

A Picture of the Age: 1849-1999

Written by Graham Citrine to celebrate the 150th anniversary of Christ Church

Chapter One: 1849 - 1874

In 1849, when Christ Church was opened, Britain was the 'workshop of the world' - richer than any other two or three countries combined. In happy contrast to the excesses of her Hanoverian uncles, Victoria (still in her twenties and blissfully happy in her marriage to Albert) mirrored the simple pleasures of most of her subjects - and there were still more than 50 years of her reign to come. Guarded by her great navy, equal to any two others combined, surrounded by sea and separated from a continent torn by revolution, Britain seemed prosperous, peaceful and law-abiding. We talk today of a single currency; then, there was a currency acceptable the world over - the English sovereign, or the Bank of England notes which promised to exchange any note for its value in gold. She was the envy of other countries so that Prince Metternich, the Archconservative from Austria, Louis Philippe, the 'citizen king' of France, and the revolutionary Karl Marx, could all find a safe haven in Britain. The people, though poor and disadvantaged by modern standards, were generally better fed, clothed and housed than ever before in history. Prices were stable or falling, wages were stable or rising: the British truly believed that they were blessed by God, and parents could teach their children with confidence:

'I thank the Goodness and the Grace
Which on my birth has smiled,
And made me in these Christian days,
A happy English child.'

The Prime Minister in 1849 was Lord John Russell, younger son of the Duke of Bedford; his Foreign Secretary was Lord Palmerston - 'those two dreadful old men' as Victoria called them. Both born in the 18th century, they were to dominate politics until the 1860s. They had supported the extension of the vote to the middle classes, but were reluctant to go further, agreeing to change at home only with the greatest misgiving. They were to be followed by Lord Aberdeen, Lord Derby, then again, Lord Palmerston in the 1850s and early 1860s - the House of Lords still provided most of Britain's leaders. But waiting impatiently for his time was the young Gladstone, son of a Liverpool cotton merchant - the industrial middle classes were about to replace the aristocracy as Britain's leaders.

Income Tax, introduced in the 1840s by Robert Peel, was 7d (3.5p) in the £ on incomes above £150 p.a. - and this was virtually the only major tax in Britain. It was to fall to 4d in the £ under Gladstone, who had hoped to dispense with it entirely to make Britain the only comparatively tax-free country in the world, but his dream was never realised.

In 1867 the Conservative Benjamin Disraeli gave the vote to the working man in the towns, and these elected Gladstone to office in 1868. "I come to you unmuzzled", he declared. In the following six years he introduced a series of reforms he believed necessary to advance Britain towards the 20th century. A High Church Anglican, his chief supporters were the non-conformist voters in the industrial towns and in South Wales. His Whig Party was now universally known as the 'Liberal' Party because of its support for total freedom of trade with the rest of the world. Gladstone truly believed that if all countries traded freely and openly then there would be universal trust and inter-dependence so that wars would finish for ever; there would be no need for expensive armies or navies; the money saved could be used to advance the people morally and economically. He believed that this was the

Christian way for the modern world, and truly believed that he was doing God's will. "I do not object to Gladstone's always having the Ace of Trumps up his sleeve," said a contemporary, "but only to his belief that God has put it there." A shy man who could only relax happily with his beloved wife and family, Gladstone was not a favourite of Victoria. "He speaks to me as if I were a public meeting," she complained, and he was never invited to sit in her presence. Nevertheless, the people loved him for his honesty; he became the 'Grand Old Man', the 'People's William'. He hoped to remove Irish grievances by reforming the Church of Ireland and the ownership of land, thus bringing Ireland into the forefront of British politics, where it still remains; he opened up the Civil Service and the Army to men of ability rather than birth; entrance to the Civil Service was by examination as was entry to Sandhurst; the Universities were opened to Non-Conformists;

Trade Unions were legalised; married women were allowed to keep their property rather than surrender it to their husband - they were no longer 'his chattel'; vote by ballot meant that voters need not fear the displeasure of employer or landlord; and perhaps most important of all - compulsory education for all - 'we must educate our masters'. School Boards were set up in towns to build Council Schools, but until enough were built, churches continued to provide basic education. In our own church hall 760 children were taught under the stern eye of the Headmistress sitting on her platform, until the school on Borough Road was opened in the 1880s. Many non-conformists objected to sending their children to C of E Schools - and having to pay for the privilege; education was not free, only the poorest received free education, others had to pay a small sum weekly, perhaps 2d or 3d a week, or more, depending on the father's income, paid on the Monday morning.

