

THE
TESTAMENT
OF SOPHIE
DAVIES

*The Queen of Chantilly and a
Scandal at the Heart of Victorian Society*

by
ROBERT STEPHEN PARRY

To Ruby

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Also by the same author:
'The Hours Before' 2015
'Elizabeth' 2014
'Wildish' 2013
'The Arrow Chest' 2011
'Virgin and the Crab' 2009

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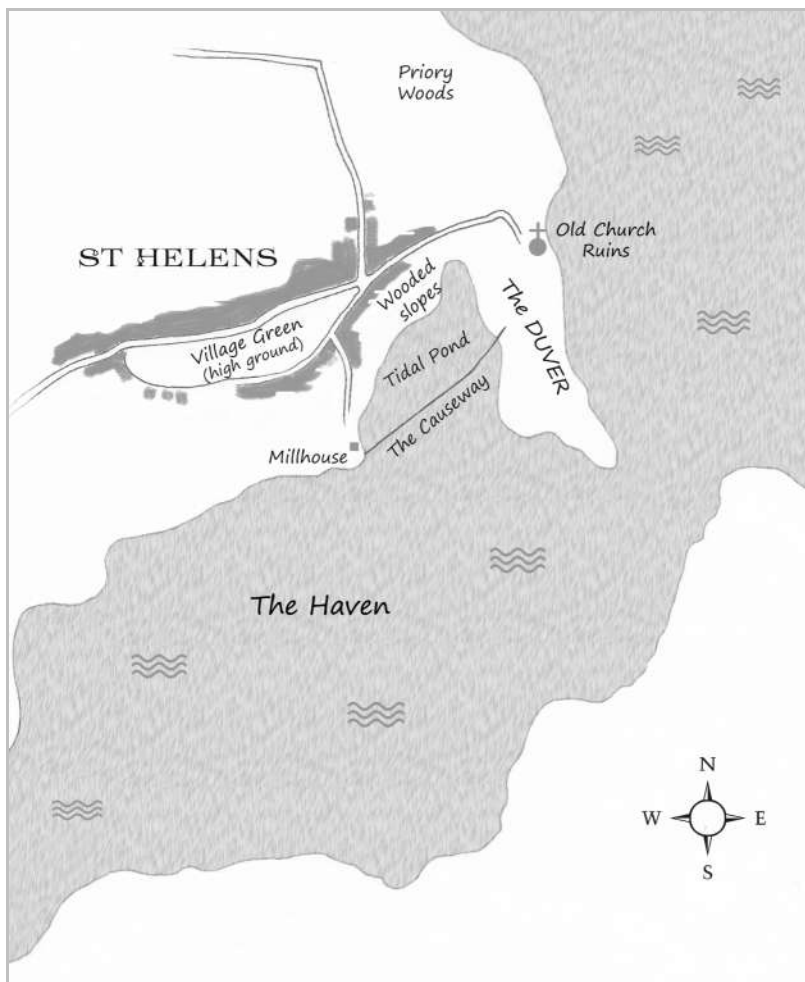
When, in 1862, my grandfather was called to the Royal Residence at Osborne to take up the post of junior archivist, he discovered a number of curious objects in the house where he was staying, and which have remained in the possession of our family ever since. His predecessor, who had also stayed in the same building, had remained in the job for only a few months. My grandfather never met him, and it is not clear who might have placed the items there or for what purpose.

As you will see, for obvious reasons we have been obliged to keep this matter confidential for some years. In fact, my grandfather, ever a man to relish a little dramatic intrigue, insisted in his final will that the story surrounding this peculiar collection (it consists of a small wicker carry basket in very poor condition, a handwritten journal, several letters and a press cutting) should not be made public for the space of precisely one hundred years from the date of his death.

Although the items might appear to have little intrinsic value, nevertheless I have felt unable, upon this, the centenary of his passing, to discard them. Instead, the wicker basket now hangs in a corner of our potting shed, where it will doubtless remain as an attraction for nesting robins, while the journal and documents are presented here in typewritten form for your convenience. I make no claims as to the authenticity of the events described therein, and will leave you to judge for yourself what credence one should award to any of it, according to your enthusiasm or otherwise for the strange and macabre.

Map of the Area Described in the Journal

For a printable, high resolution image of this map click [here](#)



Prominent Historical Figures Mentioned in these Pages

Adélaïde, Madame d'Orléans (1777-1847) sister of Louis Philippe, King of the French. Friend of Queen Victoria.

Albert, Prince (1819-61) Consort to Queen Victoria

Alice, Princess (1843-1878) the third child of Queen Victoria and Albert

Angoulême, Duchess (1778-1851) daughter of the executed King Louis XVI of France and sister to the uncrowned Louis XVII.

