

Archibald John Stuart Wortley (1849–1905) 119 – Sport and Art in Unison

“I HOPE MR A. Stuart-Wortley will not write to me as I particularly dislike him and I have no objection to you telling him this...”

“I will not loan any picture for any exhibition which Mr Stewart-Wortley has the management of.”¹

Archibald Stuart Wortley was the grandson of James Archibald Stuart Wortley, first Baron Wharnccliffe, whose family home, Wortley Hall, is in the village of Wortley near Barnsley, South Yorkshire.²

He is buried in St Leonard’s Church, Wortley. Archibald was a widely exhibited artist whose most famous work hangs at the Marylebone Cricket Club, a published writer, an acclaimed field sportsman and a well-connected society man. However, unlike some of his contemporaries and friends, his art, like his upbringing, was conservative, not revolutionary. His true talent may have been his ability to unite his artistic and cultural contemporaries with his society connections, most obviously seen in his founding of the Society of Portrait Painters, now the Royal Society of Portrait Painters. However, as Lady Valerie Meux’s words above in 1892 show, striking the balance between these two groups was not always straightforward.

Despite his family’s South Yorkshire heritage, Archibald was born on 27th May 1849 at 29 Berkeley Square in London and would spend most of his life in the capital.³ As the second child and eldest son of James Archibald Stuart Wortley and the Hon. Jane Lawley, daughter of Lord Wenlock of Escrick Park, York, he was born into wealth, title, influence and a family of happiness, culture and security.

Archibald’s parents, James and Jane, married in May 1846, having met at a party in Paris in October 1841. For James it was love at first sight but when he proposed a year later Jane rejected him. Doggedly pursuing her, he finally won her over, writing to his mother on 18th November 1845:

“My dearest mams, all is now settled and I am a happy and accepted lover! I feel I have secured a treasure beyond price.”⁴

Archibald’s father was a successful lawyer and MP for Halifax and Bute. He had been called to the Bar in 1831, to the Bench in 1841 and in 1851, he was appointed Recorder of London. In 1857 James became Solicitor General. However, soon after this appointment, life for the family changed as James was

thrown from his horse. Jane had just had a baby so the severity of the injury was downplayed and he delayed seeking medical advice.

The long-term effects personally, professionally and financially for the family were significant. It was said of Archibald, “There were two things he could not abide and would not do, they were to get astride a horse or walk for the sake of walking.”⁵ The London house was sold and in 1858 the family moved out of town to East Sheen Lodge, Mortlake, which became known as Wortley Lodge.⁶ Archibald’s father tried to walk but was frustrated and depressed by the lack of progress. He had given up public office after his incident although some business interests remained.⁷ A mild-tempered man, he became difficult to deal with and did not regain his spirits for a decade, when he resolved to accept his life in a wheelchair. Jane spent much of her time caring for him but carved out a life for herself as well. She was very much involved in the United Englishwomen’s Emigration Society and the East London Nursing Society, having hostels named after her in London and Liverpool.

Furthermore, two of Archibald’s eight siblings, William aged 10 and James aged four, died in 1863 and are commemorated in Christ Church, East Sheen in two small windows on the south side of the chancel. Despite the pressures the accident and the deaths placed on the family, social and cultural life continued. Wortley Lodge was a happy place and was noted for its musical gatherings. Jenny Lind is reported to have sung there.⁸ When the family moved back into central London this continued and the household was described as “a rookery, densely crowded by active talkative young birds.”^{9 10}

Archibald initially followed the expected aristocratic path. He attended Eton between 1862 and 1865 and progressed to Merton College, Oxford in October 1867 where he roomed with Lord Randolph Churchill.¹¹ Together, they were members of the Myrmidons, an undergraduate dining society, and appear in their annual photograph in 1870. However, it appears Archibald did not excel academically and did not graduate. It was left to Archibald’s younger



