



YOUR ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO THE VICTORIANS

The Victorian era is one of powerful associations: one in which scientific advances, technological marvels and startling social change nestled side-by-side with squalor, prudishness, the horror of the workhouse and the pervasive myth that Victorians didn't smile. It was a period that continued to see British influence and ideas percolate across the world, carried by the trade winds and rifles of an empire on which the sun did not set – and at the head of it all was a woman who, when she was born, might reasonably never have expected to reign.

Coming to the throne in 1837, Queen Victoria would rule for longer than any monarch before her – and even today is only surpassed by Elizabeth II. In this essential guide we explore both her life and reign, as well as the people over whom she ruled.

Was Victoria popular as a monarch in her own time, for instance? How much do we owe Charles Dickens for creating Christmas? What was life like in the workhouse? How did the Victorians treat criminals? We begin over the page with a Q&A with historian and expert Professor Sarah Richardson....

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SARAH RICHARDSON is professor of history at the University of Warwick. She has written widely on the Victorian period, specialising in women and political culture in late 18th and early 19th-century Britain.

EVERYTHING YOU WANTED TO KNOW ABOUT THE VICTORIANS

Professor Sarah Richardson answers key questions about one of the biggest periods in British history

Q: When did the Victorian era begin and end, and when did it first start being referred to as such?

A: It starts officially in 1837, with the accession of Queen Victoria and ends in 1901 when she dies. The first mention of the term 'Victorian' was in a literary magazine in 1839, two years after her accession. That's the strict meaning of 'Victorian' at least - pertaining to the reign of Queen Victoria. But it's used more figuratively to talk about the whole of the 19th century or to talk about attitudes and behaviours of the period.

Q: Why do you think we're so fascinated by the Victorians?

A: It's an incredibly exciting era of history; a transformational period in terms of huge rises in population, the transfer of people from the countryside to the city, and the establishment of the sort of great cities that we know and love, like Birmingham or Manchester. And Victoria lives a long time, which perhaps seems an obvious thing to say, but when you have monarchs that have very, very long reigns, they give a sort of stability and shape to a period.

We tend to think of the Elizabethan era, for example, as one of the golden ages of English history. And the Victorian period is an equivalent in a way - most of the 19th century was presided over by one person. And that gives it a sort of character and attraction.

It's a hugely important age in terms of culture and industry as well: there are countless new technological innovations, such as the railways. And the novel gets established in this period, so we have incredible writers like Charles Dickens, William Thackeray and George Eliot recording and analysing social and economic conditions in Britain at the time as well. So, the Victorians' popularity is a perfect storm of all these elements really, which makes it an incredibly exciting period.

The 19th century is also one for which we have a lot of historical information. One of the major sources for historians is the census, which begins in 1801, and from 1841 onwards, you can find out quite detailed information on everybody - from the queen downwards. You can find out the size of a household; where they were born; what jobs they did; who else lived in the house, and so on. Most early modern historians would give



Woken from her sleep, the young Victoria receives a kiss on the hand having been told of her accession following the death of William IV

Victoria wed Albert in 1840; they would be married until his death, 21 years later



◀ their eye teeth to have a source like that, where you can actually drill down and find out about the lives of ordinary people, as well as those of the great and the good.

Q: How popular was Victoria as a monarch?

A: Initially, there was quite a lot of anxiety. Her succession was not a given, and certainly when she was born in 1819 she wasn't expected to become queen. Victoria was the daughter of the fourth son of George III, so there were three sons above her father who could have had legitimate children, but didn't. So she wasn't brought up to be a monarch.

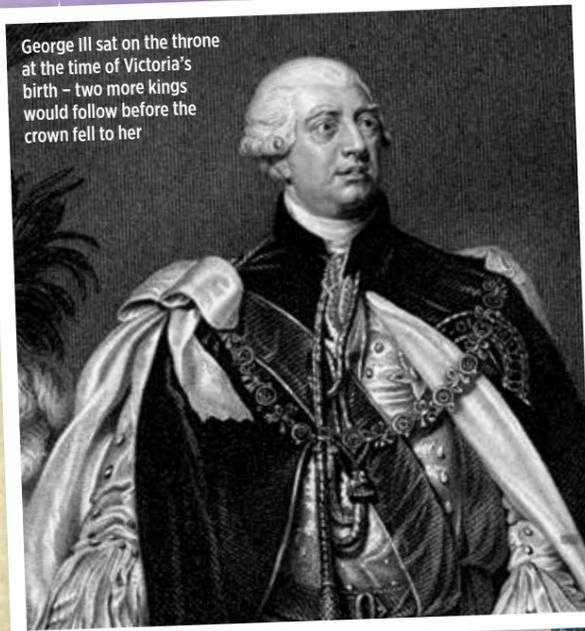
There was some anxiety at her accession because she was very young – just 18 – she was a woman, and she wasn't necessarily all that well-known to the British public. She married Albert quite early in her reign, but there were always concerns that she was being influenced by politicians at the time. This was always a fear surrounding a female

“When Victoria was born in 1819 she wasn't expected to become queen – she was the daughter of the fourth son of George III”

monarch – who were the men who might be around and influencing her? Once she married Albert, in 1840, they did become a popular royal couple, and they idealised the idea of marriage and the family. But Victoria's public image was limited somewhat by the fact that, for much of her early reign, she was pregnant and so out of the public eye – between 1840 and 1857 she had nine children.

When Albert died, in 1861, Victoria's popularity fell as she withdrew completely from public life, to the extent that there was even a rise of a Republican movement. But towards the end of her reign, as she re-emerged into public life once more, her popularity rose, too. And by the time she dies in 1901, Victoria

George III sat on the throne at the time of Victoria's birth – two more kings would follow before the crown fell to her



was very well thought of by the general public and was regarded as a monarch who had presided over the rise of democracy, the growth of the Empire, British prosperity and so on.

Q: How and why did Britain avoid the sort of revolutionary change seen elsewhere in Europe in the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries?

A: It certainly wasn't a given in the 19th century that Britain would not see revolution. In the 1840s, support for the Chartists – a movement that campaigned for political rights and influence for the working classes – was at its highest. In 1848, a huge Chartist meeting was held on Kennington Common, with upwards of 20,000 people present. Although the meeting was peaceful, 1848 was a year which saw a wave of revolutions in Europe, in places such as Sicily, France, Germany, Italy, and the Austrian Empire, and there was a lot of anxiety that Britain would see the same. Victoria and Albert were quickly taken from London to Osborne on the Isle of Wight, but interestingly, Albert actually had a lot of sympathy for the working classes and their politics. In hindsight, we know that 1848 was really the last hurrah for the Chartist movement and there wasn't a revolution in Britain. But at the time it wasn't certain.

There are several reasons why revolution was less likely in Britain, one of which being the fact that there was more democracy in Britain than there was elsewhere in Europe. We didn't have the sort of absolute monarchy like they did in France, for example, or in Austria and Hungary – the British monarchy had already ceded some of its powers in 1688, when Parliament had been established



Chartism was the first truly national mass workers' movement in history

as the ruling power of England (later the United Kingdom) and the monarchy had become constitutional rather than absolute. What's more, in 1832, a small measure of enfranchisement had been granted, albeit mainly to the middle classes. Cities like Birmingham, Manchester, Leeds and Sheffield had all been enfranchised and had MPs for the first time, meaning that their voices could be heard in parliament. So, I think there were big differences between Britain and the rest of Europe during this period, which meant the conditions for revolution were less likely.

Q: How did Victorian influence affect life across the British Empire?

A: It differed from place to place. Colonies were often ruled by governors who were there to represent the British state and the queen on the ground. Their

position, attitudes and ideologies could dramatically influence the relationships between colonised populations and the British. It wasn't always easy because a lot of these territories were vast and difficult to manage, particularly from London, so the British army, for example, was very important in maintaining law and order, or quelling rebellion in places such as India.

Things weren't the same across the whole Empire, though, and in some cases, British colonies were actually ahead of Britain in terms of democracy and so on. Women were enfranchised in New Zealand and Australia, for example, well before women in Britain, and proportional representation (where seats in parliament are allocated in proportion to votes cast) was introduced in Adelaide, South Australia in the 1830s. So, in many cases, states within the Empire were able to establish their own forms of government.



The Kate Sheppard National Suffragists Memorial, commemorating womens' suffrage, in New Zealand – the first nation in the world in which all adult women gained the right to vote in elections

Starving Irish people crowd the gate of a workhouse during the famine



THE IRISH POTATO FAMINE

The British response to an agricultural disaster left a lot to be desired

The Potato Famine of 1845-49 was a watershed moment in Britain's long history with Ireland, and the story of how a million deaths from mostly preventable disease and hunger happened on the doorstep of the world's wealthiest country still shocks.

Almost all of the exportable food produced in Ireland during the Victorian period was transported to mainland Britain. Controversial Corn Laws imposed tariffs on imported grain and kept prices of locally produced food high so, increasingly, the Irish became almost wholly dependent on potatoes, which were cheap, easy to grow and calorie dense but, as it turned out, genetically weak and prone to disease. Nevertheless, potatoes accounted for 60 per cent of Ireland's entire food needs, with no affordable alternative in event of failure.

By August 1845, a potato blight had reached Britain and continental Europe from America. Between a third and half the crop was ruined in 1845, and in 1846, up to 75 per cent of the potato harvest was inedible. Conservative Prime Minister Sir Robert Peel initially imported £100,000 of Indian grain to Ireland, established a programme of public works to provide people with a subsistence wage to purchase alternative food supplies, and repealed the Corn Laws. But his successor, Whig PM Lord John Russell, took a more fundamentalist approach, based on the popular ideologies of the era: self-help and *laissez-faire*, which opposed the provision of charity. Though a soup-kitchen system was established, it was abandoned after six months of operation.

The British government's failure to act and its incomprehension of the severity of the situation casts a dark shadow on the Victorian era, and it was widely criticised both in Ireland and elsewhere – political journalist John Mitchel wrote: “The Almighty, indeed, sent the potato blight, but the English created the famine”.

Of a pre-famine population of some eight million, over a million Irish people died of hunger and famine-related diseases, with many others forced to flee their homeland. In less than a decade in the mid-19th century, the population of Ireland plummeted from 8.25 million to just over 6.5 million.

VICTORIANS IN NUMBERS

The Victorian era is big – but just how big are we talking?