Antoinette, Marie (1755-1793), wife of Louis XVI, Queen of France from 1774 until her execution in 1793. Mother of the uncrowned King Louis XVII.

Atois, Comte d' (1757-1836) later King Charles X of France

Aumale, Henri Duc d'Orléans (1822-1897) son of Louis Philippe d'Orléans, King of the French. Friend of Queen Victoria.

Berry, Duc de (1778-1820), French nobleman, nephew to King Louis XVIII. Assassinated in 1820

Bertie, (1841-1910) otherwise known as His Royal Highness, Albert Edward, Prince of Wales, Queen Victoria's eldest son.

Beauharnais, Joséphine de (1763-1814), mistress and later wife of Napoleon Bonaparte.

Bonaparte - see 'Napoleon'

Clémentine, Princess d'Orléans (1817-1907) daughter of Louis Philippe (King of the French from 1830 until 1848). Friend of Queen Victoria and married to her cousin, Augustus.

Condé, Louis Henri Joseph - Duc de (1756-1830) - later Prince de Condé. French nobleman and Prince of the Blood. Father to the Duc d'Enghien.

Charles X (1757-1836) formerly Comte d'Artois and King of France from 1824 to 1830.

Égalité, Philippe d'Orléans (1747-1793) - notorious French nobleman who sided with the republican cause during the French Revolution. Father of Louis Philippe d'Orléans.

Enghien, duc d' (1772-1804) son of the Prince de Condé. Executed at the age of 31 on the orders of Napoleon.

Grey, General Sir Charles (1804-1870) British statesman and Secretary to Prince Albert and later Queen Victoria. Held office between 1849 until 1870.

Helena, Princess (1846-1923), also known as Lenchen. The 3rd daughter and 5th child to Queen Victoria and Prince Albert.

Kent, Duke of (1767-1820) - 5th child of King George III of England and father to Queen Victoria.

Lenchen - see 'Helena'

Louis XVI (1754-1793) King of France from 1774 until

his execution during the French Revolution. Husband of Marie Antoinette and father to the uncrowned Louis XVII.

Louis XVII (1785-1795) Louis Charles, Duc de Normandie. The son of Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette, thought to have died in prison during the French Revolution at the age of ten. But also considered by some to have lived on to become claimant to the throne of France as Karl Wilhelm Naundorff, who died in 1845.

Louis XVIII (1755-1824) Louis Stanislas, Comte de Provence. Later King of France from 1814 until his death. Brother of the guillotined Louis XVII and of Charles X of France.

Louis Philippe, Duc d'Orléans (1773-1850), son of the infamous revolutionary, Philippe Égalité. He became 'King of the French' in 1830. Exiled to England in 1848. Friend of Queen Victoria.

Louis Stanislas - see 'Louis XVIII'

Maria Amalia, Duchess d'Orléans (1782-1866), later Queen of the French. Wife of Louis Philippe. Friend of Queen Victoria.

Napoleon Bonaparte, (1769-1821), Corsican soldier who rose to prominence following the French Revolution and ultimately became Emperor of France.

Naundorff, Karl Wilhelm (1785-1845), Prussian citizen who claimed to be Louis Charles, Duc de Normandie, the uncrowned King Louis XVII of France.

Palmerston, Lord (1784-1865), British Prime Minister during the reign of Queen Victoria

Ruland, Karl (1834-1907) chief librarian and confidant to Prince Albert and Queen Victoria.

Talleyrand, Prince de (1754-1838), French politician and diplomat.

JOURNAL - APRIL 1862



Commencing Saturday 19th April

It was to the accompaniment of a horrible grating noise that the stone gave way and the grave opened. A woman was passing the church, returning from the quayside, and neither of us could fail to notice the emergence of the haggard figure, barely discernible in the mist and darkness of the early hour, pushing upwards, stretching, struggling free of the tomb. The poor woman fled in terror as the spectre cast his eye upon her - and then he straightened his body and slid, at first one, then two legs across the side of the modest little sarcophagus and hopped down, brushing himself off from the various debris of his enforced concealment in the manner of one well practised in the routine. A small barrel of what look like brandy was hauled out next and placed upon the man's shoulder. I heard a voice say that the red-coated revenue men with their sabres and muskets were gone now and that the smuggler Dickie Dawes of St Helens, wanting only of a decent breakfast to warm his innards, was safe, therefore, to return the short distance up the hill to his cottage on the Green.

