



God bless the Queen

by Brian Parsons

ONE HUNDRED and ten years ago this month, the funeral took place of Queen Victoria. Her death at Osborne House on 22 January 1901 brought to a close a reign of almost sixty-four years. Transporting her coffin from the Isle of Wight to Windsor for burial was a complex operation; it was a journey of 110 miles over water, on rails and by road. The Queen was finally placed next to her husband Albert in the mausoleum at Frogmore on the 4 February.

Drawing from a unique collection of images, the articles presents an illustrated account of her final journey.



The Undertakers' Journal published its own tribute to Queen Victoria in February 1901



A view of the cortege passing through a street in Cowes on the one mile journey to Trinity Pier. The coffin is drawn by the Royal Horse Artillery.

the coffin with the pall and insignia removed. They were replaced when the coffin was positioned on a bier which ran athwart the vessel, with the head to the starboard.



Two rows of naval warships provided an eight-mile guard of honour across the Solent. When the Alberta arrived, the coffin was unloaded at Clarence Victualling Yard at Gosport to rest under guard overnight in the station waiting room.



The bier in the Chapelle Ardente at Osborne House



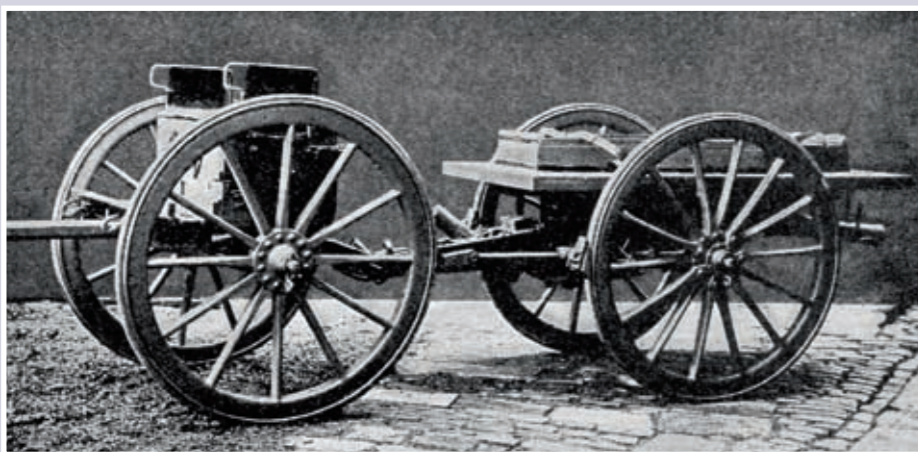
On Saturday morning the coffin was placed onto a specially constructed bier secured in the centre of the Great Western first class saloon No 229. The late Queen's instructions were that the interior be hung with purple and white velvet drapes. After a slight delay to the scheduled time of 8.45, the train departed. It was preceded by a pilot engine running 10-15 minutes ahead to ensure the line was clear. The route was via Havant Junction, Billingshurst, Leatherhead, Mitcham, Balham and Clapham Junction. Time was gained during the journey and the train arrived at Victoria station at 10.58. As the train passed along the route many people knelt at the lineside.



The Sphere published this bird's eye view of the funeral route from Osborne House to Windsor. However, the royal train actually departed from Gosport not Portsmouth.



Bluejackets lifting the massive coffin onto the deck of the royal yacht Alberta on Friday 1 February. The yacht departed at 3pm. This part of the journey provided a rare glimpse of



The gun-carriage. Pneumatic tyres had been fitted especially for the funeral to ensure a smooth journey.



The royal train at Paddington Station



At Victoria station, the coffin was removed by twelve men of the Guards and Household Cavalry and placed upon a gun-carriage for the journey to Paddington. The lengthy cortege passed by Buckingham Palace and made its way up to Hyde Park Corner, then to Park Lane, through Marble Arch, up Edgware Road then left into Praed Street to the station. Due to its slowness, it was 12.30 before the cortege arrived. Thousands stood in silence along the route. Buildings were draped with purple hangings.



On order of the authorities, no photographs of the royal train were permitted to be taken. Despite railway officials patrolling the line, a number of images were taken. This photograph shows the train somewhere in south London.



The gun-carriage arriving at Paddington Station.

The coffin was transferred back onto carriage No 229 (which had been quickly shunted via a complex web of rail connection in west London while the coffin was being conveyed through the London streets). Hauled by the appropriately named Royal Sovereign locomotive, the royal train finally departed at 1.32, half an hour later than scheduled. Once again, a pilot engine headed the royal train by ten minutes. The train comprised eight carriage with the fourth contained the Queen's coffin and the remaining conveyed British and European royalty.



At Windsor station the horses, having been waiting in the cold, became restless and kicked away and broke the traces from the gun-carriage. Replacements could not be found so the steel communication cords were removed from a railway carriage and connected to the back of the gun-carriage. A naval guard of honour replaced the horses and so a precedent for transporting the coffin at a state funeral was established.



Bluejackets dragging the coffin up the High Street in Windsor. Here the cortege is passing the London and County Bank.



The coffin arriving at St George's chapel. Weighing 7cwt, it was carried into the chapel by relays of Grenadier Guardsmen.



A view of the funeral in St George's Chapel, Windsor. The service was conducted by the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Bishop of Winchester. After the service the coffin was moved to the Albert Memorial Chapel where it remained until Monday 4 February. The coffin was guarded by Grenadier Guards and the Royal Bodyguard of Gentlemen-at-Arms, the Life Guards, who were changed every hour.



The interior of the Albert Chapel showing the memorial to the Prince Consort in the foreground. The procession conveying Queen Victoria's coffin departed from the chapel at 3pm and the gun-carriage was drawn by six black horses. The route was via the Long Walk so many could pay their last respects.



The interior of the mausoleum at Frogmore. The mausoleum bears the inscription: 'His mourning widow, Victoria, the Queen, directed that all that is mortal of Prince Albert be placed in this sepulchre. AD 1862. Farewell, well beloved! Here at last I will rest with thee; with thee, in Christ, I will rise again.'

This image shows the sarcophagus covered by the recumbent marble effigy of the Prince Consort. It was designed by Baron Carlo Marochetti who also supplied one for Queen Victoria at the time of Albert's death. The Bishop of Winchester read the prayer of committal after which earth from the Holy Land was cast upon the coffin.



The mausoleum at Frogmore photographed in 1991

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- The Sphere; *The Illustrated London News*; *The Graphic*.
- Film footage of Queen Victoria's funeral may be viewed on www.YouTube.com

All images held in the author's collection.