

Baker Street *Elementary*

PRESENTS
"THE LIFE AND TIMES IN VICTORIAN LONDON"



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THE LIFE AND TIMES IN VICTORIAN LONDON
A006 -- THE THAMES RIVER -- JANUARY, 2022



WELCOME TO TOPIC # 006... TODAY, HOLMES AND
I WILL LOOK AT THE RIVER THAMES.



*IN THE SIGN OF FOUR, YOU AND I PURSUED A
MURDER SUSPECT DOWN THE THAMES IN A 'MAD,
FLYING MAN-HUNT.'*



BY THE LATE 1800s, THE TIME OF THIS STORY, THE RIVER HAD BECOME MUCH SWIFTER AND ALLOWED FOR SUCH A HIGH-SPEED CHASE.



19TH CENTURY MP JOHN BURNS DESCRIBED THE RIVER THAMES AS 'LIQUID HISTORY,' WITH SETTLEMENTS ALONG ITS BANKS GOING BACK TO NEOLITHIC TIMES.



THE NAME ITSELF IS BELIEVED TO BE THE LATIN DERIVATION TAMESIS OF ITS CELTIC NAME TAMESAS, MEANING DARK... AT 215 MILES, IT RUNS FROM COTSWOLD, BEGINNING AS A SMALL STREAM, THROUGH LONDON, AND INTO THE NORTH SEA.



TO FACILITATE COMMERCIAL TRAFFIC, THE RIVER HAS MORE THAN FORTY LOCKS THAT RAISE OR LOWER BOATS ALONG THE WAY... SOME OF THESE LOCKS DATE BACK MORE THAN 400 YEARS AND ARE STILL OPERATED BY HAND.



**IN THE LATE 1700s VARIOUS CANALS WERE
CONSTRUCTED TO CREATE TRADE ROUTES TO AND
FROM LONDON, ENRICHING THE TOWNS ALONG THE
RIVER AS BARGES CARRIED COAL WOOL, GRAIN,
AND TIMBER TO LONDON AND OTHER GOODS BACK
TO THE COUNTRYSIDE UNTIL THE LATTER 1800s
WHEN RAILROADS TOOK OVER.**



PRIOR TO THE 1800s, THE THAMES WOULD SOMETIMES FREEZE, AND LONDONERS COULD ENJOY DRINKING AND DANCING ON THE ICE AT FROST FAIRS.





**WHILE THE RIVER HAD ALWAYS BEEN A DUMPING
GROUND FOR THE CITY'S WASTE, THE
INTRODUCTION OF INDOOR PLUMBING INCREASED
THE EFFLUENT INTO THE RIVER.**

