

Isle Of Wight 2016

On the 17th of July 2016, we embarked on a trip to the Isle of Wight, funded by the Henry Morris Memorial Trust. The aims of the trip were to look at the contrasting scenes of the island; investigate the work of Julia Margaret Cameron, and then produce a video diary along with a written report and photos of our trip, which would tie in with the theme of photography.

OUR JOURNEY

Day 1 of our trip consisted mostly of travelling and exploring our surroundings. We used 2 coaches to get to Portsmouth, and we went via London Victoria.



(LONDON EYE VIEW OVER THAMES)

After changing coaches at Victoria (which was harder than we had anticipated!) we proceeded to Portsmouth, which took a further 3 hours. Upon arrival we had to navigate through a large retail area of Portsmouth, which was also tricky, especially with our large bags on! We finally made it to the ferry port and boarded the ferry, which took us to Fishbourne.



(PORTSMOUTH HARBOUR)

The boat journey took about an hour, and from Fishbourne port we had a series of bus journeys which took us to the Youth Hostel.



(A VIEW OF RYDE FROM THE FERRY CROSSING)

Overall we were very pleased with our journey and even though it took a long time, there were many pleasant views to enjoy. We also loved the Youth Hostel we stayed in, it was in a good location and the general atmosphere of the area was lovely.

THE CHINES

One of the most famous features of the Isle of Wight are the Chines. They are primarily located on the Western side of the island. This is because of the high level of erosion caused by high-energy waves and Atlantic storms. The Western side of the island is the most exposed and therefore the most vulnerable to coastal erosion. The West side is also the highest point of the island, and so the water has to travel (from a high point) down through soft rock to reach the sea.

We decided the most efficient way to see the key Chines would be to get the bus down to the end (Whale Chine) and walk back. We had aimed to see 5 Chines (Whale, Grange, Brook, Compton and Alum Bay), unfortunately we missed Compton Chine as it was too difficult to access, but we managed to see all the rest.

We were most fascinated and awestruck by Whale Chine. As its name suggested it was the biggest Chine of the ones we saw. We were also intrigued by the layers of sediment and the different colours of the rock that we saw.



(A VIEW OF THE LAYERS OF ROCK AT WHALE CHINE)

Whale Chine was certainly the most unique of the Chines and really stood out to us.



(INSIDE WHALE CHINE)

From the image above you can see some of the water that has caused the Chine to be formed through erosion. The clay here is very soft and is eroded easily, whereas the rock in other areas further up the coast is more rigid, such as limestone at Alum Bay.



(GRANGE CHINE)

Grange Chine was very different to Whale Chine and trickier to spot! It seemed to be a lot more flat, hence vegetation has been able to grow. This is due to the increased amount of man-made coastal protection works, which mean there is less erosion and so the Chine gets filled with 'scrub'. Grange Chine and the neighbouring Marsh Chine together make up the largest Chine on the island, although it appeared to be small at first glance.



(BROOK CHINE)

The rock at Brook Chine is a lot more rigid. We observed that the Chine is longer but flatter, compared to Whale Chine. There appeared to be much more water at this Chine, perhaps because the water travels more slowly and there is not such a

steep slope. The flatter walls of the Chine allow vegetation to grow, similarly to Grange Chine. The shape of the wall (in the photo below) indicates recent erosion as there is an overhang of grass, which will fall at some point.



(BROOK CHINE CLOSE UP OF WATER)

Our fourth and final Chine was the Needles at Alum Bay, by far the most popular and famous attraction of the Isle Of Wight. By this point we had walked for almost 4 hours, so we decided to get a bus to Alum Bay. This day also turned out to be the hottest day of the year so far, so we were feeling pretty tired but the Needles were extraordinary. We were thoroughly impressed by how unique and beautiful they were. We walked down some steps and path that is built into the Chine in order to get to the beach, which showed us a stunning view.



(THE NEEDLES AT ALUM BAY)

The geology at the Northern part of the West coast is completely contrasting to the rest of the island. The chalk here is rigid and tough, and extremely resistant to erosion. Hence the Needles are going to be around for a long time and the other Chines are constantly changing. If we were go back in a few years they would be in the same location but a different shape and the water movement varies.

We finished day two with a visit to Freshwater, which is the nearest large village to us and had a shop for food. We were so pleased with how this day had turned out, as we were concerned with timing and the amount of walking in case it rained! However, we were very lucky with the weather, and the walk was along a pleasant coastal path and was very enjoyable despite the length. Although we were drained by the end of it, it was a very productive and amusing day!

THE DIMBOLA MUSEUM (DAY 3)

On day 3, after recovering from the long but exciting day previous, we awoke and caught the bus into Freshwater, where we used maps to locate the museum. Upon arrival at the museum, we immediately headed upstairs to the displays, starting with a timeline of Julia Margaret Cameron's life. As we read further into the timeline that outlined her life we were able to gain greater knowledge about the woman behind the camera. Julia Margaret Cameron (1815 - 1879) was a central early photographer and is internationally recognized as a pioneer of photography. Contrary to the stereotypical Victorian woman of the era, Cameron was open minded and had a keen desire of independence and liberty.