My mother born in 1890 attended St. John's School in Birkenhead and her stern Welsh, non-conformist mother would send her to school on Monday morning without her weekly 3d. Monday was the day for serious religious education - possibly building on the foundation of the previous day - but mother was sent home for her 'school money'. Once at home, she would be required to help with the family washing and to run errands, returning to school only when her mother was sure that C of E teaching had ended; mother hated the humiliation of it but she was not alone - others (always the girls) were treated similarly - of what use was education to a future wife and mother ?

My Grandfather, born in 1863, was one who benefited greatly. He too attended the church school, starting at the age of 7 and leaving at 11! The criteria for leaving was that a pupil had to have the basics of the '3 R's': this granddad had achieved and he was needed to work in the uncertain industrial climate beginning in 1874. His first job was with the firm of 'Moorhouses' - a soft-drinks firm which sold herbal drinks - Nettle Beer, Dandelion and Burdock etc. in brown stone flagons taken round the streets on horse-drawn carts - some may remember the Birkenhead Company. Granddad's job was to wash the returned flagons under a cold water tap (hygiene at its most basic) and scrape off the label with a blunt knife. For this he was paid 1/6d (7.5 p) for a five and a half day week. That sum would provide three meals for a normal family. Whenever he wrote a letter he would always use the small 'l' rather than the capital. When I, with my grammar school education, and with the arrogance of youth, tried to point out his mistake, he demanded, "Why?" and I could not explain why. "Right", he said, with a look of utter contempt for my lack of education, "until you tell me why, I'll do it my way."

How did people amuse themselves? Drink was very cheap and there was no restriction on children: mothers took their babies with them and if the infant cried, then a finger dipped in the gin and given to the baby to suck was a sure way of inducing sleep, while the baby was introduced to alcohol at an early age. The Music Hall was at first a Public House, where a singer or comedian would entertain the customers: as a result such entertainment was not for the respectable! But the true theatre was acceptable after the Queen was known to have visited a London theatre.

The great entertainment, however, was reading - although only about 40% of the population could read. The practice was for stories to be read aloud; with the restricted lighting available, only the reader needed sufficient light, the listeners sat in the gloom - which no doubt helped create the atmosphere for many of the stories. The most important book was the Bible of course, followed by Robinson Crusoe and Pilgrim's Progress. Books of sermons had a wide sale, often to clergymen who simply read one out each Sunday, thus saving themselves the burden of writing a sermon. (There is no evidence of this practice at Christ Church!) Poetry was also widely read and enjoyed. Wordsworth was the Poet Laureate in 1849, but he was no longer the giant of former years, he was long past his earlier greatness so that it could be written:

Two voices are there...one is of the deep.....
And one is of an old half-witted sheep

And Wordsworth, both are thine."

The most popular true poet was Alfred, Lord Tennyson, whose 'In Memoriam' was selling three or four editions a year after its publication in 1850. But he was easily outsold by Martin Tupper, a poet never heard of today but whose 'Proverbial Philosophy, a Book of Thoughts and Arguments Originally Treated', sold by the million. Many books were of the moralising kind - the Rev L. Richmond's 'The Dairyman's Daughter' sold more than two million copies: it tells of a girl who on becoming a Christian then converts her mother, father and sister before death carries them all off. Herman Melville's 'Moby Dick' was a book read by men only, it being described as being 'reprehensible throughout ... not the work to be seen by any mother in the hands of her daughter, and as such not suitable to lie on the drawing room table.' The most popular novelists were Thackeray and Dickens, both of whose work was published in weekly parts before being offered in book form. Thackeray's 'Vanity Fair' sold in its thousands, but Dickens sold his in tens of thousands. 'Dombey and Son' sold at the rate of 30,000 a month and 'David Copperfield', after a slow start, at 40,000 a month. In 1848 W.H. Smith opened his station bookstalls, following them in 1849 with his cheap lending library, with books being lent at 1d each, thus offering books to a wider public than ever before. But by far the greatest sales were achieved by the 'Penny-dreadfuls' - Gothic Horror novels with intriguing titles: 'The Skeleton Clutch or the Goblet of Blood', 'Fatherless Fanny or the Mysterious Orphan', both written by Thomas Prest, whose most famous work was 'Sweeney Todd the Demon Barber of Fleet Street'. One of the most notorious of these books 'Varney the Vampire or the Feast of Blood' ran for more than 200 chapters, and was a book which made Bram Stoker's 'Dracula' seem like a nursery story. No respectable person bought these - they were bought by servants and young people, no doubt to be confiscated by the stern father or master - and read secretly by them!