East Sheen Lodge, later Wortley Lodge,
childhood home of Archibald John Stuart
Wortley
Courtesy of Education, Children’s and
Cultural Services, London Borough of
Richmond upon Thames

brother, Charles, to follow more closely his father's footsteps and become MP for Sheffield and Sheffield Hallam.¹² While it is not clear whether the failure to graduate precipitated a movement into the art world or it had been a longer term ambition, Archibald returned to London and enrolled at the newly formed Slade Art School.¹³ The first Slade Professor was Edward Poynter,¹⁴ already known to the Stuart Wortleys, having received the commission to decorate the billiard room at Wortley Hall. From 1871 to 1873 Archibald was registered in the calendar of the Slade School of Art.

Whilst at the Slade, Archibald was invited to all the best London and country house parties, staying at Wortley Hall for the Doncaster races and also pursuing vigorously a sport which shaped his life – shooting. John Guille Millais, son of John Everett Millais, wrote: “His (Archibald's) interests seem to be centred in guns and sketch-books and as my father presently discovered in him artistic and literary talent, he strongly advised him to cultivate this, offering, in a word, to teach him to paint. Lessons in art were then begun...”¹⁵

Archibald's acumen at shooting proved a valuable tool in his life as an artist and it was whilst shooting in Scotland he met the painter John Everett Millais. In a letter to John Guille, Archibald wrote: “To have been a pupil of Millais, though only for a short time, as I was, is, I believe a unique experience. I can safely say that I learnt more from him in a few short weeks than from all the other masters who from time to time, directed or misdirected my artistic studies, put together.”¹⁶

Archibald is always described as being Millais' only pupil. There seems to have been little formality in that arrangement. However, family links to Millais were established when Archibald's brother Charles married Millais' daughter Alice and the cultural network was further expanded when Alice became a good friend of Edward Elgar.¹⁷ Alice was nicknamed by Elgar as ‘Windflower’ and became the inspiration for some of his work. Both Charles and Alice are buried at St Leonard's next to Archibald.

Following its establishment in 1848, the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood of John Millais, Gabriel Dante Rossetti and William Holman Hunt had set out to reform art by rejecting the earlier more formal technical teaching of Sir Joshua Reynolds at the Royal Academy with a greater emphasis on the spiritual and creative. However, by the 1870s, Millais had begun to focus more on realism rather than the medievalism championed by Rossetti. Millais' influence can be seen in Archibald's work, which also rejects the modernist and impressionist movements that were being championed by Edouard Manet in France.

Visiting Yorkshire, in September 1895, Archibald spoke to the Sheffield Society of Artists at the Cutlers' Hall. A Barnsley-born artist, Ernest Moore, was part of the organising committee. Ernest was later to be proposed to be a member of the Society of Portrait Painters. In his speech Archibald extolled the values of the real, reality and realism.¹⁸ His obsession for realism was recounted by Archibald's niece Lady Susan Tweedsmuir who described Archibald as a painter of meticulous realism. When Lady Susan expressed to Archibald her admiration for Rossetti, he said to her, “Nonsense, child you can't really like him. Why the man couldn't draw and he couldn't paint.”¹⁹

Archibald's older sister Mary Caroline, one of the "talkative young birds", also attended the Slade. A friend of Professor Edward Poynter, she and her sister Caroline joined Archibald as two of the earliest women students. Mary was ultimately very much part of the Arts and Crafts movement: a self-taught architect, she exhibited at the Royal Academy, Grosvenor Gallery, Grafton Gallery and the Manchester City Art Gallery. She appears in Burne-Jones' work 'The Golden Stairs' in the Tate Gallery collection. The emphasis on drawing from life at the Slade introduced by Poynter may have influenced Archibald and will have perhaps given Mary many new ideas which she pursued with enthusiasm in her later life.

