



Part 2: Local life in Southampton and on the Isle of Wight

In 1814, the Tsar of Russia, Alexander 1, hailed as the saviour of Europe (*from Napoleon Bonaparte*), visited London and Portsmouth, and although he did not make the short journey across the Solent to visit the Island, Hoy nevertheless decided to commemorate the visit to England by erecting a 72ft high column at the northern end of St. Catherine's Down, with the inscription "In remembrance of many happy years residence in his Dominions".

The monument was not far from his property, 'The Hermitage', which by then had been renamed 'Medina Hermitage' (photo below), 'Medina' being a reference to that river having its source in the grounds, and 'Hermitage' to remind him of the 'Hermitage Palace' in St. Petersburg, Russia.



In 1815, he bought Middanbury House on the outskirts of Southampton and made this his main residence. Hoy's last land acquisition was made three years before his death when he purchased the Thornhill Estate, some 430 acres quite close to Middanbury House. Little is known of his domestic life, but his first wife, Hannah, who was 11 years his senior, died in 1822. They did not have any children. Three years later, in May 1825 he married Elizabeth Bradley from an aristocratic Kent family and, perhaps to place a further seal on his social standing, he built Thornhill Park, a sumptuous mansion in Southampton, as a gift to his new bride. No record has been found of Hoy visiting the Island after his second marriage and he died at Middanbury House on June 26th 1828, his remains interred in the family vault at St. George's, Hanover Square, London.



Hoy's obituary says he was '*.....much beloved by his friends, most esteemed by an extensive acquaintance, and will be deeply regretted by them and by a large number of poor dependents, who have been long employed and supported by his liberality and bounty*' (he definitely showed this liberality by leaving each of his eight servants a full years wages in his will).

Michael Hoy was considered slightly eccentric. Three of his properties carried his initials - M.H. (Medina Hermitage, Middanbury House in Southampton and another of his Island properties, Millbrooke House in Carisbrooke Road, Newport). The end of Hoy's story is rather sad. Two of his mansions, Middanbury House and Thornhill Park were demolished to make way for housing estates and his family burial ground in London was bulldozed for development. On top of this, the Medina Hermitage was destroyed by fire and rebuilt in a less graceful Victorian Gothic-style in the late 19th century

Colin Beavis: *Ventnor & District Local History Society*.



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