Children's books were equally stern and moralising in their content. Children had to learn that life was hard and to be endured. "I'm five years old today, Father," said the young child. "Five years nearer to your death, my boy," was the reply. 'Pilgrim's Progress' was a favourite story with children, as was 'Robinson Crusoe'. A book for Christmas in 1849 was 'The City Apprentices or Industry and Idleness Exemplified' by the Rev T. Murray, and written for 5-8 year olds. It tells of Thomas Idle and Francis Goodchild. The latter becomes Lord Mayor of London, while the former was brought to execution at Tyburn - the young child would be familiar with public executions, even if he had never seen one. But to be fair, in the same year there was also 'Popular Rhymes and Nursery Tales' with most of the familiar stories and Hans Andersen's 'Wonderful Stories for Children!'

Children also played board games - draughts, chess, backgammon were of course well-established games going back several centuries, but other games were now appearing - Snakes and Ladders was introduced - the child having to experience defeat or disappointment when near to victory - there were more snakes on the top line of the board

than anywhere else; this game, like so many others, came from India, now an important trading area for Britain. The British love of horse racing was also featured – and again I am sure that many remember this game played on a board showing an oval track, with various hazards to be overcome – falling into the ditch, being unseated etc. The Victorians could never resist giving a moral or educational purpose to their games and this is well illustrated in the Geography game where players must travel through Europe visiting towns and cities, each of which carried a description of some point of interest – e.g. 'Lyons, the second city of France – remain for one turn to see its silk manufacture in which more than 100,000 people are employed'. 'Warsaw, the capital of Poland, a large city but very dirty. Go back to Ratisbon and complain to the Imperial Diet'. Finally, 'London – the capital of Britain and her Empire; the greatest city in the world'.

In 1850, Darwin's 'Origin of the Species' was published, leading to great anger and furore in the Church, as it seemed to deny the truth of the Bible. In time, most Christians were able to reconcile its teaching with their theology and it did cause people to examine their beliefs rather than accept them unquestioningly.

Sport was the province of the wealthy; professional sport was not yet available to attract the ordinary man, who had neither the time nor the money to indulge. Horse racing was popular – Derby Day being one of the great social occasions for both rich and poor in the South while the Grand National played a similar part in the North. Bare-knuckle fighting also attracted rich and poor, but only the less respectable elements. Fights continued until one fighter was unable to continue. Rounds continued until a man was knocked down, his seconds then having a minute to 'bring him up to scratch' - the line drawn in the centre of the ring. Though illegal, Britain produced the world champions at this sport until an Irish-American, John L. Sullivan, took the title to become the last bare-knuckle champion of the world. He in turn was to lose it to another Irish-American, 'Gentleman Jim' Corbett who later lost the title to Robert Fitzsimmons, 'Ruby Robert', a Cornishman and the last native-born Englishman to hold the heavyweight title. These fights were fought under the rules laid down by the Marquis of Queensberry – fighters to wear padded gloves, rounds to last no more than three minutes, and if a fighter was knocked down, he had only 10 seconds to rise to his feet, by his own efforts, no help given by his seconds.

Whether it could be called entertainment is doubtful, but a public execution was still the great draw for crowds. The execution of John Gleeson in Liverpool drew a crowd of more than 100,000, the railways laying on special cheap excursion trains for the event in 1849.

Fox hunting was the sport for the wealthy, though the poor enjoyed the spectacle as hunt followers. There is an apocryphal story that the Rector of Woodchurch was accosted by one of his parishioners: "Good Morning, Rector; I am sorry to say that you will not be going to heaven when you die for you are not a Christian." "I am sorry to hear that. Why not?" "Because I heard that you had shot a fox, and no Christian would ever do such a thing. Good day, Sir!"

Religion was important and could raise passions. When the Pope decreed that he was about to establish Roman Catholic Sees with Bishops and Archbishops in Britain, there were cries of 'No Popery!' A Liverpool Vicar called for the death penalty for any who accepted a title from the Pope or for any priest who heard Confession. It was suggested that any person accepting such a title from a foreign ruler was a traitor and guilty of High Treason. Lord Russell was forced to introduce an Ecclesiastical Titles Bill refusing the establishment of Popish titles. The Bill was never enforced, the titles came in, Catholics did not become traitors and the Bill was quietly repealed later by Gladstone.

