

# The Royal Yacht Victoria & Albert II



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At the time of writing this, lying on the deck just below the Captain's cabin in HMS *Trincomalee* are two faded barge-boards'. These had been used as decoration on our ship on ceremonial occasions when it was the training ship *Foudroyant*, and stayed with the ship when it was brought to Hartlepool for restoration. In the past few years we have found out more about these barge-boards, and the vessel they were originally designed for, HM Royal Yacht *Victoria and Albert II*.

The replacement for the first Royal Yacht *Victoria and Albert* was originally laid down as the *Windsor Castle* at Pembroke Dockyard on the 6<sup>th</sup> February 1854 and like her predecessor she was a twin wooden paddle steam yacht. The *Windsor Castle* was designed by Oliver William Lang, the same naval architect who designed the largest paddle steam warship for the Royal Navy, HMS *Terrible*. When the ship was launched by Lady Milford on Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup> January 1855 her name had been changed to *Victoria and Albert*, and she was commissioned on 3<sup>rd</sup> March the same year.

The Royal Yacht had a length of 300 feet, beam of 40 feet 3 inches, a draught of 16 feet 3 inches and displaced 2470 tons. The two wooden paddles which propelled her were driven by a pair of oscillating engines by Messrs John Penn & Sons, Greenwich, giving a top design speed of 14.75 knots.

Unlike other paddle steamers of the time, the Royal Yacht carried extremely tall masts, this was to enable her to fly the over-sized ensigns when Queen Victoria was onboard (the Royal Standard, the Admiralty Flag and the National Flag). As was a tradition continued up to the Royal Yacht *Britannia*, her hull was painted black with a gold stripe all around it.

Prince Albert took an active part in selecting the internal fittings of the Yacht, a new patent material, linoleum, was used to cover the upper deck, the cabins below were lined in box pleated rosebud chintz with doors made from, the then fashionable, birds eye maple with ivory handles. All the space from the paddle boxes aft was used for Royal accommodation. A dining room was situated on the upper deck measuring 24 feet by 17 feet, being glazed all around to provide panoramic sea views, a staircase descending to the main deck with its Royal apartments. The Royal nursery was on the orlop deck, together with the cabins for use by the Queen's suite, the officers and crew were accommodated in the forepart of the vessel. Felt was laid between the deck beams and deck as soundproofing.

The Royal Yacht's crew numbered 240, the seamen were referred to as 'riggers', and her complement of Marines wore a specially-designed drill uniform of white cloth, to match the summer dress of the 'riggers'. To keep noise to a minimum, when the Queen was onboard the crew wore soft-soled shoes, and most commands were given by hand signals.

HM Yacht *Victoria and Albert II* was mainly used for ceremonial purposes around the United Kingdom, most notably at the Royal Naval reviews, the first of these she attended was in 1856 when she conveyed the Royal party through the lines of 240 ships that had served in the Crimean War.

After Prince Albert's death in 1861 the yacht was mainly used by Queen Victoria for short trips around the United Kingdom. During the rest of the Queen's reign little modification was made to Prince Albert's designs for the yacht, although in 1888 it was fitted out with electric lights. The last great event attended by the yacht was the Diamond Jubilee Review at Cowes in 1897, the yacht steamed through five lines of warships, on board were the Prince and Princess of Wales, the Empress of Germany and representatives of all the Royal house of Europe. Due to infirmity the Queen was not on board, staying at Osborne on the Isle of Wight.