Having left the Slade, been tutored by Millais and with his family connections in society and the cultural world, Archibald was well placed for a career as a painter. He went on to build his reputation as a portrait painter and painter of the countryside he loved. Archibald enjoyed early success. He first exhibited the painting 'In Wharnccliffe Chase Winter' at the Royal Academy in 1874, aged 25, a countryside scene in the Wharnccliffe Estates in South Yorkshire. As his reputation grew, so did his social standing. Archibald exhibited at the Royal Academy annually between 1874 and 1878 and this continued in the 1880s and 1890s with a mixture of portraits and outdoor scenes.

His range of commissions also grew. In November 1881 Archibald exhibited a life-sized portrait of the Honorary Secretary, a Mr Birks, as part of the Wakefield Scientific and Art Society at the old Clayton Hospital. A portrait of Clement Godson, a gynaecologist, was also at the Grosvenor Gallery, London. In 1882 he exhibited again at the Grosvenor Gallery, with a portrait of Miss Rachel Sassoon, the first woman editor of a national newspaper, and the aunt of Siegfried Sassoon, in whose library the portrait hung. In 1884 Archibald exhibited at the Royal Academy two works which are now in the ownership of the Usher Gallery, Lincoln.

The late 1880s and 1890s were a successful time for Archibald. Portraits gave him an income and led to a growing volume of work. The Cutlers' Hall in Sheffield holds a portrait of Archdeacon Blakeney by Archibald, presented in 1891. A portrait of Sewallis Shirley, MP and founder of the Kennel Club, still hangs in the Kennel Club boardroom. James Purdey and Sons Ltd of London, rifle and gun makers, have a portrait of James Purdey by Archibald in their premises. The National Trust holds portraits of the seventh Viscount Barrington of Ardglass, James Clay MP and the Hon. Elizabeth E, Harbord, Lady Hastings.

The painting for which Archibald is now most known was a commission in 1890. A portrait of W. G. Grace for which he was paid £300, raised by subscription, hangs in the Long Room at the Marylebone Cricket Club.²⁰ A copy of a portrait of Grace attributed to Archibald is at the National Portrait Gallery along with a portrait of novelists Walter Besant and James Rice. In the same year he exhibited at the Grosvenor Gallery in an exhibition called *Art and Sport* and a drawing of him by his friend Leslie Ward, who was the caricaturist 'Spy', appeared in the magazine *Vanity Fair*.

Archibald also developed Royal connections. The Royal Collections hold two works by him: 'Venus, a Dandy Dinmont terrier belonging to Prince Albert

1890 *Vanity Fair* print of Archibald John Stuart Wortley, captioned 'Sports and Arts'



Victor of Wales' dated 1892, the year of the death of the somewhat controversial Prince.²¹ The second work is a portrait, after Sir Arthur S. Cope, of King Edward VII dated 1894. Another Royal portrait, that of Edward VII, is in the collection at the Belfast City Hall. In 1893 he submitted pictures for the inspection of Queen Victoria.

Personal success and perhaps a reaction to the elitism of the Royal Academy prompted Archibald to found the Society of Portrait Painters, now the Royal Society of Portrait Painters, in March 1891. A group of artists first met at Archibald's studio at 68 Westbourne Terrace, London. The artists, including John Collier and Leslie Ward, planned their exhibition and invited members and non-members including Frederic Leighton and Archibald's former teacher Millais (who was elected an Honorary member in 1892) to contribute to their first exhibition held at the Royal Institute of Painters in Watercolours.²²

In 1892 James McNeill Whistler, with whom Archibald was already friendly, joined the group. He had been a visitor at Wortley Hall in the early 1880s and had painted a scene of Wortley village. This work is in the Freer/Sackler Galleries at the Smithsonian in Washington. Much of Archibald's time was now spent promoting and running the Society. In 1897 Archibald was elected its first President and remained its President until 1904.