In 1850 British pride was shaken when the Cowes Yacht Race was won by the American yacht 'America', defeating the best Britain could produce. Now, 150 years later, the 'America's Cup' has still not been returned to Britain, despite many attempts.

In the same year it was proposed that Britain should stage a 'Great Exhibition' to show her achievements to the world. Presided over by Prince Albert, it was to be housed in the Crystal Palace, conceived by Joseph Paxton, who in 1847 had designed Birkenhead Park, the first Municipal Public Park in the world. The Crystal Palace shows Victorian England at its best - nothing was impossible if one had confidence and trust. At a cost of only £79,000, it covered more than 18 acres, was more than a quarter of a mile in length, and over 100 feet high. From the time that the design was accepted to its erection, the building took only 22 weeks! [Compare this with the £750 million and years of construction of the Millennium Dome!] It was a beautiful building, light and airy, graceful and well-proportioned. To try to describe all of its exhibits would require a book to itself, though not all objects were useful - there was a cast-iron pram weighing close to 4cwt and a knife with more than 100 blades which made the present Swiss Army knife seem simple by comparison. Of interest to us at Christ Church was the great 'Father Willis' organ of 4,500 pipes, built especially for the exhibition by the premier organ builder in Britain (and therefore by implication in the world) - a fore-runner of our own magnificent instrument.

Thousands visited the Exhibition, the railways running cheap excursion trains to bring people from all over the country to London: the days when a person was born, lived and died in the same village were ending for ever. The profits from the Exhibition were used to build the Royal Albert Hall as a major concert hall for the capital and also the Victoria & Albert Museum.

The 1840s saw a change in fashions. In the Regency period and after, men had dressed in bright clothing - plum reds, greens, blues, with large brass buttons, and they were usually clean-shaven. Now, in the new, hard-working prosperous Britain, men would dress in sober black with a forbidding top hat squarely on the head; beards lent an air of severity, age and dignity. Look at the stern, unsmiling faces of our 19th century vicars compared with the gentler appearance of the 20th century incumbents in the photographs at the back of Church. Indoors, a gentleman would wear a smoking jacket and cap, it being believed that the smell of tobacco on clothes would be too much for the delicate sensitivity of the ladies! The whole effect was soberly rich and solid, but rather dull and not a little pompous.

It was the ladies who showed the brighter side of fashion - the 'good wife' was one who stayed at home to manage the house and its servants. Their clothes reflected their husband's wealth and position, and they appeared over-dressed and fussy. The crinoline had not yet come in, so in the 1850s a lady would dress in at least four petticoats, one of them being of a heavy stiffened material and others starched to give them strength to support a huge dress of 3 to 4 yards of material in the skirt alone. Add to this the fashion for very tight stays of whalebone and it was understandable that women fainted in the heat of summer, giving them the reputation of being the 'weaker sex'. The narrow waist was the height of fashion, the smallest recorded being a mere 13 inches. It was chiefly the wealthier ladies who followed this fashion - a working woman would find it impossible to work if she were constricted in this way. The price was paid in the health of these young ladies and by their children for many babies were born with deformities - dislocated hips, curved spines etc. By the 1860s the crinoline had been invented, a sort of cage of steel and bone which reduced the need of heavy petticoats. Its disadvantage was its tendency to rise up in a strong wind, or if one sat down suddenly and carelessly, much to the embarrassment of the wearer, for even the showing of an ankle was considered risqué at this time. I imagine they would be a major problem in our church with its narrow aisles and very narrow pew seats. Imagine a Victorian family of mother, father and three or four children sitting in one of our pews on a hot summer's day and one can have real sympathy as well as admiration for the Victorians.

Ladies' dresses also became brighter. The discovery of aniline dyes in the 1850s led to very bright scarlets, greens, yellows, almost any colour imaginable conceived by the

scientist in his laboratory. The reserved softer colours produced by vegetable dyes were disappearing in the face of stronger colours. In 1859 the Empress Eugenie of France celebrated her husband's victory over the Austrians by wearing a huge crinoline dress in a purplish-red colour, called Magenta after the battle. Victoria and Albert's love of Scotland was reflected in an outburst of colourful tartans, using the new dyes; tartans never known by any clan appeared everywhere. Prince Albert designed his own 'Balmoral' tartan, to be worn at the house he had designed as a summer home. Visitors were startled by rooms where the carpet, upholstery and wallpaper were all in various shades of tartan - it was known to give sensitive people a headache simply sitting there. By the 1870s the size of women's dresses had become ridiculous and with the change to flat fronted dresses with the crinoline reduced to a small cage drawn round the back, known as the bustle, dresses became lighter and easier for movement.