400,000

Number of people who gathered in London for Victoria's coronation in June 1838

2.5 BILLION

Coins produced by the Royal Mint during Victoria's reign



23,226

Number of days that Victoria ruled (that's 63 years, seven months and two days)



10

Number of British prime ministers during Victoria's reign

350 MILLION

Number of letters being sent every year in the decade following the introduction of the penny post



121.3 MILLION TONS

Output of coal per annum from British mines by 1870



16

MILLION

The population of England, Scotland and Wales in 1837



60,000-70,000

Number of deaths from tuberculosis in each decade of Victoria's reign

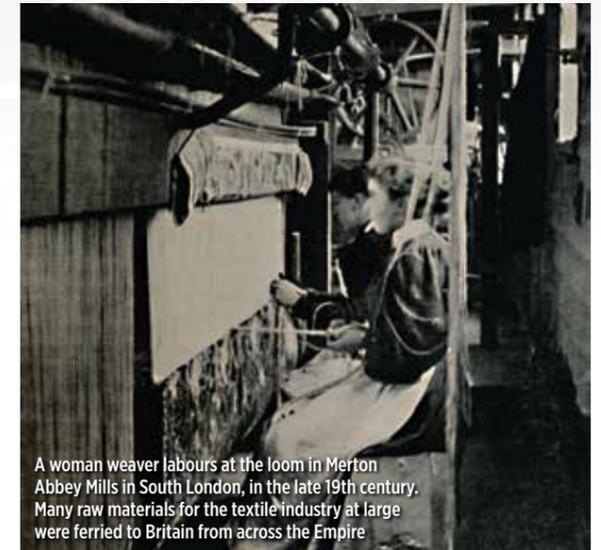


7,000 MILES

Distance of railway line that had been laid across England by 1850



These men are singing 'MacDermott's Warsong' in 1877, a bellicose ballad boasting of Britain's military prowess that contains the phrase 'by jingo' – and later led to the coining of phrase 'jingoism'



A woman weaver labours at the loom in Merton Abbey Mills in South London, in the late 19th century. Many raw materials for the textile industry at large were ferried to Britain from across the Empire



A Victorian parlour – equivalent to the modern living room – decorated with authentic items

Q: The Victorians are often seen as being prudish and disapproving. Is this a fair assessment?

A: When people talk about Victorian values, they're really talking about a middle-class view of values – hard work, self-improvement, that type of thing. And these are the sorts of values we associate with the Victorian era.

I think the idea of Victorians being a bit prudish is accurate to some extent, in that we have conduct and advice manuals from the era which put forward views of acceptable behaviour, but perhaps not as much as we might expect. We also have to understand that scientific knowledge and information about things like sexuality and menstruation were much less advanced in the 19th century than they are today. So, there were a lot of myths around certain behaviours.

There has been a lot of research recently on homosexuality in the Victorian period, for example, which indicates that homosexual desire was actually pretty tolerated until the 1880s, when the laws changed and homosexual acts of 'gross indecency' were criminalised, making it easier to prosecute.

Another area of misunderstanding is prostitution, something we assume would have horrified Victorian sensitivities. Obviously, there was great moral outrage against prostitution, but for many working-class communities, it seems women sort of drifted in and out of prostitution depending on their circumstances. So, communities would often tolerate women who engaged in sex work, and viewed them as simply trying to survive rather than as 'career' prostitutes. So, like many other elements of the Victorian era, it's a contradictory picture in many ways. ◉

Q: How did the Victorians view the people and places they were colonising?

A: Britain's desire to expand its empire was really seen as a type of 'civilising' mission – a mission to 'save' these populations from tribalism and paganism and that sort of thing, a way to export British values of democracy, liberalism and Christianity. And as photography starts taking off, people can actually see some of these exotic places that previously they had only heard about – as a result they become more real to people. But it's still a very constructed view of the British heading out to 'save' these populations.

Q: How aware would ordinary people have been of Britain's influence overseas?

A: The main sort of source of information for most people would have been industry – Britain's textile districts were dependent on raw materials being brought into Britain from the Empire to fuel the nation's industrial development.

There were also a number of wars and conflicts during the 19th century, such as the South African Wars and the Crimean War (see p38), which would have captured the public's imagination and inspired patriotism and even what's known as jingoism – a sort of glorying in the British Empire. So yes, I think there was a reasonable sense of what the Empire was providing and particularly its

“Britain's desire to expand its empire was really seen as a type of 'civilising' mission – to 'save' these populations”

importance to the British economy. There was also a sort of professional exodus from Britain in the 19th century, as people left Britain to settle in the Empire, in places like New Zealand, Canada, South Africa and India – people who worked in the civil service or fought with the army, or industrialists looking to exploit resources and territories overseas.

THE VICTORIANS AND THE EMPIRE

Queen Victoria's reign saw Britain dominate the world stage, spreading its power, influence and beliefs across the known world

WORDS: NIGE TASSELL

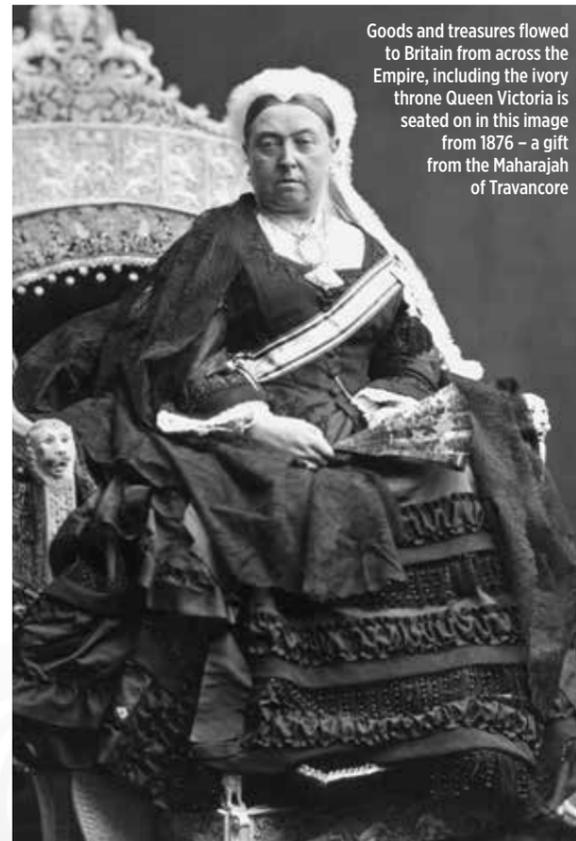
When Victoria ascended the throne in 1837, the British Empire was a loose assortment of colonies mostly accrued for reasons of trade. By the time of her death nearly 64 years later, the Empire had expanded to become a coherent and dominant show of economic and political strength. As head of state, Victoria had presided over nearly a quarter of the world's population.

At the turn of the 20th century, the Union flag was raised right across the map: from the farthest reaches of North America, across the Caribbean, over large swathes of Africa, throughout the Indian subcontinent and as far distant as Australia and New Zealand. The cliché was that Britain's influence, power and control was so far-reaching, so all-encompassing, that the Sun never set on its empire. And it was true.

"The loss of America in the 18th century, following the American War of Independence, had been an immense blow to Britain's confidence," says Sarah Richardson, professor of history at the University of Warwick, "and at Victoria's accession, the British Empire was in a state of flux. But by the end of the 19th century, Britain's existing empire had expanded beyond recognition, and colonisation had become a moral mission to share and spread British values across the globe."

Powered by the Industrial Revolution, which had put itself at the forefront of global manufacturing, Britain was eager both to develop new markets for its goods and to secure easy access to raw materials from elsewhere in the world. The expansion of Britain's industries, and the hugely positive effect on its economy,

was dependent on the expansion of its empire. The result was a complex tangle of trade, politics and governance, with the traffic – both of goods and people – going in either direction. Britain needed raw materials and cheap labour; in return, it offered its colonies technical advances (such as the railway) and societal improvements, such as medicine



Goods and treasures flowed to Britain from across the Empire, including the ivory throne Queen Victoria is seated on in this image from 1876 – a gift from the Maharajah of Travancore

and education. The latter, though, often came with the imposition of a certain way of life – and occasionally a certain level of brutality.

Expanding in the manner in which it did during the 19th century, the British Empire was significantly aided by the comparative weakness of other imperial European powers. Having defeated France in the Napoleonic Wars (1803–15), Britain found itself unrivalled when it came to both military and economic power. For the next 100 years, it encountered very little military conflict between the great powers; the century between 1815 and 1914 became known as the *Pax Britannica* – Latin for 'British Peace'.

A TUDOR DREAM REALISED?

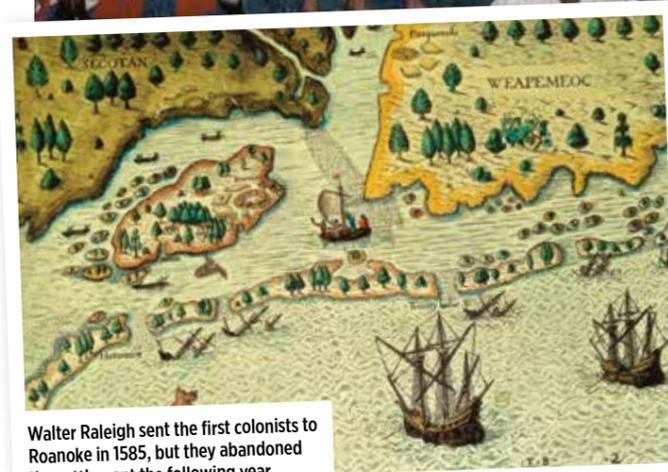
The notion of a British Empire was not a 19th-century one. It had its origins in the early days of the House of Tudor when, at the end of the 15th century, Henry VII commissioned explorers to seek out the most efficient way of reaching India by sea. One such explorer, the Italian John Cabot, inadvertently landed in North America in 1497, possibly coming ashore at Newfoundland, Labrador or Cape Breton Island.

By the time Henry VII's granddaughter, Elizabeth I, reached the throne, English foreign policy was largely based on defence rather than expansion. Nonetheless, in 1584 Walter Raleigh was granted a royal charter to establish a settlement in North America, sending a group of settlers to Roanoke in Virginia the following year to set up a colony. It was the first attempt at the English colonisation of what would later become the United States.

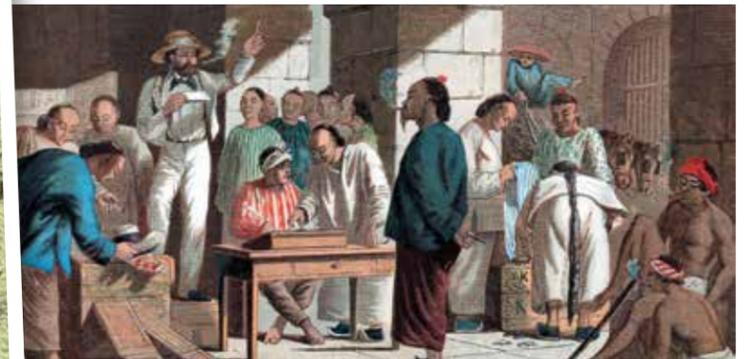
In 1600, Elizabeth granted a royal



An official of the British East India Company rides on an elephant with an escort; prior to the British Raj, the company effectively ruled India



Walter Raleigh sent the first colonists to Roanoke in 1585, but they abandoned the settlement the following year



British goods are sold in Canton (now Guangzhou) in this 1858 print. Britain gained access to Chinese trade through gunboat diplomacy – the two Opium Wars

charter to the East India Company, with the express purpose of trading extensively in the Indian Ocean region and beyond, an area where both the Portuguese and the Dutch already had well-established trade networks. The East India Company became extraordinarily successful, expanding rapidly to the point where it was controlling half of the world's trade.

