however, make her a little too sympathetic towards the monarch and she has a tendency to overlook the Queen's obvious failings. The gender theme is developed by Adrienne Munich's *Queen Victoria's Secrets*,<sup>16</sup> which is a challenging and thought-provoking exploration of the influence of Victoria on cultural history. It is, however, more a compendium of how Victorians saw Victoria rather than a biography. Others have employed the analytical tools of cultural studies. John Plunkett's scholarly *Queen Victoria: First Media Monarch*,<sup>17</sup> examines the role of the media in Queen Victoria's reign and analyses how the development of popular media helped re-invent the monarchy and make it more popular.

There has been a recent shift in biographical writing, that which examines particular aspects of Victoria's private life: Lynne Val-lone's *Becoming Victoria*<sup>18</sup> and Kate Williams's *Becoming Queen*,<sup>19</sup> for example, both focus on the Queen's emotional and