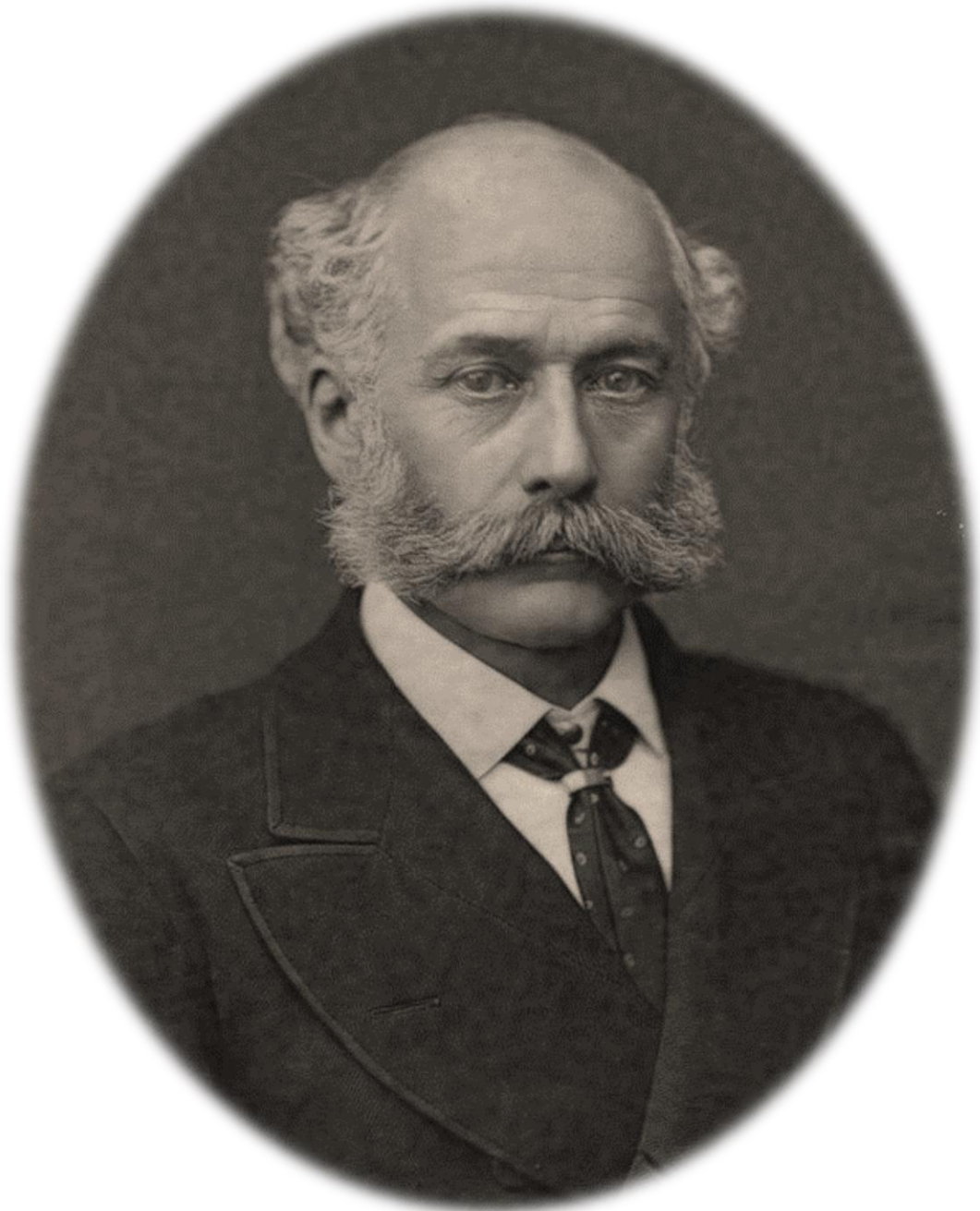


**IT BECAME SO POLLUTED IN 1858 THAT PARLIAMENT
WAS SUSPENDED BECAUSE OF THE STENCH.**



THE "SILENT HIGHWAY" IN
LONDON





SIR JOSEPH BAZALGETTE DESIGNED A SEWER SYSTEM THAT CARRIED THE WASTE FURTHER DOWN THE RIVER AND INTRODUCED A FILTRATION SYSTEM.



EMBANKMENTS WERE ALSO CREATED TO SPEED THE RIVER AND CARRY OFF MORE MUD... AS A RESULT OF THE SWIFTER RIVER FLOW, THE THAMES NO LONGER FREEZES AND THE LAST FROST FAIR OCCURRED IN 1814.



THE VICTORIANS ALSO DREDGED THE RIVER TO INCREASE ITS NAVIGABILITY AND FOUND NUMEROUS ARTIFACTS IN THE PROCESS.



MODERN DAY 'MUDLARKS' CONTINUE TO FORAGE THE RIVER FOR BITS OF HISTORY STILL BURIED IN THE MUD ALONG THE THAMES, DATING BACK CENTURIES.



**MANY OF THESE ITEMS CAN BE FOUND IN
DISPLAYS AT VARIOUS LONDON MUSEUMS,
INCLUDING THE MUSEUM OF LONDON AND THE
BRITISH MUSEUM.**



WHILE THE RIVER'S SPEED WOULD BE FAMILIAR TO US, THE WATER'S CLEANLINESS WOULD BE A GREAT SURPRISE TO US.



THE 'DEAD RIVER' OF VICTORIAN TIMES IS NOW HOME TO 125 SPECIES OF FISH, INCLUDING SALMON AND SEA TROUT, AND OTTERS HAVE RETURNED.



THANKS TO SUCH ECOLOGICAL EFFORTS ENGLAND'S
'LIQUID HISTORY' CONTINUES TO FLOW WITH A
MUCH BRIGHTER FUTURE AHEAD.



SO, WE HAVE COMPLETED TOPIC # 006 IN OUR SERIES...

IN TOPIC # 007, WE WILL LOOK AT BEEKEEPING IN VICTORIAN TIMES.



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"THE LIFE AND TIMES IN VICTORIAN LONDON"

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