The East India Company was no mere commercial body, though; it blurred the distinction between trade and politics. By the turn of the 19th century – and aided by its own private army, whose number was twice that of the British Army – it effectively ruled, through the installation of puppet leaders, a very

“The East India Company was no mere commercial body: it blurred the distinction between trade and politics”

large proportion of India. The company also played a huge part in opening China up to trade, thanks to its cultivation of opium in Bengal, and its subsequent export to the port of Canton, which led to the two Opium Wars between Britain and China. The upshot of the First Opium War was the ceding of Hong Kong in 1842, a territory that would become a

keystone of the British Empire for many subsequent decades.

Speaking in the House of Commons in 1833, the MP Thomas Babington Macaulay observed that the East India Company's apparent *raison d'être* – trade – had become “auxiliary to its sovereignty”. However, it was living on borrowed time. After the Indian Rebellion, which began in 1857, the company was abolished, with the subcontinent coming under the direct control of the crown – known as the British Raj.

“When Victoria came to the throne, Britain's most important colony was India. Victoria herself became Empress of India in 1877 and she viewed the

KEY EVENTS IN THE 19TH CENTURY EXPANSION OF THE BRITISH EMPIRE

Across a span of just 100 years, British influence spread rapidly across Africa, Asia and the Pacific

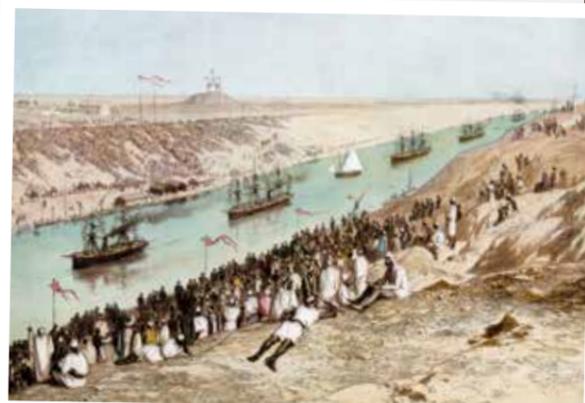


←	1802	Ceylon (present-day Sri Lanka) is declared a crown colony
←	1808	The crown colony of Sierra Leone is established
←	1813	The islands of Malta and Gozo are formally annexed
←	1831	The colony of British Guyana is formed
←	1841	The colony of New Zealand is formed
←	1843	Hong Kong becomes a crown colony
←	1849	Vancouver Island becomes a crown colony
←	1858	The British crown assumes the East India Company's governmental authority in India
←	1867	Three former colonies (New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, and Canada) unite to form the new nation of Canada
←	1874	Fiji becomes a British colony
←	1877	The British High Commission for the Western Pacific Islands is created
←	1878	Cyprus is occupied by the British
←	1881-1919	The Scramble for Africa: Britain controls territories in Africa stretching from Cairo to Cape Town (see map opposite)
←	1887	The Maldives, an archipelago of 2,000 coral islands, are taken under British protection
←	1889	Trinidad and Tobago become a joint colony
←	1892	The Falkland Islands become a British colony
←	1896	The Federated Malay States are formed
←	1899	The emirate of Kuwait becomes a British Protectorate
←	1901	The six separate British self-governing colonies of Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria, Tasmania, South Australia, and Western Australia form the Commonwealth of Australia

Hong Kong became a valuable trading post for Britain



Mines like this one in Kimberley, South Africa, offered up one of the continent's most prized resources: diamonds



Crowds gathered at the inauguration of the Suez Canal, a prized shortcut in the journey to India

country as the jewel in her crown", says Richardson. "And it is really in India that you can see the foundations being laid for what's often known as a 'moral imperative' for an empire – the idea that Britain had a moral obligation to bring its values of democracy and industry and free trade and all of those sorts of things to other countries. The idea of 'civilising' the people they ruled was very important to the Victorians."

EXPANDING BOUNDARIES

Britain's stronghold in south Asia, both commercially and politically, was further strengthened with the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869, the body of water that offered a dramatically speedier passage to India. In 1882, Britain took control of the canal from the French, a move that precipitated an expansion of the empire's boundaries. Starting in the early 1880s, the so-called 'Scramble for Africa' saw the imperial tentacles stretch deep into that continent.

Having already colonised large parts of West Africa – including modern-day Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Ghana and the Gambia – earlier in the century, Britain effectively took control of Egypt, the country that the canal ran through. From there, expansion spread in a southerly direction, through Sudan, Kenya, Uganda and down into southern Africa. By 1902 and the end of the Second Boer War, the map of Britain's African colonies and protectorates traced a huge swathe across the continent, from Port Said in the north to the Cape of Good Hope on the southern tip.

Africa was rich in raw materials and natural resources, such as gold and diamonds. In return, it offered a substantial market for British-

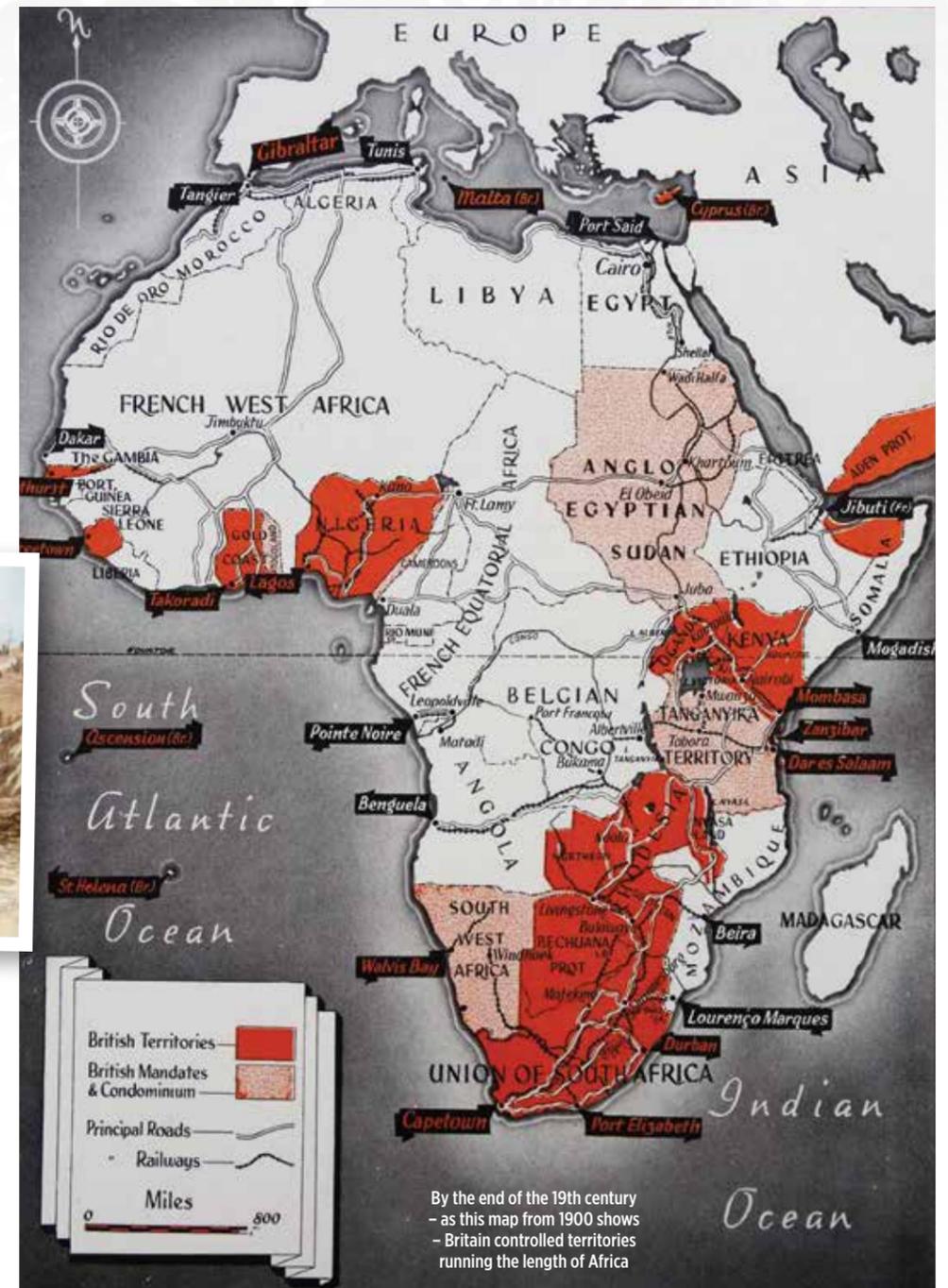
produced goods – as did the rest of the empire, of course.

The Empire's expansion wasn't taken as a given; colonies were often far from acquiescent when it came to coming under the rule of the British crown. Uprisings were a recurring motif of the Victorian imperial age, whether it was the Indian Rebellion that ultimately did for the East India Company, or the First Taranaki War in New Zealand (1860-61), or Jamaica's Morant Bay Rebellion of 1865.

EDGING TOWARDS AN END

Certain colonies that had been staples of empire for many decades, and which were comparatively peaceful places, were rewarded with 'dominion' status, making them semi-independent. Canada was the first of these, in 1867, with Australia following suit in 1901. However, and certainly in the early case of Canada, this new status was decidedly limited. London retained the right to overrule decisions made across the legislative, executive and judicial branches of government.

After its peak during the Victorian era,



By the end of the 19th century – as this map from 1900 shows – Britain controlled territories running the length of Africa

“Colonies were often far from acquiescent when it came to coming under the rule of the British crown”

the Empire began to recede during the 20th century, with the British economy significantly crippled by the cost of two world wars. Many of the colonies, protectorates and dominions embarked on a programme of national self-

determination. In 1957, ten years after independence had been granted to India, Ghana, too, removed itself from colonial control, followed by the rest of Britain's African colonies. Across the Atlantic, throughout the 1960s, '70s and '80s, the various islands that made up the British West Indies also extricated themselves from direct rule by London.

From its height during Queen Victoria's long reign, when a quarter of the world's landmass was under the Crown, the British Empire had entered its twilight. ☉

FOR QUEEN & COUNTRY

Victoria's reign was marked with conquests, invasions and battles

WORDS: EMMA SLATTERY WILLIAMS

Throughout the 19th century, the British Empire continued to grow, though at a cost – there is not one decade of Victoria's reign that did not see some form of conflict in the Empire. During her time on the

throne, British and Imperial soldiers faced battle across India, Africa, South-East Asia and Eastern Europe. Here, we examine four of the most famous conflicts of the era, which continue to resonate – whether for their privations or political implications.

DID YOU KNOW?
POWER OF THE PRESS
 The Crimean War was the first in the world to be covered in newspapers – those back in Britain saw images of battle for the first time. This helped spread news of the work of nurses like Florence Nightingale and Mary Seacole.

THE SPARK THAT LIT THE FLAME
 The Indian Rebellion began when a rumour spread that the cartridges of the Bengal Army's new rifle – a Pattern 1853 Enfield – had been coated in pig and cow fat. Since cartridges had to be opened by mouth, the fat coating was offensive to both Hindus and Muslims. It was the jailbreaking of 85 men of the 3rd Bengal Light Cavalry – who had refused to use these cartridges – on 10 May 1857 that sparked a wider rebellion amongst the sepoys.