Honing both his artistic and shooting skills during the 1870s did not stop Archibald pursuing his other great loves – having fun and acting. To accommodate both, in 1876 he revived The Beefsteak Club, an after-theatre club and a venue for amateur plays. W. S. Gilbert was a member and co-wrote *The Forty Thieves*, in which Archibald participated enthusiastically.

Another member of the Beefsteak Club was Archibald's good friend Carlo Pellegrini, Italian aristocrat and the popular caricaturist 'Ape' from *Vanity Fair*. By 1878 Archibald felt secure enough, perhaps as a result of a commercial venture into sporting engravings published by the Fine Art Society, of which he was a founder member, to commission a house with Carlo Pellegrini. The house designed²³ by E. W. Godwin was called Chelsea Lodge and the designs



'Note in Green' A view of Wortley village by James McNeill Whistler. Courtesy of Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington DC. Gift of Charles Lang Freer F.1902.155

for the house can be seen at the Victoria and Albert Museum.²⁴ The house was close to Whistler's house, The White House, Tite Street, also designed by Godwin incorporated studios for them both and had communal ground floor areas. However the joint tenancy was soon ended and Archibald commissioned a further house at 29 Tite Street and named it Canwell House after a Lawley family home, which had been sold by the family in 1872.

Archibald used the Beefsteak Club links to the theatre later in his career to secure portrait commissions. The *Daily News* of 3rd February 1885 reports that Archibald's work hung in the London Fire Brigade quarters of Captain Shaw, a friend of the Prince of Wales, who was depicted in *Iolanthe* by Gilbert and Sullivan. The London Fire Brigade Museum also has a portrait of Captain Shaw thought to be by Archibald.

This interest in the theatre may have brought Archibald into contact with Eleanor (Nelly) Bromley, who Archibald was to marry on 31st January 1884 at the Registry Office, Lambeth.²⁵ ²⁶ Nelly played on the London stage from 1868 and in 1875 she was the Plaintiff in the first production of *Trial by Jury* by



Eleanor Bromley aged approximately 20
Courtesy of the family

John Stuart Wortley as a child at Beaulieu, Hampshire. Courtesy of the family



Gilbert and Sullivan; she continued on stage until her marriage. The wedding was no grand affair. Archibald would have been expected to marry someone from a similar background to him and as well as her birth and profession, on her marriage Nelly had four children, so this was an unconventional match.²⁷

It may have been this marriage that prompted Valerie Meux (a neighbour from the family's time in East Sheen) to take against Archibald and Nelly and write so disparagingly as can be seen in the opening quote. However Nellie's²⁸ beauty, wit, charm and no doubt diplomacy won her entry into Victorian society, which was denied to Valerie Meux.

Not only was Nelly accepted by society, so were her children, although it was only the last-born, John, who took the Stuart Wortley name. Valentine and John were educated at Eton although Valentine maintained his mother's name, Bromley, and was described in the school records as Archibald's stepson. Valentine attended Hollesley College, Woodbridge after Eton, a college devoted to preparing men for the Colonies and he went to Canada as a farmer. He married and died in Canada in 1950.

John Stuart Wortley, born in Battersea, joined the army. He married Edith Phillips, the daughter of South African mining magnate Sir Lionel Phillips and after service in South Africa, Nigeria, the Sudan and Egypt John died at Bullecourt, France in March 1918. After his death, Edith married the artist Sir William Nicholson in 1919.

Nelly's girls also married into wealthy families. Lilian married into the Duncombe/Feversham family from Yorkshire and had a career as a singer and librettist known as Lilian Eldee. Lilian's career blossomed around the turn of the century, with performances at the Grand Opera, Stockholm and she made her debut at Covent Garden. Zoë married into the Croft family of port makers.



Zoe Croft with her daughter Lilian
Courtesy of the family

As Archibald's status as a portrait painter developed, so did his reputation as a field sportsman, this in turn led to opportunities to develop the literary talent commented on by Millais. Archibald was certainly an expert on field sports and his exploits were well documented. In December 1882, for £500 stakes, he took on a Dr Carver, an American sharp-shooter at Hendon in a pigeon shoot. The much-publicised match ended in a draw, both men bringing down 83 of the 100 birds, and confirmed Archibald as one of England's finest shots.

