

Baker Street *Elementary*

PRESENTS
"THE LIFE AND TIMES IN VICTORIAN LONDON"



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THE LIFE AND TIMES IN VICTORIAN LONDON
A036 -- FOGGY SMOGGY OLD LONDON -- JANUARY, 2022



WELCOME TO TOPIC # 036... TODAY WE WILL BE
LOOKING AT THE POLLUTION ISSUES IN OUR DEAR
OL' LONDON...



**OUR ADVENTURES CONTAIN 54 REFERENCES TO
FOG: A THIRD OF THEM IN 'THE ADVENTURE OF
THE BRUCE-PARTINGTON PLANS'...**



...AND ALMOST ANOTHER THIRD IN A REFERENCE TO
THE FOG COVERING GRIMPEN MIRE IN THE HOUND
OF THE BASKERVILLES.



THE OTHER REFERENCES ARE DISTRIBUTED AMONG
TEN STORIES.



WHILE DICKENS ROMANTICIZED IT, AND DOYLE USED IT TO CLOAK THE CITY IN GREATER MYSTERY, IN REALITY, LONDON'S FOG WAS A DEADLY BREW OF SMOKE AND CHEMICAL POLLUTION.



***SMOKE POLLUTION BEGAN IN MEDIEVAL ENGLAND
WHEN COAL WAS BURNED FOR DOMESTIC USE—
PRIMARILY FOR COOKING AND HEATING.***



BEGINNING IN THE LATE 1700s WHEN ENGLAND EXPERIENCED ITS INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION, THE RISE OF STEAM ENGINES POWERED BY BURNING COAL MULTIPLIED THE PARTICULATE MATTER IN THE AIR, AND FACTORIES SPEWED OTHER CHEMICALS AND POLLUTANTS INTO THE MIX.



THE RESULT WAS A THICK SMOG (A TERM COINED BY DR. H.A. DES VOEUX IN 1905 TO DESCRIBE FUSION OF SMOKE AND FOG IN LONDON) THAT KILLED 2,400 ALONE DURING THE WINTER OF 1879-1880.



WHILE THE HEALTH EFFECTS OF LONDON'S AIR POLLUTION WERE WELL-KNOWN AND RECOGNIZED, BOTH NATIONAL AND LOCAL GOVERNMENTS STRUGGLED TO CONTROL IT.



*IN THE 1840s, SOME INDUSTRIAL CITIES PASSED
LEGISLATION TO LIMIT SMOKE PRODUCTION, AND
LONDON PASSED SIMILAR LAWS IN 1853 AND 1891.*



THESE RESTRICTIONS, HOWEVER, HAD LITTLE EFFECT ON POLLUTION.



IN 1906, PARLIAMENT PASSED THE ALKALI, ETC. WORKS REGULATION ACT TO CONSOLIDATE EARLIER EFFORTS TO REDUCE INDUSTRIAL POLLUTION RELATED TO THE PRODUCTION OF SODA ASH.



A typical 19th. century LeBlanc works
(St. Rollox, Glasgow, ca. 1880)



DOMESTIC SMOKE, RESPONSIBLE FOR ABOUT 95% OF THE FUMES, WERE NOT BE COVERED BY THE ORDINANCES, AS WERE OTHER MAJOR INDUSTRIES.





IN ADDITION, THE DEFINITION OF 'SMOKE' WAS NOT CLEAR, MAKING PROSECUTION DIFFICULT.



**DESPITE SUCH EFFORTS, AIR POLLUTION
CONTINUED UNABATED AND IN DECEMBER, 1952...**





...A FOG CONTAINING SULFURIC ACID (CREATED FROM SULFUR DIOXIDE AND NITROGEN DIOXIDE, BY-PRODUCTS OF COAL BURNING) BLANKETED THE CAPITAL FOR SEVERAL DAYS...



...DARKENING THE SKY, REDUCING VISIBILITY TO ONLY THREE FEET, AND KILLING 4,000 PEOPLE AND THOUSANDS OF ANIMALS.



IN RESPONSE, PARLIAMENT PASSED THE CLEAN AIR ACT IN 1956.



**THIS LEGISLATION CREATED AREAS WHERE ONLY
SMOKELESS FUELS WERE ALLOWED AND REDUCED
PERMITTED LEVELS OF SULFUR DIOXIDE AND
OTHER POLLUTANTS.**



**IN 1968, THE CLEAN AIR ACT, TALL CHIMNEYS,
FURTHER REDUCED POLLUTION BY REQUIRING
SMOKE AND OTHER PARTICULATE MATTER BE
DISPERSED HIGHER INTO THE ATMOSPHERE
THROUGH TALLER CHIMNEYS.**



BY 2013, MORE THAN 35% OF THE VEHICLES WERE DIESEL, AND IN AN UNEXPECTED TWIST, ARE NOW LINKED TO ABOUT 9,500 DEATHS EACH YEAR IN LONDON.



DIESEL ENGINES PRODUCE MORE NITROGEN OXIDE THAN GASOLINE CARS CREATING HIGH LEVELS OF NITROGEN DIOXIDE THAT CONTRIBUTE TO RESPIRATORY PROBLEMS AND WORSEN ASTHMA ATTACKS.



**BRITAIN'S SUCCESS STORY IN FIGHTING AIR
POLLUTION HAS COME FULL CIRCLE.**



**THE LEGENDARY FOG FROM MY TIME WILL ONCE
AGAIN RISEN TO THREATEN ITS CITIZENS.**



NOT ONLY CAN IT HIDE KILLERS WHO USE THE MIST TO CLOAK THEMSELVES AND THEIR CRIMES, IT MAKES ITS OWN CONTRIBUTION TO THE DEATHS OF THOUSANDS EACH YEAR.



SO, WE HAVE COMPLETED TOPIC # 036 IN OUR SERIES...

IN TOPIC # 037, WE WILL LOOK AT THE CONCEPT OF 'BRAIN FEVER' IN THE VICTORIAN PERIOD.



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