

ASPECTS OF FRANCONIA – COBURG AND SEßLACH

July 2017 – Coburg and Seßlach

Thanks to the royal wedding in 1840 of Prince Albert and Queen Victoria the relatively small Upper Franconian city of Coburg, with a population slightly over 40,000, is a familiar-sounding name to most English-speaking history buffs. We are often told that Albert and Victoria were a good match and, although the marriage had been “arranged”, they were deeply in love with each other from the outset. In her journal Victoria wrote about her wedding night:

My dearest dearest dear Albert sat on a footstool by my side, and his excessive love and affection gave me feelings of heavenly love and happiness, I never could have hoped to have felt before! He clasped me in his arms, and we kissed each other again and again! His beauty, his sweetness and gentleness,- really how can I ever be thankful enough to have such a Husband!

And they had nine children in rapid succession!

Albert, who was born in Rosenau Castle, made a great contribution to English life. Despite feeling somewhat constrained by his role of consort, he is remembered for his stewardship of the Great Exhibition of 1851, a resounding success. He supported educational reform and the abolition of slavery and it was a sad time for the Queen when she lost him, allegedly, to typhoid fever in 1861. However, he is not forgotten, especially in London with its Albert Memorial and Royal Albert Hall, and even Albert Square, the main setting for the popular soap called EastEnders!

Coburg is only just up the road from Erlangen, an easy ride. For Queen Victoria, though, it was an exhausting journey lasting several days, but during her 63-year reign she came no fewer than six times! And on one journey she brought with her a “flushing loo” which, in one sense, is still “visitable”, I suppose.

Rosenau, which Victoria adored, is today also home to the European Museum of Modern Glass. It is housed in a new building opposite the castle’s orangery and displays modern art in glass from the 1960s to the present. A glass staircase leads to the special exhibition room and the studio on the first floor. Here on the gallery, visitors can also find out more about how glass is made and the different ways of working it.

Just 12 km southwest of Coburg lies one of Bavaria’s prettiest medieval towns, Seßlach, replete with town wall, many half-timbered buildings and a 13th-century parish church – and a charming tourist manageress who once studied English at IFA in Erlangen.

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