That is about the gist of it - the dream as I recall, and which I experienced upon my very first night here at what is to be my temporary home until the end of the summer. It was so

unusual a dream (surely something to do with having to endure Easter again, as one must at this time of the year) that it has prompted me to commence upon this journal today, a little sooner than I had anticipated, and in which I look forward to recording my observations of all the rich variety of birdlife to be found in these parts. It really is a most suitable place to indulge my hobby - and thus, armed with my trusty MacGillivray's Manual and my treasured copy of Darwin's recent masterpiece, which I am hoping to reread this summer, my time here away from all the smoke and grime of London is set to be most recuperative and will surely make my working days amid the dusty archives at Osborne House a little more tolerable.

Sunday 20th April

A fine day, some sunshine.

Embarked on a walk from the village green down to the very tip of the inlet into the Haven and the saltmarsh estuary of the river Yar, a large lagoon and a once-busy harbour in bygone times, they say - though with few attractions to visitors these days, except for moorings for the occasional yacht or fishing boat. Bordered by fields and wooded slopes, it really is a unique combination of environments and consequently of wildlife also (see my rather imperfect sketch of the area appended to the start of this journal). The Haven itself is almost entirely isolated from the sea by a long strip of gently undulating sand and coarse turf called the Duver - or, as an elderly lady I encountered briefly this morning assured me, should be pronounced not as 'doover,' as I had mistakenly suggested when asking for directions, but simply to rhyme with the word 'cover.' I should have known better. The local accent is a sturdy Hampshire dialect.

'Go gently on the Duver as you would upon your lover!' she rattled out - I'm sure that's what she said, and then laughed as I walked away. Most inappropriate, surely, to have been so forward with a stranger. (Are they all mad here?)

Anyway, apart from this brief educational experience, I'm glad to report that I did not see another soul for what remained of the afternoon.

Monday 21st April

A fine, warm day, and after a late start at my place of work due to Easter, I was able to meet my new colleagues at Osborne - a very upright and reassuringly refined assortment of men and women, many of them titled. There was the pleasure of re-acquainting myself with Sir Charles Grey, Private Secretary to Her Majesty; and also Sir Charles Phipps, his assistant. But the fellow who is to become my immediate superior, and whom I had not met until today, is a Mr Carl (or Karl) Ruland, a dapper, energetic German with fair hair and rimless glasses. He was librarian for many years to the late Prince Albert and now divides his time between continuing in that role for Her Majesty and as tutor in German to the twenty-year old Prince of Wales - or 'Bertie,' as he is more affectionately known. Bertie, however, is not here all that often - not these days - and Ruland travels with the Court, as does Grey and Phipps. So once I have been fully briefed and they have all moved off to Balmoral shortly, I suspect I shall be left very much to my own devices.

This might not be such a bad thing, as the atmosphere here does strike me as excessively dour and formal, and so far I cannot say that my reception has proved overwhelmingly friendly, either. One might think that the presence of several elegant governesses - overseeing the royal children - and a dazzling host of ladies in waiting to Her Majesty might mitigate matters. But this is not the case. The ladies are all in mourning due to the passing of the Prince Consort in December, and seem anything but approachable. Wherever the Queen goes, apparently things are the same: an unremitting air of gloom and despondency travels with her, and everyone seems anxious, 'treading on eggshells' lest they utter an inappropriate remark or even speak too loudly. At least no one

seems likely to interfere in my work or overburden me with small talk.

In the afternoon, I was shown along the sumptuous and gilded corridor that connects the various sections of the vast building, the 'marble corridor,' as it is appropriately called. This took me through to what is called the Household Wing and a corner where I might set up an office (not exactly in the same quarters as the servants and grooms, but almost). Here, I was cautioned by Grey over making myself too visible in the vicinity of the main residential Pavilion or upon the terraces during those times when Her Majesty is in residence. At any rate, I am told that I should exercise discretion to begin with. One is made to feel acutely aware of one's station - one's place.

For all that, my purpose in being called here, I should perhaps remind myself, is quite an intriguing one - assisting with the correlation of the late Prince Consort's memoranda and minor documents, public and private. Her Majesty has instructed Ruland to secure the safety of all the most precious papers of her beloved in whatever form - because of their inestimable value to subsequent generations. That includes everything - really *everything*. Her Majesty cannot bear the thought of a single item of Albert's being discarded. All papers, even a shopping list, must be kept and put in order somehow, and thus I shall be occupied with all the various abandoned notes, lists and scraps of paper, many written in German or French, that are scattered all around the Prince's morning room and study; the nursery, the library, the service buildings and no doubt a good few other places, as well. This, of course, is after Ruland and Her Majesty's secretaries have already been through and removed anything of any sensitivity.

No matter. I live in hope, mindful always that perhaps with Albert's sudden demise only so very recently, they will not yet have scoured every corner - a liberty I am permitted almost without restriction. So there might yet be something of value to be unearthed.

We shall see.

End of Sample