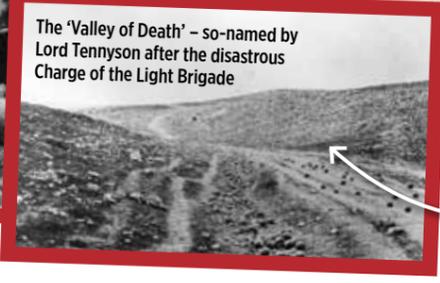
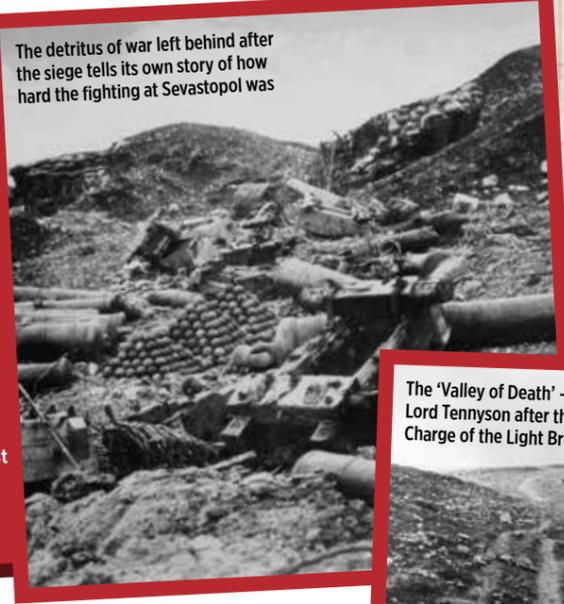
THE INDIAN REBELLION (1857-58)
 The rebellion started with Indian soldiers against their commanders – though unsuccessful, it bolstered calls for independence

Since the 17th century, the East India Company had gradually been carving out territory in India, ultimately becoming the country's leading power at the expense of existing Indian rulers. In 1857, rebellion broke out among the Company's *sepoys* (Indian infantry) in Meerut – ostensibly over gun cartridges (see box left) but fuelled by wider resentments about the erosion of Indian culture – which rapidly spread to Delhi and beyond. The rebellion was quashed and the East India Company was nationalised; direct rule was imposed over India, ushering in the British Raj.

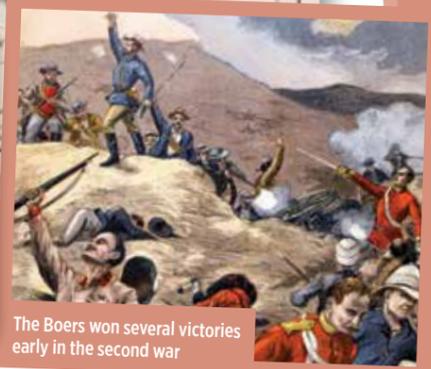


THE CRIMEAN WAR (1853-56)
 A conflict that changed the control of power within Europe – weakening Russia

In 1853, Russia invaded the Danubian Principalities (modern Romania), causing the Ottoman Empire (a state and caliphate that controlled much of Southeastern Europe, Western Asia, and Northern Africa) under Sultan Abdulmejid I, to declare war. Britain and France, wary of Russian expansion, joined the Ottomans, taking part in an 11-month siege of Sevastopol on the Crimean Peninsula. Thousands of soldiers died from diseases such as typhoid and dysentery and the harsh winter, as well as the brutal battles of Alma, Inkerman and Balaclava. Peace was finally achieved when Austria threatened to join against Russia – the Ottoman Empire maintained hold of its territories, and Russia was forbidden from keeping a navy on the Black Sea.



A DOOMED COMMAND
 During the Crimean Battle of Balaclava, the infamous Charge of the Light Brigade saw around 670 British cavalrymen charge headlong into Russian fire with little chance of survival – all due to a miscommunication of orders. The disastrous incident would later inspire poet Lord Tennyson and even heavy metal band Iron Maiden.



SOUTH AFRICAN WARS
 (Sometimes known as the Boer Wars; 1880-81 & 1899-1902)

During the late 19th century, Britain tried to gain control of modern-day South Africa

In 1877, tensions between the Boers (descendants of Dutch, German and Huguenot settlers) and the British became strained after the British annexed the Transvaal (the British name for the Boers' South African Republic), and erupted into war in December 1880. The fighting was short-lived, with the Boers securing victory (and partial independence) in March – although it remained under British suzerainty. Relations soured again in 1899, a result of the discovery of gold in the region. A longer, bloodier war followed, the last two years of which the Boers fought as a guerilla campaign. The British responded by rounding up Boer women and children into camps (where many died of starvation) and deployed 'scorched earth' tactics – Boer territory was deliberately and systematically devastated to deprive the guerrilla fighters of food and shelter. The Boers eventually conceded; the treaty that followed ended Boer independence.

MORE WARS

Some of the Victorian era's other conflicts



AT LEAST 400,000
 Number of soldiers believed to have been involved in the Second South African War from Britain and the Empire, including up to 30,000 black Africans.

Queen Victoria lost her husband, Albert, two years after this 1859 painting was completed. She famously remained in mourning for the rest of her life and never remarried



VICTORIA: QUEEN, WIFE, MOTHER

Victoria and Albert created a new kind of royal family, free from scandal and extramarital affairs, but life behind closed doors wasn't always plain sailing

WORDS: EMMA SLATTERY WILLIAMS

Queen Victoria is one of Britain's most iconic monarchs. Her 63-year rule surpassed any of her predecessors and was only surpassed by Queen Elizabeth II in 2015. Her rule saw Britain and its empire undergo massive change – physically, in terms of its size, and socially, too, as society was brought into the modern age.

As well as her long reign, Victoria shares another similarity with Elizabeth II, as professor Sarah Richardson explains – neither was meant to be queen. “Like our own queen, Elizabeth II, Victoria grew up not expecting to inherit the throne. It was only when Elizabeth’s

uncle, Edward VIII, abdicated that her father, George, became king. It was pretty much the same with Victoria; as the daughter of a fourth son, it wasn't likely that she would ever become queen.”

In 1817, a succession crisis loomed when Princess Charlotte, the only legitimate daughter of the Prince Regent (the future George IV), died during childbirth. George III had 15 children, but, by 1817, only one had produced a legitimate heir. The following year, George III's fourth son, Prince Edward, Duke of Kent, hurriedly married Princess Victoire of Saxe-Coburg-Saalfeld (later the Duchess of Kent), and Victoria was born on 24 May 1819.

TROUBLED CHILDHOOD

Prince Edward died when Victoria was less than a year old, and she grew up under the care of her mother and Sir John Conroy, her father's former equerry. Victoria's childhood was far from happy – Conroy and Victoire kept her under strict governance in Kensington Palace, away from other children and the royal court; she even had to be accompanied down the stairs in case an accident befell her. Hoping to wield power through the future queen, the ambitious Conroy attempted to persuade Victoria – and others – that she wasn't fit to rule. If Victoria had become queen before she was legally an adult, then a regent would have been appointed, likely the Duchess of Kent, who was under Conroy's control. To Conroy's dismay, though, Victoria celebrated her 18th birthday a month before she became queen.

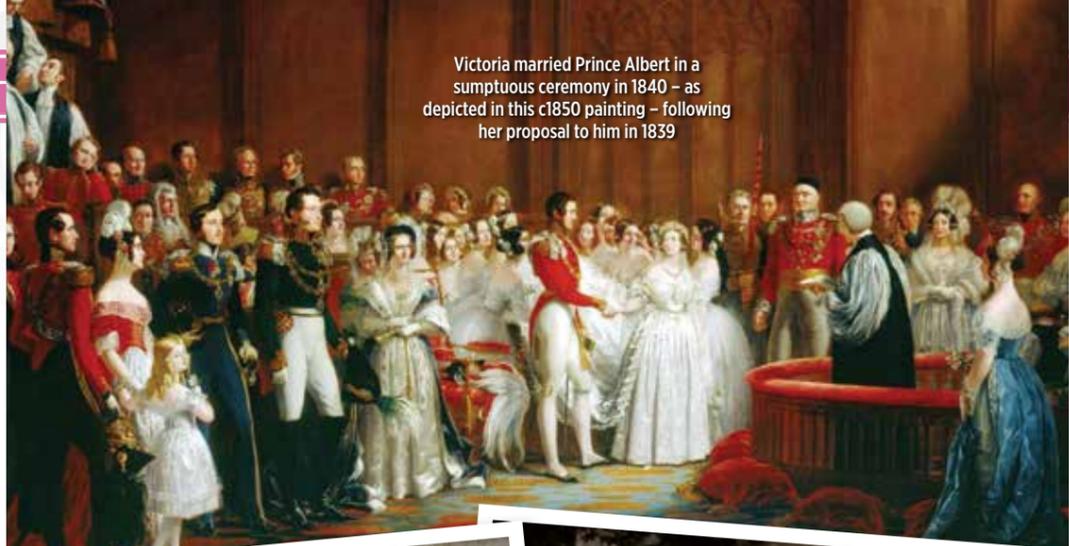
In the early hours of 20 June 1837, Victoria was told that her uncle,

MAIN: Princess Victoria with her mother, Victoire, the Duchess of Kent

BELOW: Prince Edward, Victoria's father, was the fourth son of King George III



Victoria married Prince Albert in a sumptuous ceremony in 1840 – as depicted in this c1850 painting – following her proposal to him in 1839



◀ William IV, had died and that she was now Queen of Great Britain and Ireland. One of Victoria's first acts was to remove her mother from the bedroom they had shared for the young queen's entire life.

MAKING A MARK

As a woman thrust into what was at the time firmly a man's world, Victoria relied on the male figures who surrounded her. Her first prime minister, Lord Melbourne, became a favourite and father-figure to the young queen, advising her on the intricacies of politics and government that she did not fully comprehend.

This was a theme that continued throughout her life, as Richardson points out: "Victoria was quite reliant on people guiding her – in the early part of her reign, she leaned on Prime Minister Lord Melbourne. But although she did rely on advice from male advisers, Victoria knew her own mind, and her own position. She also wanted to be able to stamp her authority on the role of the monarch. She was quite determined."

This determination was demonstrated during the Bedchamber Crisis of 1839. When Whig prime minister Lord Melbourne resigned, his successor, Robert Peel – a Tory – demanded that Victoria dismiss her Whig ladies-in-waiting in favour of Tory replacements. Victoria refused. In retaliation, Peel refused to form a government and become the country's prime minister. To resolve matters, Lord Melbourne was persuaded to stay on for another term.



LOVE AND DUTY

It wasn't long before thoughts turned to Victoria's marriage. Both her mother and her uncle, Leopold I of Belgium, wanted her to marry her first cousin, Prince Albert of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha. Victoria had first met Albert when she was 17, and he hadn't bowled her over. Further meetings changed her mind about the match and they were married in February 1840.