In order to dress as they did, ladies needed a servant. Even modest families had at least one servant. A housemaid/general servant would earn £12 p.a. for a 15 hour day and one afternoon off per month; a cook/general received £30 p.a.; a kitchen maid £5 and a bootboy £6. For less than £100 a year, a moderately wealthy family could have five or six servants to do all the everyday chores, and most families with £2 or £3 a week had at least one servant. Servants had to 'know their place' - hence the existence of 'free' pews in the balconies at Church - here sat the servants, their entrance being the side doors now seldom used, while their master and mistress used the main doors on Bessborough Road and at the West End.

Few people bought houses, most rented. A good family house with out-buildings and servants quarters would cost £30 a year; a cheaper house with room for one servant would be £15 p.a. First class travel by boat and train to Paris was £1.8s.0d. (£1.40p). First class to New York with all meals was £25-£30.

In the country, 'Hiring Fairs' still remained: farm workers would stand in a line to be hired for the year; farmers out-bid each other for the young, fit, skilled man whose reputation would be well-known. He would be offered a cottage for his family and pay could reach £30-£40 a year for a very good man. As a worker grew older, however, his value fell; the most pitiful were the very old who might be hired to do the simplest work, his pay being a simple bed in the barn and his meals. If no work was forthcoming, then the workhouse awaited - the ultimate disgrace for any poor person. The aim of the workhouse was to make life so unpleasant inside that any work was better than entering one of these places. With Victorian prosperity in the middle of the century, there was full employment for all, so the workhouse would stand empty unless filled with orphans or the very old, people for whom they were not designed. For an old person to enter a workhouse meant permanent separation between husband and wife, except to see each other in the church on Sunday, and also the recognition that they had no-one to care for them, they were at the bottom of the heap. Even life in prison was better, for in prison there were new rules concerning food, the provision of books, some exercise and social mixing with fellow inmates, and even the chance to earn a little money for luxuries by sewing mail bags - and also one could leave prison without having to die to obtain freedom.

In 1840 the 'Penny Post' was introduced: this encouraged the use of the mail to send letters and a new phenomenon, the Christmas card. As the first stamp in the world, the British had no need to distinguish their stamps from others, so that the British stamp, unlike others, had no need to state the name of the country - and this continues to the present day. Again, the increase in communication meant that the old barriers between people were breaking down.

Following the Great Exhibition, it seemed as if a change had occurred - life became less secure, doubts and worries began to appear. In 1854 the Crimean War ended 40 years of

peace - the longest period of European peace since the Middle Ages. Britain and France united to keep Russia away from the Mediterranean. There was no doubt that the Western Countries would win against the most backward country in Europe, but it was the manner of winning. The war should have been over within six months, instead it lasted for two years. Officers who had been young subalterns in 1815 were now General Officers, without the experience of commanding armies in battle; there was confusion over supplies - an order for 10,000 pairs of boots was carried out, but while 10,000 right boots sailed for the Crimea, 10,000 left boots followed three months later - by which time the right boots had been lost! Men froze in tattered uniforms while greatcoats and blankets rotted in stores three miles away. The Charge of the Light Brigade at Balaclava showed that courage still remained, but it showed also that 'someone had blundered'.

The news of the suffering of the wounded at the hospital at Scutari reached the British people by the new electric telegraph, so that the day's news could be read the next morning. It resulted in Florence Nightingale and her devoted band of nurses going to the Crimea and the death rate in the hospital falling from 85% to below 20% simply by the provision of cleanliness and comfort. She returned a heroine, to start her Royal School of Nursing at St. Thomas's Hospital, to put Britain in the forefront of nursing training. The war saw the introduction of an award for gallantry - the Victoria Cross, the bronze medal made from the guns captured from the Russians at Balaclava. But British self-confidence, so evident in 1851, had been shaken. It was to be shaken even more in 1857 with the Indian Mutiny, which led to the Government's having to take responsibility for control of the sub-continent from the East India Company.

Further wars followed, both on the continent and overseas. Britain was not directly involved, but the results were to affect her status. In 1859, France helped Italy to defeat Austria, and Italy appeared as a new kingdom. The war is noteworthy for the Battle of Solferino when Henri Dunant saw the suffering of the defeated Austrian wounded left to die on the battlefield, causing him to start the Red Cross, dedicated to helping anybody in need and with its HQ in Geneva.