In the 1880s Archibald moved to Jersey, living at St John's Manor, La Hougue Boete, described in an auction catalogue as "The Blenheim of the Channel Islands" with a croquet lawn, cricket field, archery ground and rifle target. He is registered as having one dog at the property in 1888 and four in 1889 and no doubt he was indulging his passion for shooting. At the height of his professional and social powers in 1892 Archibald spent time shooting with the Prince of Wales in Norfolk, where seven men were said to have shot 1,572 pheasants in one day.

However, Archibald's writing did not meet with universal acclaim. In 1885 the eighth Duke of Beaufort created a series of books entitled *The Badminton Library of Sports and Pastimes*. Dedicated to the Prince of Wales, Archibald contributed to the volume *Shooting*. In October 1886 the *New York Times* reviewed the volume and their review was entitled 'What shall we kill today?' Their rather withering appraisal of Archibald's contribution did not dent his enthusiasm for writing. More literary efforts came with the publication of works entitled the *Fur and Feather Series*. Archibald contributed both text and drawings to this series of books about game, which attempted to bridge the gap between sport and natural history. In the volume on grouse published in 1894, the reader learns the natural history of the grouse, how to shoot a grouse (by Archibald) and lastly how to cook and eat a grouse.

Portrait of Lilian Eldee (Bromley, then Duncombe) by Archibald John Stuart Wortley, 1901. Courtesy of the Royal Academy of Music

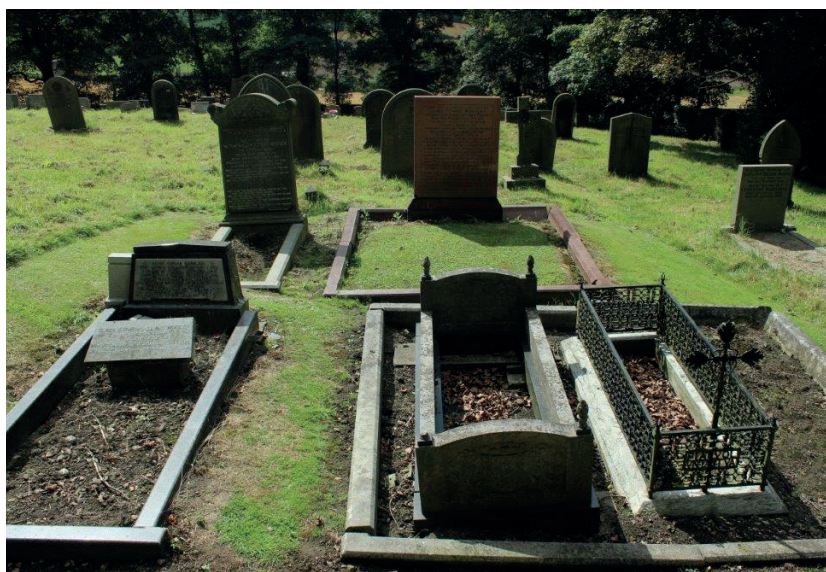


A recipe for grouse à *la Sultane*, grouse stuffed with mushrooms, anchovies, and truffles basted in a good consommé was a typical recipe in the book. Archibald illustrated the work in conjunction with the noted bird painter and naturalist, Archibald Thorburn. Still having fun and combining art and theatre, in April 1895 Archibald put on a series of tableaux vivants: living pictures at the Londesborough Theatre Scarborough for a charity event organised by the Sitwell family of Renishaw Hall. Popular pictures of the day were represented by actors and models fully theatrically dressed and set for the stage.