ABOVE LEFT: Prime Minister Lord Melbourne (shown in this c1895 print) was a strong influence during Victoria's early reign



ABOVE RIGHT: Victoria and Albert were seen as the model Victorian family

Victoria kept a journal throughout most of her life, and her diary entries show that she and Albert had an affectionate marriage – although tempestuous. Victoria was quick to anger, and Albert resented his lower status, both in the household and in the marriage.

Albert was very interested in politics and soon took over the role that Melbourne had once performed. "Once



This portrait was commissioned for Victoria's Diamond Jubilee in 1897. She was still in mourning and wore a portrait of Albert in her bracelet

"She wanted to be able to stamp her authority on the role of the monarch. She was quite determined"

Victoria married Albert, he acted as her political adviser; he was much more politically aware than she was," says Richardson. Albert was also fascinated with social reform (he supported the abolition of slavery for example) and innovation, spearheading the Great Exhibition of 1851. This grand spectacle championed Britain as a world leader in industry and attracted exhibitors and visitors from all over the world.

MOTHER TO THE NATION

Pregnancy was one aspect of marriage that Victoria did not relish. In total, she and Albert had nine children, all of whom survived childhood, and it's thought the queen may have suffered from post-natal depression after some of these pregnancies. Victoria also disliked the fact that motherhood took her away from her role as queen, with Albert taking over some of her duties.

While Victoria is often seen as a rather distant parent who herself admitted to a dislike of babies, Albert took a great interest in his children's development and education, holding them to very high standards. Both were extremely devoted parents in their own ways, and together Victoria, Albert and their children became the epitome of

the model Victorian family. Victoria's predecessors had often been plagued by scandal, with illegitimate children and mistresses, and she was keen to restore the monarchy's reputation.

But in 1861, Victoria's world crumbled when Albert died, probably from typhoid. The queen went into a period of deep mourning and wasn't seen in public for a number of years. She continued to wear black for the rest of her reign, but returned to public life in 1872 – her first public appearance in over 10 years was a thanksgiving service for her son, Edward, Prince of Wales, who had recovered from a bout of typhoid.

During Victoria's long absence, republican sentiment grew, but much of this was put to rest towards the end of her reign as she emerged from her seclusion. The celebrations for her golden and diamond jubilees in 1887 and 1897 respectively, saw the whole nation enjoy festivities and parties.

Queen Victoria died on 22 January 1901, at the impressive age of 81. She was buried with a plaster cast of Albert's hand as well as a lock of her manservant – and rumoured lover – John Brown's hair (see box on opposite page). She had succeeded in restoring the royal family's reputation as a family to admire and emulate. ☉

GRANDMOTHER OF EUROPE

Victoria's descendants were scattered across Europe, connecting royal dynasties

Victoria was certainly a matchmaker with her nine children and 42 grandchildren – ensuring dynastic alliances across Europe and earning her the title of the 'grandmother of Europe'. Her descendants were married into the monarchies of Denmark, Russia, Germany, Spain and Norway.

The queen's eldest son, the future Edward VII, had a difficult upbringing. As heir to the throne, both Victoria and Albert expected a lot of him, but he didn't excel academically. As he grew up, Edward gained a reputation as a playboy and represented a new breed of the fashionable elite. Two weeks before his own death, Albert had reprimanded Edward for having a scandalous affair with an actress. Albert returned home and soon fell ill and died; Victoria would hold Edward partly responsible for his father's death.

Victoria's eldest daughter, Vicky, the Princess Royal, married Prince Frederick of Prussia, and their first son became Kaiser Wilhelm II of Germany. During World War I, cousin was pitted against cousin – Wilhelm even suggested that World War I may not have happened if Victoria was still alive, as she would not have allowed it to happen.

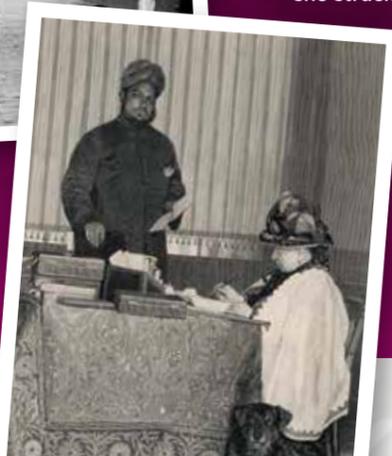
One of Victoria's favourite granddaughters, Princess Alix, the daughter of Princess Alice, married the future Tsar Nicholas II of Russia. She – along with her husband and children – met a horrific end after the Russian Revolution when they were assassinated by the Bolsheviks (see our feature on the Romanovs on page 70).



Victoria and her family in 1894. Kaiser Wilhelm II sits in the front row, far left, with Tsar Nicholas II behind, and the future Edward VII behind him



ABOVE: John Brown brought Victoria out of her shell with pony rides at Balmoral



RIGHT: Abdul Karim taught Victoria to read and write Urdu

LIFE AFTER ALBERT

Victoria found companionship with two male servants after Albert's death

Albert's untimely death caused Victoria to withdraw from the world. However, there were two male servants with whom she struck up notable friendships.

John Brown worked at the Scottish royal residence Balmoral, and encouraged the queen to come out of her seclusion for pony rides. He fulfilled a role that Victoria had lost when Albert died, as Richardson suggests: "John Brown played the role of confidante, of somebody Victoria could

unload on. And I think that was probably very important for her, because she never remarried."

In 1877, Victoria officially received the title of Empress of India and became fascinated with the country. In 1887, an Indian servant, Abdul Karim, became a particular favourite of hers. He taught her to read and write in Urdu and introduced her to curry – a dish she became very fond of. Victoria gave Karim the title of *Munshi* (teacher), and took advice from him on Indian affairs. The closeness between the queen and her Indian servant caused uproar and disapproval in the royal household; when Edward VII came to the throne he sent Karim back to India and burned much of the pair's correspondence.



The middle classes increasingly indulged in leisure activities, such as this family on a rowing boat, c1865



A son sits by his drunken parents c1880. Squalor was rife in city slum housing



In 1900, Medland Hall, London, rented out 'coffin' beds for four pennies a night

VICTORIAN DAILY LIFE

As the rich got richer on the spoils of the empire, the working classes suffered grinding poverty

WORDS: CHARLOTTE HODGMAN

The Victorian era is widely regarded as a golden age of innovation and industry, when humanity made great leaps in technology and thinking. But what was life like for 'ordinary' Victorians whose daily struggle for survival was far away from the sweeping progress and prosperity? "Pretty grim", answers Professor Sarah Richardson. "Life expectancy at birth for the average Victorian was about 42, and more than 25 per cent of children died before their fifth birthday. Disease was rife – there were four major outbreaks of cholera alone between 1832 and 1866. And although, in general, standards of living did improve over the period, a third of the

population was still living in poverty at the end of the 19th century. "Of course, there was some light on the horizon – universal education came in during the 1870s, there were improvements in health and sanitation, and also the introduction of leisure pursuits such as football, libraries, music halls and the like. So it wasn't all doom and gloom, but life wasn't a positive story for most Victorian working-class people."

Child workers, like this street peddler, were a common sight in Victorian times



GRIM CITY LIVING

Between 1800 and 1850, England's population doubled, and as factories sprung up across the country, churning out the products of Britain's imperial expansion, and new technology meant fewer farm workers were needed, thousands flocked from the countryside to the city in search of work. The cost of accommodation rocketed as demand increased, and many families were forced to live side by side in slum housing – hastily built houses, known as tenements, divided into individual rooms in which entire families would live. Conditions were terrible: many houses flooded or collapsed, and sanitation was non-existent. Lodging, or 'doss', houses were common, renting out cheap beds for the night. For the homeless, an alternative to sleeping on the streets or entering the workhouse was a 'penny sit-up' where, for the price of a penny, you could sit – but not lie – on a bench for the night. Two pence could see you upgraded to a bench with a rope strung up to lean over, while four pennies would pay for a wooden coffin

in which to bed down.

Poor children fared little better. Until 1842, when new laws were introduced which prevented children under 10 working underground, children made up 25 per cent of the workforce in mines, factories, and workshops. Infants as young as four could be found deep underground, holding open ventilator doors for coal wagons to pass through, usually pushed by other children. Britain's factories, too, employed thousands of child workers – smaller than adults, they could crawl beneath moving machines to clean and tidy. It's small wonder that accidents and deaths were so common.

If you were lucky enough to have been born into a middle-class family, though, – a social class of merchants, bankers, doctors and the like, which emerged and grew rapidly during this period – life would have been easier. As the Empire expanded and industry grew, the newly rich enjoyed the sorts of luxuries once afforded only by the super wealthy. Domestic servants could be hired, shopping trips taken and even excursions to the seaside were possible. The Victorian era was a golden age for the middle class. ☉

LIFE IN THE WORKHOUSE

The Victorian period saw a dramatic shake-up of existing forms of social welfare, and the expansion of one of the era's most notorious institutions

One of the biggest changes to the lives of the poor took place in 1834, when, faced with the return of unemployed or injured servicemen from the Napoleonic Wars and a national poor relief bill that had quadrupled between 1795 and 1815 – from £2 million to £8 million – the British government passed the Poor Law Amendment Act.

The new system of poor relief was now administered by Unions – made up of groups of parishes – which would each operate a workhouse. Outdoor relief (money or assistance issued without requiring an individual to enter an institution) was mostly abolished: for the able-bodied poor, it was now the workhouse or nothing.

The workhouse was designed to be a deterrent, and life inside its walls was not supposed to be any easier or more pleasant than life as one of the lowest-paid workers outside in the community – the decision to enter was not one that was taken lightly. After being admitted to the workhouse, personal clothes were placed in storage, and inmates were issued with uniforms, given baths and subjected to medical examinations. Families were separated, as were the able and infirm. Men were put to work, performing physical labour such as bone crushing, stone breaking or oakum picking, while women were expected to take on domestic chores, such as cooking, laundry and sewing. Children, too, lived separately and were only permitted to see their parents for a few hours a week.

Food was basic and sparse. Inmates were usually provided with between 137 and 182 ounces of food per week, in addition to soup

and gruel. At Andover Union Workhouse in Hampshire, inmates were so hungry that they were found gnawing at the old, mouldy animal bones they were meant to be crushing for fertiliser.

But entering the workhouse did not necessarily mean staying there forever. Many inmates who were employed in seasonal work used the workhouse to get through periods of hardship and unemployment.

One enduring problem faced by Victorian Poor Law Unions was how to assist the homeless poor, for whom no provision had been made in the 1834 act. What's more, Unions were only permitted to serve people who resided permanently within the Union boundaries. In 1840, casual blocks were introduced to workhouses, where homeless people could stay for one night per 30-day period. Although it varied from place to place, homeless people were generally subjected to harsher treatment than the so-called 'deserving poor' – those unable to work because they were sick, old or disabled.

The workhouse era is often seen to have officially ended in 1930, when the 643 Boards of Guardians in England and Wales were abolished. Many former workhouse buildings were destroyed, converted into public hospitals, or turned into museums – in remembrance of those Victorians who had nowhere else to turn.

DID YOU KNOW?
FOOD FOR THOUGHT
In 1900, a major overhaul was made to the workhouse diet, and Unions were allowed to create their own weekly menus from an approved list of about 50 dishes. Inmates could now tuck into Irish stew, pasties and roly-poly pudding.



