

1871 AND THE VICTORIAN ERA

- In 1863 the world's first underground railway was developed in London. In 1878 electric lighting appeared in cities. In 1882 electric tram cars began to run. Omnibuses pulled by horses were popular if you could afford the fares.
- By 1870 the population in cities was overwhelming to visitors. There were 40,000 costermongers, sellers of fruit or vegetables or fish from hand-carts, in London and 100,000 "winter tramps". There were more Irish living in London than in Dublin. There were 20,000 public houses in London visited by more than 500,000 customers annually. There were approaching 500,000 dwellings in London. Friedrich Engels wrote of "countless ships", "endless lines of vehicles", "the immense tangle of streets" and nameless misery.
- In 1871 the first Woodbridge Horse Show took place. Now it is such a large event, it is held on Trinity Showground on the edge of Ipswich. Horses in Victorian times were an important part of the rural economy, and urban transport relied on them too. The penny-farthing, also known as a "high wheel", "high wheeler" and "ordinary", was the first machine to be called a "bicycle". It was popular in the 1870s and 1880s. In 1886 a "Safety Bicycle" was invented, recognisable today as having two equal sized wheels.
- In 1874 the first East Anglian Daily Times was first published. Local newspapers, eg the Woodbridge Reporter, became an important way of disseminating local and national news. Large houses staffed by house servants, gardeners and grooms were an important part of the servile economy. Christchurch Mansion and park in Ipswich was not gifted to and purchased by the town until 1894.
- There was a building boom in Victorian times, with wood and brick the material of choice in most towns except those near stone quarries. In cities stone and other impressive materials were chosen to show off the buildings. Apprentice schemes were common.
- The 1800s saw a revival of Christian worship and the building of many churches and non-conformist chapels. In Woodbridge the Quay Congregational Chapel was built in 1805; Beaumont Chapel was started in 1841 (originally Congregational and becoming Baptist in 1899); St John's Anglican Church was built in 1840. Its high spire lasted until 1981 when this toppled down. Our (Wesleyan) Methodist Church had its foundation stone laid in June 1871 and was ready for worship the following year.
- The Prime Minister was the Liberal Lloyd George.
- The British army were fighting in Afghanistan (not much change there) – the 2nd Afghan War.
- Sainsbury's had opened its first shop in 1869 in Drury Lane. It now has 1,400 supermarkets. In towns, small shops boarded up or shuttered their front windows at night because of possible unruly behaviour or thefts. Wallpapers were popular and the concept of wholesaling began around this time.
- Town life was at a slower pace. Pedestrians strolled along. There were horse-drawn waggons and coaches, with attendant waste issues, considerable in large cities. Roads and pavements were uneven and usually simply made of compacted soil. Many people moved to towns and cities for work, leaving rural industries and farming helpless. Many common areas of work like river eel-trapping, blacksmiths and domestic servants have long since disappeared.
- Wood and coal were the heating materials of choice in open fires, but there was no electrical power distributed to towns. The first coal-fired electricity generating station was to be opened in 1882 at Holborn Viaduct. Global warming was an unknown phenomenon. The UK would generate electricity by burning fossil fuels for 137 years.

- Compare this with now. May 2019 saw the first coal-free week in the UK when no coal was used to generate electricity. In February 2020, the largest company in this field, DRAX, announced its intention to cease burning coal by 2021 with a loss of 230 jobs. A parallel area of business developed with fire insurance companies founded to sell policies to large companies.
- Large cities began to build impressive buildings to house trade fairs, corn exchanges and public gatherings and concerts. Manchester's Halle Orchestra was founded in 1858.
- Victorians displayed charitable and philanthropic virtues by founding charities to alleviate some of society's inequalities, eg RNIB was founded in 1868; Barnardo's was founded in 1866; National Children's Home, NCH, (now Action for Children) was founded in 1869; NSPCC was founded in 1884; The National Trust was founded in 1895.
- Ipswich Hospital was founded in 1889.
- In 1883 Sir William Alexander Smith founded the Boys' Brigade in Glasgow. The oldest Uniformed Organisation for Boys and predates the Scouts. The organisation is still relevant today and is worldwide. Lord Baden Powell was a friend of Sir William and because of writing a book initially for the Boys' Brigade a new movement for boys grew out of it. The first 'Scout' camp on Brownsea Island was in fact made up of boys from the local Boys' Brigade company and some from Eton. Every year on the Sunday closest to 4th October Companies celebrate the founding day with a parade and service.
- Some large shipping disasters prompted the development of lighthouses. The first lighthouse to be lit: by electricity was South Foreland (still prominent on the BBC Met-Office shipping forecast) in 1867.
- The 1870s had several "firsts" in sport: on 30th Nov 1872 the first official soccer match between two countries took part in Glasgow between Scotland and England. An estimated 3,000 spectators paid £100 (total) to watch the goalless draw; The first Australia v England cricket match took place in Melbourne in 1877. (The Ashes series began in 1882) after England failed to reach their target of 85 by 8 runs); The first Wimbledon tennis championship was held in 1877. Willie Renshaw beat Rev J T Hartley 6-0, 6-2, 6-1; On 25th August 1875 Matthew Webb, a captain in the English Merchant Navy swam the English channel, taking 21 hours, 45 minutes. It is estimated that because of tides, his zig-zag crossing covered 63km to cross the 30km gap; In 1877 The Oxford and Cambridge rowing eights crossed the finishing line in a dead heat, the only time in the Boat Race's history.
- To retrospectively pay for the "Great War", Income Tax was raised from 6% in 1908 to 22% in 1922 which had a large effect on the higher classes.