Archibald's shooting and family connections also bought him into contact with the business world. Leslie Ward recounts that Archibald went into the City feeling he could profit after the Boer War but that he was not successful. His business interests were associated with John Douglas-Scott-Montagu, a pioneer of motoring who shared Archibald's love of shooting and was a very engaging



Eleanor Stuart Wortley at 88 years old photographed at Beaulieu. Courtesy of the family



The family plot in St Leonard's church yard. Archibald's grave back left
Courtesy of Phil Cartwright



personality. John's mother was Lady Cecily Susan Montagu and was a cousin of Archibald. Archibald was a director, with John Scott Montagu, of the New Schultze Gunpowder Company. The powder was manufactured for use in field sports. In 1900 he sold at Christies a portrait of Mrs Dundas by J. Hoppner for £1,750 indicating perhaps that he had financially overstretched himself.

The focus of Archibald's life was shifting. Business seemed more important than painting. He made his will at his home in Curzon Street in September 1903 and that year's minutes of the Society of Portrait Painters give his address as c/o his solicitors. The minutes also refer to the continuing illness of its President.

RIGHT

Embroidery dedicated to Archibald, St Leonard's Church Wortley. Photograph courtesy of Phil Cartwright



LEFT

Archibald's grave, St Leonard's churchyard
Courtesy of Phil Cartwright

By June of that year Archibald was no longer well enough to attend meetings. In 1905 he resigned his directorships of the Fine Art and General Insurance Company, a company set up in 1890 to offer insurance to works of art and exhibitions, and the Schultze Gunpowder company due to ill health. He died on 11th October 1905 at Moorcroft House, Hillingdon, a private asylum. Probate of his will gave his address as Down Hall, Bradwell on Sea, Essex.

A memorial service was held for him at Christ Church, Piccadilly on the same day as his funeral at Wortley and a tribute to him from the King was read out. His headstone at St Leonard's, Wortley has words from 'When Earth's Last Picture is Painted' by Rudyard Kipling and inside the church there is a very tender memorial to him. Near the lectern is a framed silk embroidery made by his sister Margaret, in a mahogany frame with words and musical score worked in brass plate at the foot, to the hymn 'O God our Help in Ages Past'.

After his death Nelly made Dock House on the Beaulieu Estate in Hampshire her home. By 1918 she had moved to Palace Flats on the Estate. Gertrude Jekyll designed a garden for her in about 1920 at the time Gertrude was being painted by William Nicholson. Nellie died in 1939 and is buried in Beaulieu churchyard.

In 1906 an exhibition of Archibald's work was mounted at the Grafton Gallery, London. In the catalogue preface to that exhibition the unnamed writer says about Archibald: "He had the keen eye of the sportsman and the insight of the artist. Sport and art in unison."

ENDNOTES

1. Lady Valerie Meux, 29th June 1892. The exhibition was the second exhibition of the Society of Portrait Painters. Correspondence of James McNeill Whistler 1855–1903, edited by Margaret F. MacDonald, Patricia de Montfort and Nigel Thorpe; including The Correspondence of Anna Whistler 1855–1880, edited by Georgia Toutziari.
2. James Archibald Stuart Wortley MP, 1776–1845. He married Caroline Creighton, daughter of the first Earl Erne. Caroline was herself an artist. Her work forms part of the Oppe Collection at the Tate Gallery.
3. The home of his maternal grandfather, Paul Beilby Thompson, First Baron Wenlock.
4. *The First Lady Wharnclyffe and her Family 1779–1856* by her grandchildren, Caroline Grosvenor and the late Charles Beilby, Lord Stuart of Wortley, London: Heinemann, 1927, Vol. 2.
5. *Forty years of 'Spy'*, Leslie Ward, London: Chatto & Windus, 1915 p. 150.
6. Archibald's family lived at 3 Carlton Gardens, London between 1851 and 1858.
7. James was a Director and Chair of the Atlantic Cable Company and Chair of Credit Foncier & Mobilier. He appears in a photograph in May 1862 with dignitaries including William Ewart Gladstone and the First Baron Wenlock making the first underground train journey from Edgware Road. There are numerous connections between the Lawley and the Stuart-Wortley families to Gladstone.
8. Jenny Lind 1820–1887 opera singer known as the Swedish Nightingale.
9. The family had moved to 16 St James Place, London, close to 15 Curzon Street, Wharnclyffe House, purchased by Archibald's grandparents (James and Caroline Stuart-Wortley) in 1818. This house still stands in Mayfair and is the home of the Embassy of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.
10. *A Scrap Screen* Alice Buchan, London: Hamish Hamilton, 1979, p. 85.
11. Lord Randolph Churchill, 1849–1895, statesman and father of Winston Churchill.
12. Charles was later to be made Baron Stuart of Wortley.
13. Following his death in 1868 philanthropist Felix Slade had bequeathed money to found the Slade Art School, part of University College London in 1871.
14. Edward John Poynter, 1836–1919, later drew Archibald's sister, Margaret Stuart Wortley, a