Workhouses were meant to be unpleasant. Inmates worked hard (like these women hanging out laundry c1880). Reforms in 1900 improved the variety of workhouse food, although meals were still eaten in silence (right)

SEVEN EPIC FEATS OF IMAGINATION...

The Victorians were an inventive bunch, whose innovations have spread around the world

WORDS: EMMA SLATTERY WILLIAMS

THE RAILWAY

Steam locomotives were introduced in the late 18th century, but it was the Victorian era that saw the railways used to their full potential. Heavy investment was put into creating new lines, and by the end of Victoria's reign millions of people had become regular rail users. Being able to move goods around the Britain boosted industrialisation, and seaside towns thrived as holidaymakers flocked to their shores. As well as creating a rail network that could transport people across Britain, in 1863 London became the first place in the world to boast an underground railway system, allowing commuters and tourists to enjoy swifter journeys across the capital.



The broad gauge Iron Duke locomotive arrives at Chippenham Station, Wiltshire in 1847

KITCHEN GADGETS

The humble but ever-useful potato peeler and can opener were both created during the 19th century, as was the hand-cranked ice cream maker – a particular favourite. Thanks to advances in mass production during this time, such handy kitchen tools became affordable for many more Victorian households.

TELECOMS

Keeping in touch with people became much easier during the Victorian era with the development of both the telegraph and the telephone. In 1837, British inventors William Fothergill Cooke and Charles Wheatstone were granted a patent for an electric telegraph that passed communications through wires. Elsewhere, on the other side of the Atlantic, Samuel Morse was developing a communication machine that used dots and dashes. In 1851, a telegraph cable was successfully installed in the English Channel and over the next few decades these cables spanned continents and oceans – Queen Victoria would send the first transatlantic telegraph to US President James Buchanan in 1858. In the US, in 1876, Scottish inventor Alexander Graham Bell patented his telephone, and by the early 20th century wireless telephone sets were being installed in homes across the world.



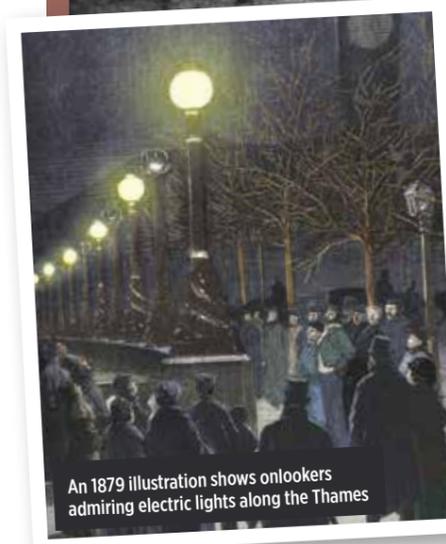
This early Bell telephone was used in a demonstration for Queen Victoria

PHOTOGRAPHY

During the 1830s and 40s, the techniques used in photography were developed, with British inventor William Henry Fox Talbot successfully creating a usable negative using a camera by 1840. For the first time, people across Britain could see the face of their queen and the celebrities of the day. By the latter part of Victoria's reign, photography studios were popping up ready to capture family portraits.



William Henry Fox Talbot (right) adjusts the lens on his camera at his Reading photography studio

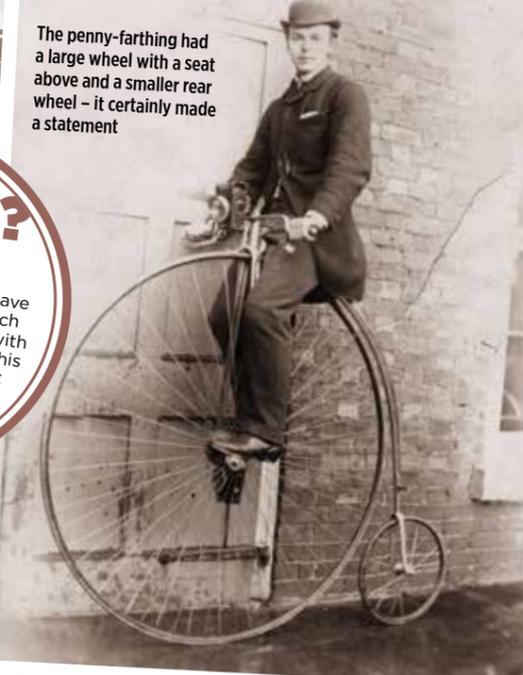


An 1879 illustration shows onlookers admiring electric lights along the Thames

ELECTRIC LIGHTING

When Victoria became queen, candles had already been replaced by gas lighting. But gas wasn't ideal, as it could cause headaches as well as explosions. Electric lighting was developed in the 1870s by British inventor Joseph Swan, and 1879 saw a Newcastle street become the first in the world to be lit by electric lights. It wouldn't be until after World War I, though, that most homes were electrically illuminated.

DID YOU KNOW?
FULL EXPOSURE
The oldest surviving photograph is believed to have been taken in 1826 by French inventor Nicéphore Niépce with a camera obscura. Showing his country estate, it's thought that the exposure would have taken a number of hours.



The penny-farthing had a large wheel with a seat above and a smaller rear wheel – it certainly made a statement

THE BICYCLE

In the early 19th century, a precursor to the bicycle was devised by German inventor Karl Drais – his *Laufmaschine* had no pedals and was pushed along by the rider's feet. The penny-farthing and its mismatched wheels became popular from the 1870s, but it wasn't until 1885, when John Kemp Starley created his safety bicycle, that we see a design that resembles the modern bike. With a chain and rear-wheel drive it was far more stable than its predecessors.

THE STAMP

Before the invention of the stamp in 1840, the British postal system was unreliable, and recipients had to pay to receive a letter – if they didn't pay, they didn't receive their post. The first adhesive stamp, the Penny Black, featured a picture of Queen Victoria, and meant that the sender had prepaid for the letter. At just a penny, the stamp revolutionised the postal system and made it more widely affordable to send post around Britain.



The famous Penny Black stamp. Post boxes were also introduced as part of postal reforms

...AND ONE EPIC FAIL

GREY SQUIRELS

Not every Victorian innovation was a success and our 19th-century forebears are responsible for several bad ideas, including the introduction of the American grey squirrel. The first verifiable record of a pair of greys being released in the UK is in Cheshire, in 1876. Before long, Britain's smaller, native red squirrels were overrun and can now only be found on the Isle of Wight, Brownsea Island, Anglesey, a few pine forests in the north of England and the Scottish Highlands.



GETTY IMAGES X8

VICTORIAN VITTLES

Some Victorian fare is still popular today, but there are other dishes that remain very much of their time

WORDS: EMMA SLATTERY WILLIAMS



MARROW TOAST

Bone marrow is the spongy tissue found inside some bones – might not sound appetising, but the Victorians loved it, especially when spread on toast. Even Queen Victoria herself is said to have been a fan, according to former royal chef Charles Elme Francatelli in his book *The Cook's Guide, and Housekeeper's & Butler's Assistant*.



A SUNDAY ROAST

We have the Victorians to thank for this quintessential British trend of roast meat, Yorkshire puddings and all the trimmings on a Sunday. Meat was not a luxury that most could afford to eat daily, so Sunday became the day to indulge. The joint was put in the oven in the morning and would be ready by the time the family returned from church.



CURRY

Indian food is often ranked as Britain's favourite cuisine, and we have Queen Victoria to thank for it. The East India Company brought curry to Britain and the first curry houses opened in the early 1800s – although not all approved of this 'foreign' food. The Queen took a liking to it, though, with chicken curry and daal being particular favourites.



GRUEL

It's hard to imagine anyone enjoying this enough to ask for more, even if you were Oliver Twist. This plain, watery thin porridge, which would have been eaten by the poorest Victorians, was made of ground cereals such as oats boiled with milk or water.



TREACLE TART

The Victorians loved sweet treats, and this pudding was both inexpensive and excellent at sating sugar cravings. Its main ingredient is golden syrup, or light treacle, a by-product of the sugar cane refining process that was first sold off as pig food. The only other ingredients needed for this simple tart are shortcrust pastry base, breadcrumbs and lemon juice.



JELLIED EELS

Originating in the East End of London in the 18th century, this fishy delicacy – found in eel, pie and mash shops as well as market stalls – was a firm Victorian favourite. The eels would be boiled in stock and allowed to set into a jelly before being eaten cold.

A VICTORIAN CHRISTMAS

We have the Victorians to thank for many of our favourite Christmas traditions – as well as a popular ghost story

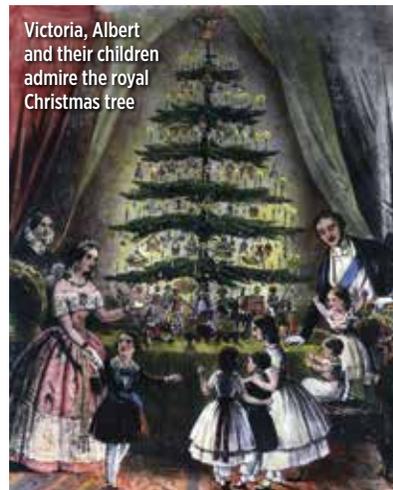
WORDS: EMMA SLATTERY WILLIAMS

The Victorians may not have invented Christmas, but they certainly introduced and revived many of the traditional elements we celebrate during the festive season today. Before the Victorian period, Christmas celebrations were muted affairs, with many of the working classes limited to just one day off. When Queen Victoria married Albert, however, the family became the heart of the Christmas period again, and the royals led by example.

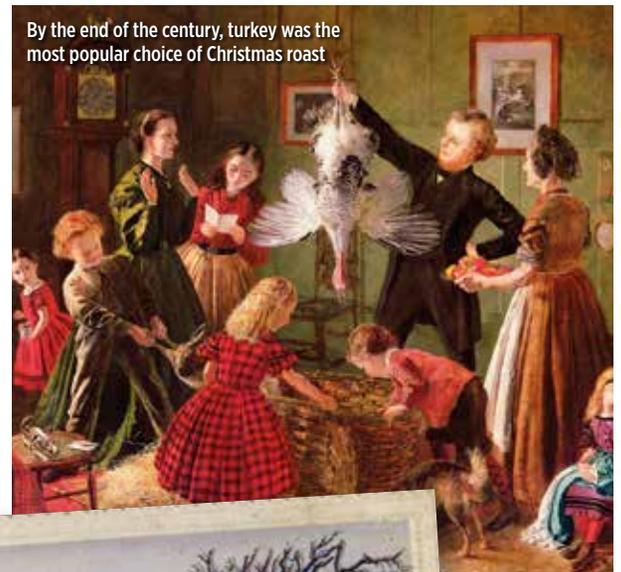
Many traditions celebrated in Germany were popularised by Prince Albert, including the Christmas tree. After *The Illustrated London News* published an image of the royal family making merry around a tree, everyone wanted one, and so the tradition was born. Gift-giving had traditionally been observed at New Year but, as the importance of Christmas increased, gifts began to be given on Christmas Day, with shop-bought presents starting to replace homemade gifts.