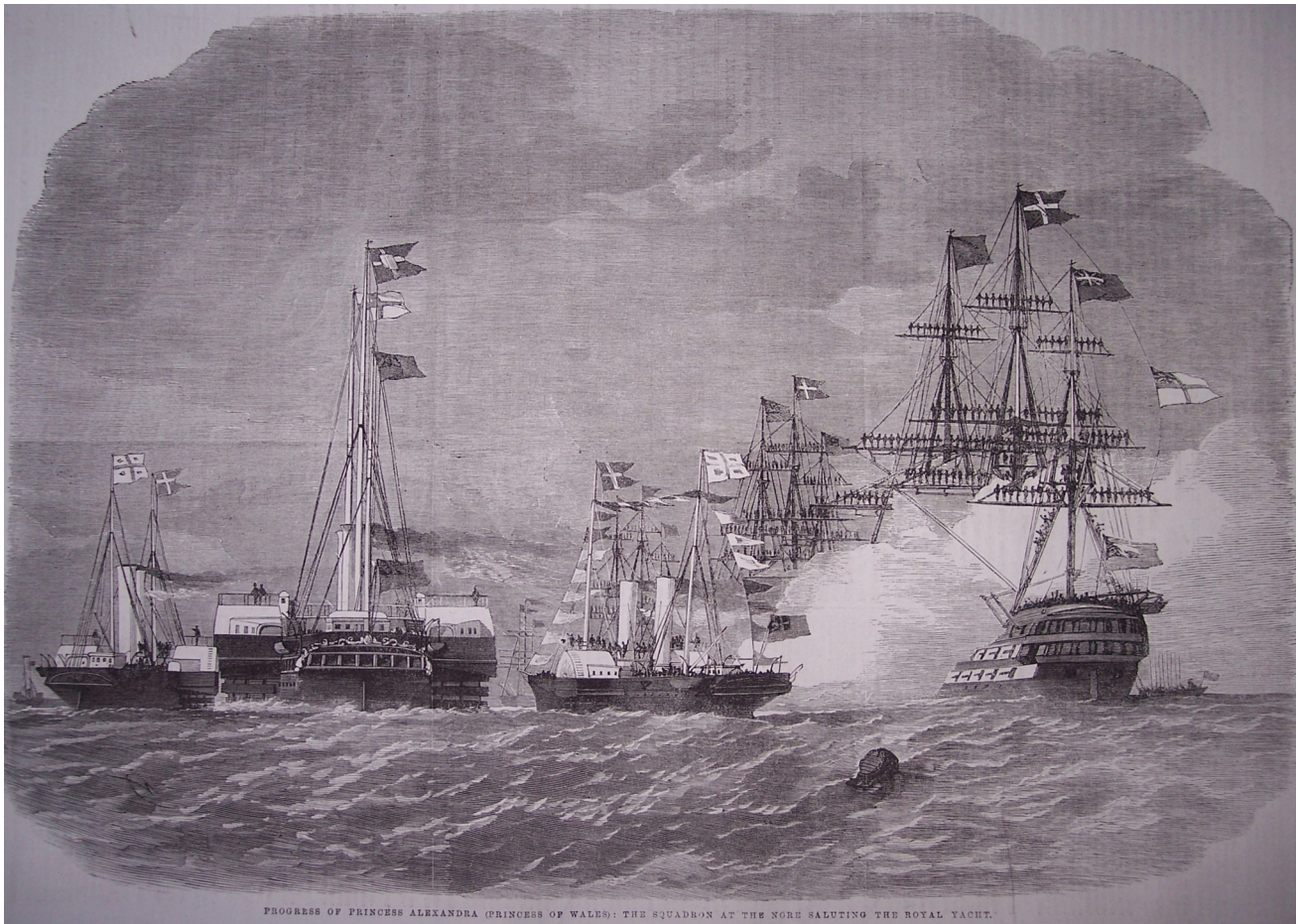
The *Victoria and Albert II* was eventually replaced by the larger *Victoria and Albert III* being paid off on the 3<sup>rd</sup> December 1901, and in 1904 she was broken up, much of her being burnt.

At least two officers that served on the *Victoria and Albert II* had previously sailed with HMS *Trincomalee* during her second commission. Lambton Lorraine had been a midshipman on the *Trincomalee*, and writes in his memoirs of his:

*"appointment (24<sup>th</sup> June, 1858) to the Queen's Royal yacht VICTORIA AND ALBERT. The distinction of serving here so close to my Sovereign lasted only 'till the next step of promotion, but during this short period Her Majesty and the Prince Consort visited the Cherbourg fetes, and crossed the Channel to Antwerp for a visit to their daughter and the Prussian Crown Prince."*

Charles Parry, an acting lieutenant on board our ship in 1855, (see Summer 2011 Quarterdeck), later served for two years aboard the Royal Yacht. In 1863 the Yacht brought the Princess Alexandra from Denmark. Charles wrote in a letter:





*Being greeted in Nore*

*'Friday night we spent in the Thames, a few miles above the Nore, the several men-of-war forming the accompanying squadron as guards of honour being anchored around us to protect our precious freight. They could not, however, protect us from the hundreds of passenger boats which, crowded densely, kept buzzing about us until close on midnight, cheering and illuminating, and doing the best they could to prove they were quite determined to have their full share in the festivities.*

*'Our illuminations were very pretty. Stacks of rockets of brilliant colours were sent up by fifties at a time from our bridge, and rows of men, three deep above each other, with red and white long lights alternately (the Danish colours), formed a pretty effect.*

*'On Saturday morning we were almost hemmed in by the small, crowded steamers, and the anxiety for fear of an accident was not small – one touch, and hundreds must have been in the water – but we escaped, and got up to Gravesend in beautiful style. Shortly after the Prince of Wales came on board, and the meeting was one not easily to be forgotten by those lucky enough to be present.*

*'When the Prince and Princess landed no cheers were heartier than those of the Yachtsmen, and none of them moreso than mine. The hearty individual shouts of "God bless you both!" were no idle words of form. I'm sure everybody honestly wished it. They made a capital pair – both tastefully dressed, and their faces beaming with happiness.'*

What remains of the HM Yacht *Victoria and Albert II*?

The figurehead and stern decorations of the yacht are on display at the Royal Naval Museum in



Portsmouth. The figurehead depicts the coats of arms of Queen Victoria (left) and Prince Albert (right). The stern was decorated with magnificent dolphins.

Two barge-boards, from a barge belonging to the yacht, presently rest aboard HMS *Trincomalee*. It is thought likely that these were purchased by Wheatley Cobb when the Royal yacht was dismantled at the beginning of the last century, this being a few years after he had acquired the *Trincomalee*.



*Figurehead & Stern Decoration  
(at the Royal Naval Museum, Portsmouth)*







*Queen Victoria's barge-board*



*Prince Albert's barge-board*

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