In 1861 the American Civil War began, in theory over slavery but in fact over world trade - the industrial North of America wanted to erect barriers to British trade to protect its own markets. The cotton-growing South favoured free-trade with Britain, its biggest customer for cotton picked by slaves. The Government, in theory, was neutral, but in fact favoured the South; the workers supported the North, which they saw as fighting slavery. Ill-feeling came from the launch of a Laird's built ship, 'The Alabama', which for nearly two years destroyed Northern shipping. There was no danger of war - the U.S.A. would never risk a war with Britain whilst fighting her own bitter war, but the North's victory in 1865 meant that Britain lost many of her markets in the U.S.A. On the credit side, the exploits of the 'Alabama' won for Laird's a reputation for excellent ships which served them well in the future.

This war was noteworthy in many ways - it saw the first battle at sea between 'ironclads', marking the end of the wooden sailing ship on which Britain's sea domination had rested; it also saw the advent of trench warfare, and attacks on the civilian population as the weakest element in an adversary. The first appearance of machine guns and the breech-loading rifle, the importance of railways for the swift movement of men and materials - all these should have provided lessons for the future, but few military men recognised their importance. The war also led to massive unemployment in Britain, the first sign that industrial prosperity was not guaranteed. With no unemployment pay, suffering in the new industrial towns was widespread and the numbers were so great that the workhouses could not accommodate them all, so that food had to be given outside the system.

In the 1860's also, Prussia became the new leader of Germany, defeating Denmark,

France and Austria to unite all the German States into a new German Empire under the King of Prussia, now to be known as the Kaiser. This new Germany in turn began to industrialise itself and in so doing closed its markets to British goods - again, unemployment began to grow in the manufacturing towns. France became a Republic following this war, her ex-emperor, Napoleon III, coming to Britain where he was kindly received by the Queen. He died shortly afterwards, his son, the Prince Imperial, was killed later serving in the British army in Africa. His widow, the elegant Eugenie, lived on in Britain until the 1920's and until recently, there was a lady living in Oxton who had been a personal maid to the Empress, keeping her portrait beside her bed. My wife, a District Nurse, had treated her and learned of her history. In this war, the French, worried by the tendency of butter to 'go off' in the hot weather, had produced a butter-substitute made from vegetable oil to which they gave the name 'margeron' meaning 'pearl' - hence our margarine. In each of these wars, the Prussians had won swiftly and spectacularly by careful planning - having their troops in the right place at the right time and destroying the opposition in a single battle. The conviction grew that to win wars, the Prussian pattern was to be followed - guaranteeing a short sharp victorious war.

For France, the great desire was for revenge; for the newly-united Germany there was the belief that success could be won by war rather than peaceful negotiation: the seeds of the future World War were sown.

The wars divided the Royal Family: Prince Albert had always favoured a united Germany under Prussian rule; his beloved eldest child, Vicky, had married the Crown Prince of Prussia and Albert hoped for a liberal parliamentary Prussia to be a co-equal of Britain, the two to control the world. Albert died in 1861, causing Victoria unimagined grief and despair. She retired almost completely from public life, retiring to Windsor or to Osborne in the Isle of Wight, where portraits, busts and statues of Albert were in every room and Albert's valet continued to lay out his clothes, prepare his bath and shaving water as always. Victoria continued to sign state papers and place them on Albert's desk, as always, and when she dined alone or with family, Albert's place was laid at table. All male children and grandchildren carried the name of Albert and she believed that this would be the name for all future British kings. Because of this she tended to favour the Prussian cause. Her son, Albert Edward, Prince of Wales, loved France and the French, and he was married to the beautiful Alexandra (the Princess Di of that time), Princess of Denmark, they tended to be anti-Prussian as a result. Though fond of his sister and brother-in-law, he had no time for his nephew, the young Prince William. Because of Victoria's retirement from public life, the Prince of Wales set up his own rather raffish court, and for the first time in Victorian Britain murmurs of republicanism began to be heard.

So, at the end of our first 25 years, the prosperity and confidence of the 1840s had been replaced by unease and a growing industrial slump, with widespread unemployment, whispers of republicanism, and a lack of certainty for the future. In 1874, Gladstone was defeated in the election, and was replaced by Benjamin Disraeli and a Conservative Government to try to re-establish that old confidence.