As the focus of Christmas began to shift to family and children, the role played by Father Christmas also changed. The jolly fellow had previously been associated with adult celebrations, but now he became the bringer of gifts and added a magical element to the holiday. The singing of Christmas carols was also revived and the custom of kissing under the mistletoe – which possibly had pagan roots – became an acceptable way of stealing a Christmas kiss. Meanwhile, the reform of the postal system and introduction of the Penny Black stamp in 1840 – making it easier to keep in touch with friends and relations – helped launch the tradition of the Christmas card, the first of which appeared in 1843.

Roast turkey remains the customary fare for Christmas lunch and we can thank the Victorians for this, too. In the early 19th century, turkeys would have been too expensive for the majority of households to afford. But the development of the railway made



Victoria, Albert and their children admire the royal Christmas tree



By the end of the century, turkey was the most popular choice of Christmas roast

The Christmas card revolution began with reforms to the postal service

them more accessible and affordable, and soon they had become the star attraction at Christmas dinner tables. The inclusion of a roast turkey at the end of Charles Dickens's *A Christmas Carol*, also helped cement this meaty tradition. 🍗



CHARLES DICKENS

How a spooky story saved Christmas

When we think about the Victorian Christmas, often it's the fictional scenes from Charles Dickens's *A Christmas Carol* that spring to mind. Published in 1843, this spooky ghost story was written after Dickens (right) had toured northern England and seen the plight of many of Britain's poor. It became one of his best-known works, and had the unexpected side-effect of reinvigorating the festive season and creating a sense of nostalgia for the celebrations of years gone by. It was so popular that its first edition sold out within a few days.

The joyful Mr Fezziwig (below) was a foil to the miserly Scrooge in *A Christmas Carol*



FAMOUS VICTORIANS

The Victorian era gave us some of the most famous faces from the worlds of science, literature and beyond **WORDS: EMMA SLATTERY WILLIAMS**



FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE

1820-1910

The Lady with the Lamp transformed the nursing profession, making it a respectable role for women and saving countless lives by implementing simple changes. During the Crimean War (1853-6), Nightingale was sent to the field hospitals in modern-day Turkey. There, amongst other things, she introduced regular handwashing and the provision of clean clothes for patients, which saw rates of infection drop, as well promoting a high level of dignity and care to the soldiers she was looking after. Nightingale's reports on patient living conditions prompted a Royal Commission into the health of the British Army. In 1860, she opened the world's first secular nursing school in London and the advice in her book *Notes on Nursing* is still used as a practical guide to hygiene and caring.



SIR ROBERT PEEL

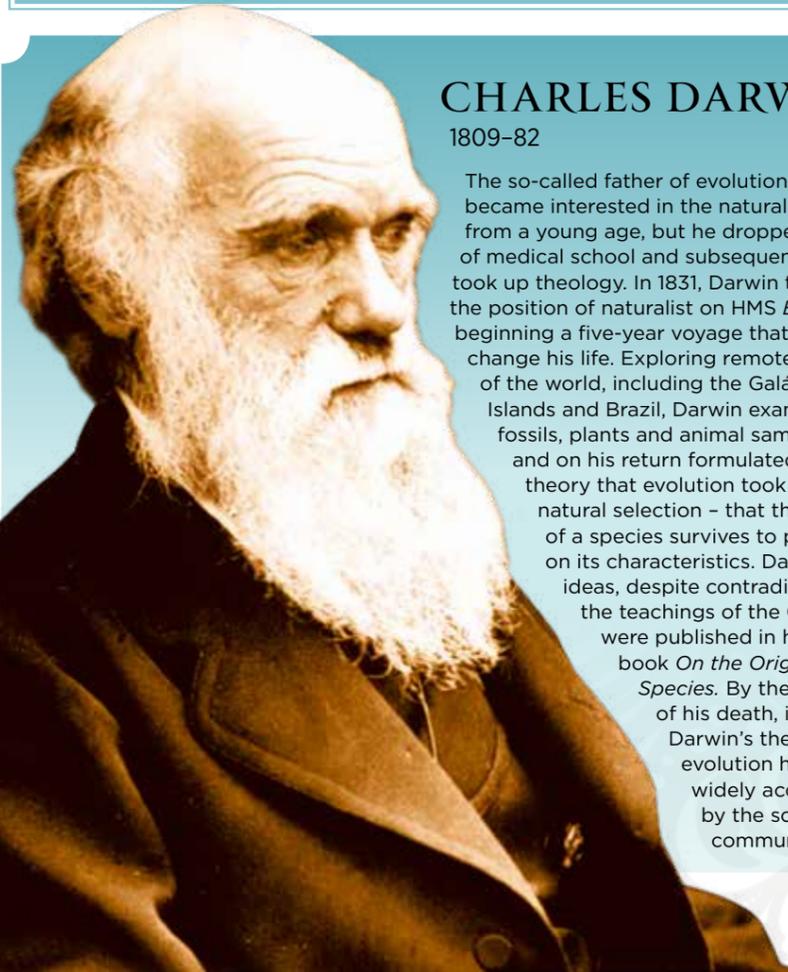
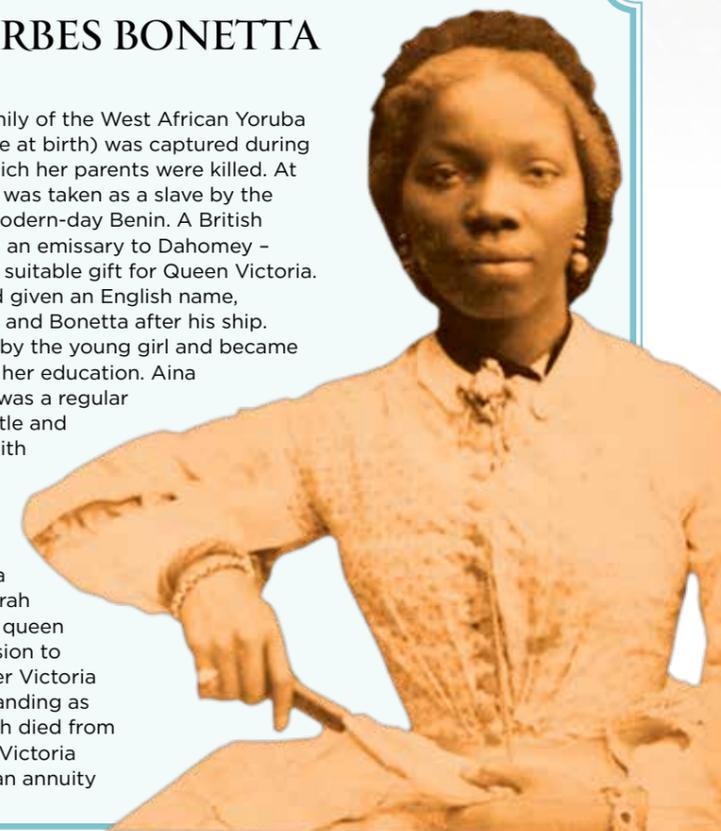
1788-1850

Serving twice as British Prime Minister, Robert Peel brought in many reforms that changed Britain for the better. As Home Secretary he helped promote Catholic Emancipation, while as Prime Minister he improved conditions for the working classes - especially those working in mines and factories. Peel is also seen as the father of modern British policing with his introduction of a professional and full-time police force for London - a reformed style of policing that quickly spread across the country (see p53).

SARAH FORBES BONETTA

1843-80

Born into the royal family of the West African Yoruba people, Aina (her name at birth) was captured during a slave-hunt war in which her parents were killed. At just five years old, she was taken as a slave by the king of Dahomey, in modern-day Benin. A British Navy captain - sent as an emissary to Dahomey - was given the girl as a suitable gift for Queen Victoria. Aina was baptised and given an English name, Forbes for the captain and Bonetta after his ship. Victoria was charmed by the young girl and became her protector, funding her education. Aina - now named Sarah - was a regular visitor to Windsor Castle and impressed the court with her academic abilities. At 19 she married a Yoruba businessman and philanthropist; they returned to Africa and raised a family. Sarah kept in touch with the queen and was given permission to name her first daughter Victoria - with the monarch standing as godmother. After Sarah died from tuberculosis, aged 37, Victoria continued to provide an annuity for the child.



CHARLES DARWIN

1809-82

The so-called father of evolution, Darwin became interested in the natural world from a young age, but he dropped out of medical school and subsequently took up theology. In 1831, Darwin took up the position of naturalist on HMS *Beagle*, beginning a five-year voyage that would change his life. Exploring remote parts of the world, including the Galápagos Islands and Brazil, Darwin examined fossils, plants and animal samples, and on his return formulated his theory that evolution took place by natural selection - that the fittest of a species survives to pass on its characteristics. Darwin's ideas, despite contradicting the teachings of the Church, were published in his 1859 book *On the Origin of Species*. By the time of his death, in 1882, Darwin's theories on evolution had been widely accepted by the scientific community.

ISAMBARD KINGDOM BRUNEL

1806-59

Engineer Isambard Kingdom Brunel was the mastermind behind some of Victorian Britain's greatest engineering feats - from Bristol's Clifton Suspension Bridge and the SS *Great Britain* to an entire railway network. Brunel's first major engineering achievement was helping his father, also an engineer, build the Thames Tunnel - the first tunnel to be built under a navigable river. In 1833, Brunel became Chief Engineer for Great Western Railway and built a network of tunnels, viaducts and bridges on the route between London and Bristol.



ADA LOVELACE

1815-52

Daughter of the poet Lord Byron and Annabella Milbanke, Ada Lovelace is widely considered the world's first computer programmer. Annabella, herself a highly educated woman, promoted her daughter's interest in logic and mathematics. When she was just 17, Ada met mathematician and inventor Charles Babbage and became fascinated with his Analytical Engine - an automatic mechanical digital computer. She would later translate an article about the Analytical Engine by Italian engineer Luigi Federico Menabrea, adding her own notes (three times longer than the original text) which contain what is considered to be the first computer program or algorithm, and demonstrating her awareness of the machine's future potential. There is still debate about how much Ada contributed to Babbage's work and who wrote about what first, but she is remembered for her vision in an era of great restrictions for women.



EMILY BRONTË

1818-48

One of the talented Brontë siblings, Emily lived most of her life on the remote Yorkshire Moors with her family. Her only published novel - the dark and tragic *Wuthering Heights* - is considered a classic of English literature. Along with sisters Charlotte and Anne, Emily was first published under a pseudonym in a book of poems. She died in 1848 of tuberculosis, less than three months after her brother Branwell.

CRIME AND PUNISHMENT

It didn't pay to be on the wrong side of the law in Victorian England

WORDS: CHARLOTTE HODGMAN

If you were to pick up a copy of *The Illustrated Police News* – one of Victorian Britain's first tabloid newspapers, which reported murders and hangings in full, salacious detail – you would likely feel that the 19th century was a veritable bloodbath of death and danger. But how worried were Victorians about their personal safety?

"Looking at crime statistics for the Victorian period can only tell you so much," says Sarah Richardson, professor of history at the University of Warwick, adding that a lot of it actually came down to perceptions of crime at the time.