great beauty of her day. She was a social reformer and married Sir Reginald James Chetwynd Talbot, later Governor of Victoria.

15. *The Life and Letters of Sir John Everett Millais* by his son John Guille Millais. Methuen & Co, London, 1889, ii 61.
16. *The Life and Letters of Sir John Everett Millais* by his son John Guille Millais. Methuen & Co, London, 1889.
17. Charles' first wife was Beatrice Trollope, daughter of Thomas Adolphus Trollope, niece of Anthony Trollope. They married at the British Embassy Paris in August 1880. She died after giving birth to their daughter Beatrice in 1881.
18. *The Sheffield and Rotherham Independent* 7th September 1895. The occasion was the 21st annual exhibition of the Sheffield Society of Arts at the Cutlers' Hall where Archibald gave the opening lecture.
19. *The Lilac and The Rose*, Susan Buchan, London: Gerald Duckworth and Co., 1952, p. 57
20. W. G. Grace 1848–1915, England's most famous cricketer.
21. Prince Albert Victor 1864–1892, son of the Prince of Wales, later King Edward VII, and grandson of Queen Victoria whose short life, mental abilities, lifestyle and sexuality have attracted a great deal of gossip and speculation. A further portrait of Edward VII hung at Old Battersea House, the bottom half having been cut to disguise wardrobe doors.
22. Sir Leslie Ward 1851–1922, portrait artist and caricaturist for *Vanity Fair* magazine under the pseudonym 'Spy'.
23. A collection of these engravings is held at the British Museum.
24. Edward W. Godwin 1833–1886, designer and architect associated with the Aesthetic and Arts and Crafts Movements.
25. Nellie, baptised in 1851, was most likely a descendant of the Bromley family of engravers and printmakers.
26. As early as 1881, Nellie and the children are with Archibald at Sharsted Cottage in Westgate on Sea, described as visitors. Clement Godson owned the cottage, a friend of Archibald's who was a keen stalker and shot.
27. Lilian born 1870, Zoe 1871, Valentine born 1879 and John (Jack) born 1880.
28. Having married brewer Henry Meux, Valerie never achieved full acceptance. Working at the Casino de Venise she had a hurried and secret marriage to Henry and then outraged society by driving around London in a carriage pulled by zebras, a vulgarity too far.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Norman Scholey, St Leonard's Church

Susan Tomkins, The Beaulieu Estate

Charles Forbes Adams

Lorna Beckett

Sam Taylor

M. Beresford

Charles Graham

Selena Percy

The National Trust

The archives of: Eton School, Oxford University, University College London
Surrey History Centre, Alberta, The Royal Academy of Music, London Borough
of Richmond Upon Thames, Lambeth, City of Westminster, London Fire
Brigade, The Royal Collections, National Trust, Jersey, Sheffield City, Barnsley,
The Kennel Club

Uxbridge Library

City of Red Deer Archives

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