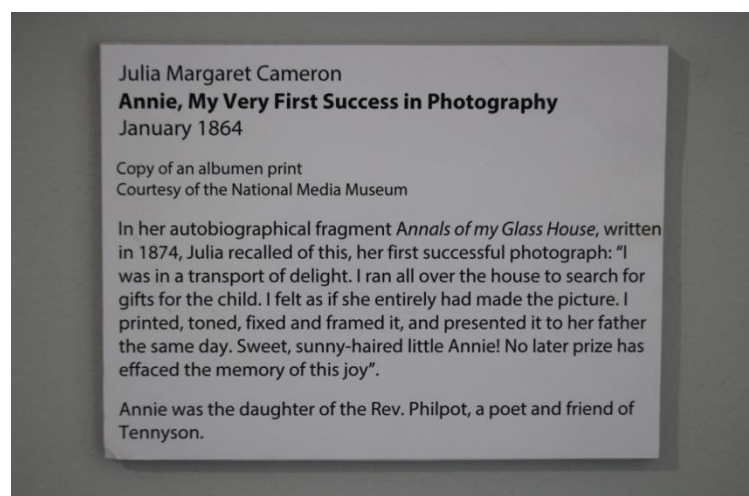


Moving our focus onto the home of the pioneer itself, we instantly became curious about the namesake of the cottage, and were able to discover that the home had been named after a region where the family owned coffee estates. Not only this, but we also deepened our understanding about the house, discovering that Lady Tennyson

(wife of the famous poet Alfred Lord Tennyson, whom Julia would later capture in one of her pictures) actually helped Julia arrange the gardens of both Dimbola and Sunnyside (another residence Julia purchased on the island).

As we explored the beautiful cottage further, we found the bedroom of Julia Margaret Cameron herself, which had been preserved by the museum. This was particularly fascinating, as by listening to the audio we were also able to gain greater knowledge relating to Julia's everyday life, and notable likes and dislikes. The room featured an old wooden bed, with a chair in one corner, and a dressing table facing the window, which allowed a wonderful supply of light to highlight the room's elegance.

Of course, one of the most focal points of Julia's life occurred in 1863 when her daughter and her daughters' husband presented her with a camera to preoccupy Julia whilst she was on the Isle of Wight without her family. It is then in 1864 when Julia takes her first successful photograph. As we explored further we discovered more about the famous first photograph, reading an extract from Julia's autobiography as seen in the plaque below the photo:



As we continued to explore the museum, we were able to view more of Julia's work, however we both had a noticeable interest in one photo, entitled 'Vectis'. Knowing that this name was linked to the Isle of Wight and having already completed the expedition the previous day exploring the island, we both felt an impulse to research the photo further. In reading the plaque we discovered that Vectis is the Roman name for the Isle of Wight, and here Cameron tried to embody the island in the form of Cyllena Wilson, the daughter of a draper and the granddaughter of a reverend. We then continued to unearth that she and two of her siblings were actually adopted by the Camerons after their parents died in

the early 1860s. As the photo was taken in 1868 it is clear that Cyllena would have already been adopted by this point.

Further exploring the exhibits, we began to become aware of a particular theme running through many of the photographs. Not only did many have religious imagery, but also many subjects in the photographs were compromised of celebrity families and/or particularly striking women and children. As we enquired further, our understanding grew as we became aware of what is referred to now as 'The Freshwater Circle'. During the 1860s and 70s, there were many celebrities and affluent people living in Freshwater, and it was at this time that Julia's home also became home to many of her new and rich friends such as Tennyson and her artistic mentor G.F Watts. As Dimbola became the hub to many artists and other creatives, it becomes clear that Julia's work has also been influenced by this time, and so much of her work highlights her fantasies of celebrity and desire to become a significant artist of her time.

In conclusion, during our time at the museum, we were truly able glean a better understanding into the life and works of Julia Margaret Cameron, in not only appreciating her art, but in also comprehending the circumstances both personal and of the time.



After making many notes and taking many pictures, we left the museum and took the bus back to Totland, where we ate lunch and began to pull together the information we had both individually collected. After the beautiful weather and enjoying the experiences we had had the privilege of having, we began to pack for the return journey home, sad to leave, but glad to have had the opportunity!

A FINAL NOTE

We would like to thank the Henry Morris Memorial Trust for giving us the funding for this incredible trip! We learnt so much, not just about the Isle of Wight and Julia Margaret Cameron, but also about ourselves, and our capability of independent travel. We discovered that we are actually quite good at reading maps, but our bus catching skills require a bit of work! It has given both of us a lot of confidence to travel independently in the future, something which would have been difficult to learn if you hadn't given us this incredible opportunity.