"The Victorians were very worried and preoccupied with particular groups of criminals," she explains. "The concept of juvenile crime, for example, was almost invented in this period, and there were real concerns about what to do with child criminals. In the early part of the 19th century, the only thing that could be done was to transport them to Australia – even children as young as ten or 12 – or lock them up in adult prisons. But from the late 1850s, you start to see things like reform schools and borstals being introduced."

There was also a belief among the middle classes that child criminals could be divided into two categories: the perishing classes – who were born into poverty and had no choice but to steal and commit crimes – and the dangerous classes. These children were, according to this mindset, essentially born evil.

SYSTEMS OF PUNISHMENT

Until the early 19th century, Britain operated under the Bloody Code, a system that listed more than 200 offences as punishable by death – from murder and arson to pickpocketing and even cutting down hop-vines. By the mid-19th century, however, moves were being made to remove criminals from society rather than kill them, and imprisonment became the primary form of punishment.

Philosopher Jeremy Bentham's idea that placing people in solitary confinement where they could reflect upon their

crimes was initially a popular one, and prisoners would carry out forms of hard labour – breaking rocks or picking rope – as part of their punishment. But by the end of the period, prisoner aid societies were being set up to educate and rehabilitate inmates, and in 1886 the Probation of First Time Offenders Act was passed. This saw missionaries and magistrates develop a system of releasing offenders on the condition that they kept in touch with, and accepted guidance from, the missionaries.

"Transportation to Australia or other British colonies was another common form of punishment in the early 19th century," says Richardson, "but by the 1850s, transportation had fallen out of favour – mainly because of the costs involved, but also because of resistance from the colonies who were receiving Britain's criminal population."

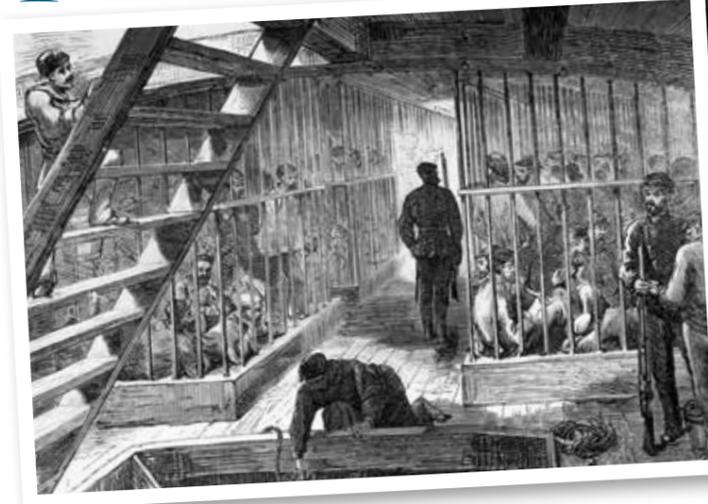
Transportation, although perhaps a welcome reprieve from the death sentence for most criminals, carried its own dangers and hardships. "It was, in many ways, a life sentence," comments Richardson. "Although you might have been sentenced to seven years transportation, it was unlikely that you would ever return home or see your family and friends again."

Around 162,000 convicts were sent to Australia between 1787 and 1868, some 80 per cent of whom had been found guilty of theft and around one in seven of which were women. Before making the journey, prisoners were held in prison or on floating prison-ships, known as hulks, while they waited for other prisoners to join them. The journey to Australia itself took months, and conditions onboard were cramped, with many convicts chained up in leg irons. Upon their arrival, prisoners who had survived the journey were set to work, with many building roads or breaking rocks.

Well-behaved prisoners could earn a ticket-of-leave for good behaviour and secure themselves an early release. But even serving a full sentence and receiving a certificate of freedom didn't

HORSING AROUND

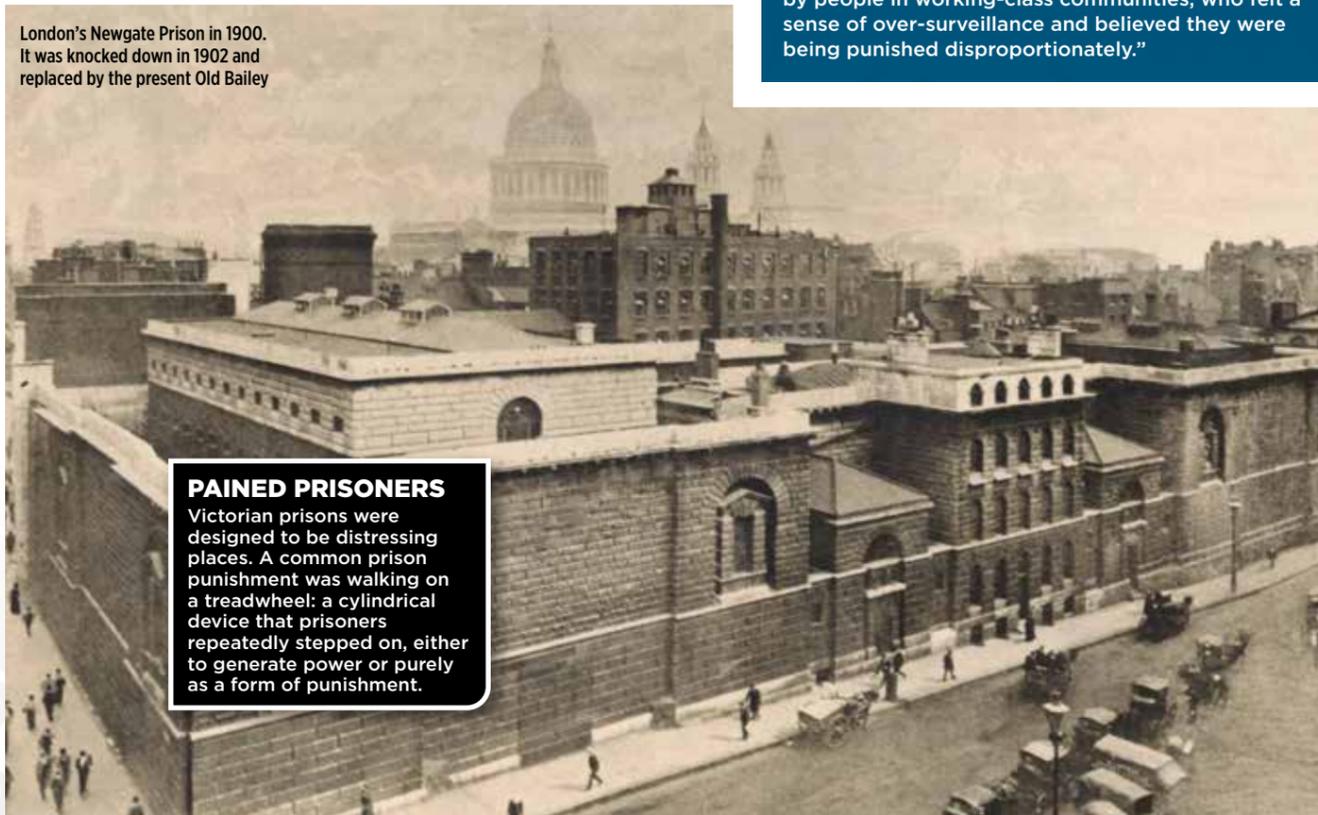
The Bow Street Runners were the UK's first professional police force. The mounted division of the agency – the Bow Street Horse Patrol – was created to help tackle highway robberies. The entire force was later superseded by the Metropolitan Police.



Prisoners were commonly caged or restrained during their transportation to Australia, as this c1890 etching shows

necessarily mean going home, for few could afford a ticket for the return journey. Most remained in Australia with the country's free settlers, with some even rising to prominent positions in Australian society. Pickpocket George Barrington became superintendent of convicts in Parramatta, for instance, while sheep-thief Daniel Connor was known as one of Perth's largest landowners by the 1890s. 📍

London's Newgate Prison in 1900. It was knocked down in 1902 and replaced by the present Old Bailey



PAINED PRISONERS

Victorian prisons were designed to be distressing places. A common prison punishment was walking on a treadwheel: a cylindrical device that prisoners repeatedly stepped on, either to generate power or purely as a form of punishment.



Members of the Metropolitan Police outside their station in the late Victorian era, c1890

BOBBIES ON THE BEAT

London's new police force divided opinion

In 1829, Conservative Home Secretary (and later prime minister) Sir Robert Peel established the Metropolitan Police in London, England's first modern police force. Previously, attempts to keep law and order were undertaken by so-called thief catchers or watchmen, but Peel's new, uniformed agency was designed as a permanent body of professional law-enforcers, initially comprising 895 constables, 88 sergeants, 20 inspectors and eight superintendents.

"The Metropolitan Police was designed to bring a more professional air to policing," says Richardson. "Previously, law enforcers had been seen as being little better than the criminals they were policing – or at least part of the same class. But although the new police force was welcomed by the middle classes, they were generally viewed with suspicion by people in working-class communities, who felt a sense of over-surveillance and believed they were being punished disproportionately."

GET HOOKED

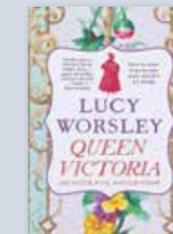
If we've whetted your appetite for all things Victorian, why not explore the topic further with our pick of books, films and podcasts

BOOKS



The Political Worlds of Women: Gender and Political Culture in Nineteenth-Century Britain
By Prof Sarah Richardson (Routledge, 2013)

Sarah Richardson examines female engagement in both traditional and unconventional political arenas, including female sociability, salons, child-rearing and education, health, consumption, religious reform and nationalism.



Queen Victoria: Daughter, Wife, Mother, Widow
By Lucy Worsley (Hodder & Stoughton, 2018)

Who was Queen Victoria? A little old lady, potato-like in appearance, dressed in everlasting black? Or a passionate young princess, a romantic heroine with a love of dancing? Lucy Worsley examines 24 days of the queen's life, through diaries, letters and more.



How to be a Victorian: A Dawn-to-Dusk Guide to Victorian Life
By Ruth Goodman (Liveright, 2020)

Drawing on her own adventures living in re-created Victorian conditions, Goodman serves as a guide to 19th-century life – from waking up to the rapping of a "knocker-upper man" on the window pane to lacing into a corset. Discover the weird and wonderful intricacies of Victorian life.

ONLINE AND AUDIO

▶ **Did the Victorians Ruin the World?** (BBC Sounds): Kat and Helen Arney present revisionist revelations about our Victorian forebears. Listen at bbc.co.uk/sounds/brand/b08llqzz



▶ For podcasts, features, quizzes, interviews and more on the Victorians, visit the Victorian hub on our website: historyextra.com/period/victorian

WATCH



Victoria
(ITV, now streaming on Amazon Prime and BritBox UK)

The life and reign of Queen Victoria is explored in this sumptuous three-season historical drama – from her ascension to the throne, to courtship and marriage to Albert.



New Hidden Killers of the Victorian Home
(BBC iPlayer)

Suzannah Lipscomb looks at the killer products and domestic horrors that surrounded the Victorians – from the food they ate to the clothes they wore.