

Baker Street *Elementary*

PRESENTS
"THE LIFE AND TIMES IN VICTORIAN LONDON"



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THE LIFE AND TIMES IN VICTORIAN LONDON
125 - LIVING ON LONDON'S MEAN STREETS - AUGUST, 2023



**WELCOME TO TOPIC NUMBER # 125... TODAY WE
WILL BE LOOKING AT THE RAG-TAG BUNCH, KNOWN
AS THE BAKER STREET IRREGULARS, WHO HELPED
US ON SOME OF OUR INVESTIGATIONS.**



YOU INTRODUCED ME TO THE BAKER STREET
IRREGULARS IN THEIR FIRST ADVENTURE, A STUDY
IN SCARLET... AT THAT POINT, HOWEVER, I
REFERRED TO THEM IN A COMMON TERM OF THE
PERIOD—'STREET ARABS.'



NOT UNTIL THE SIGN OF THE FOUR DID YOU
PROVIDE ME WITH THEIR OFFICIAL TITLE: THE
BAKER STREET IRREGULARS.



**THESE YOUNG BOYS—SIX IN THE FIRST CASE AND
A DOZEN IN THE SECOND—REPRESENTED ONLY A
SMALL PORTION OF THE 35,000 ESTIMATED TO BE
LIVING ON THE LONDON STREETS IN 1902.**



THE NINETEENTH CENTURY SAW LONDON'S POPULATION EXPLODE—FROM 1 MILLION IN 1800 TO 6.5 MILLION AT ITS END... THIS TEEMING METROPOLIS STRAINED THE CITY'S RESOURCES, ESPECIALLY IN THE AREA OF HOUSING.



CHARLES DICKENS AND HENRY MAYHEW CHRONICLED THE LIVES OF THOSE WITHOUT HOUSING AND BARELY SURVIVING TO RAISE AWARENESS OF THE PROBLEM, PARTICULARLY AMONG THE YOUNG.





AROUND THIS TIME, THE TERM 'STREET ARAB' APPEARED
TO DESCRIBE SUCH HOMELESS CHILDREN AND THEIR
NOMADIC EXISTENCE.



THOSE AS YOUNG AS THREE OR FOUR SUPPORTED THEIR EXISTENCE EITHER THROUGH SELLING WARES, SUCH AS SHOE BLACKING, NEWSPAPERS, OR FLOWERS; MUDLARKING, SEARCHING THE THAMES FOR REFUSE DURING LOW TIDE; COSTERMONGERING, HAWKING FRUITS OR VEGETABLES FOR A STALL OWNER; OR, PERHAPS MOST OFTEN, RESORTING TO SOME CRIMINAL ACTIVITY.



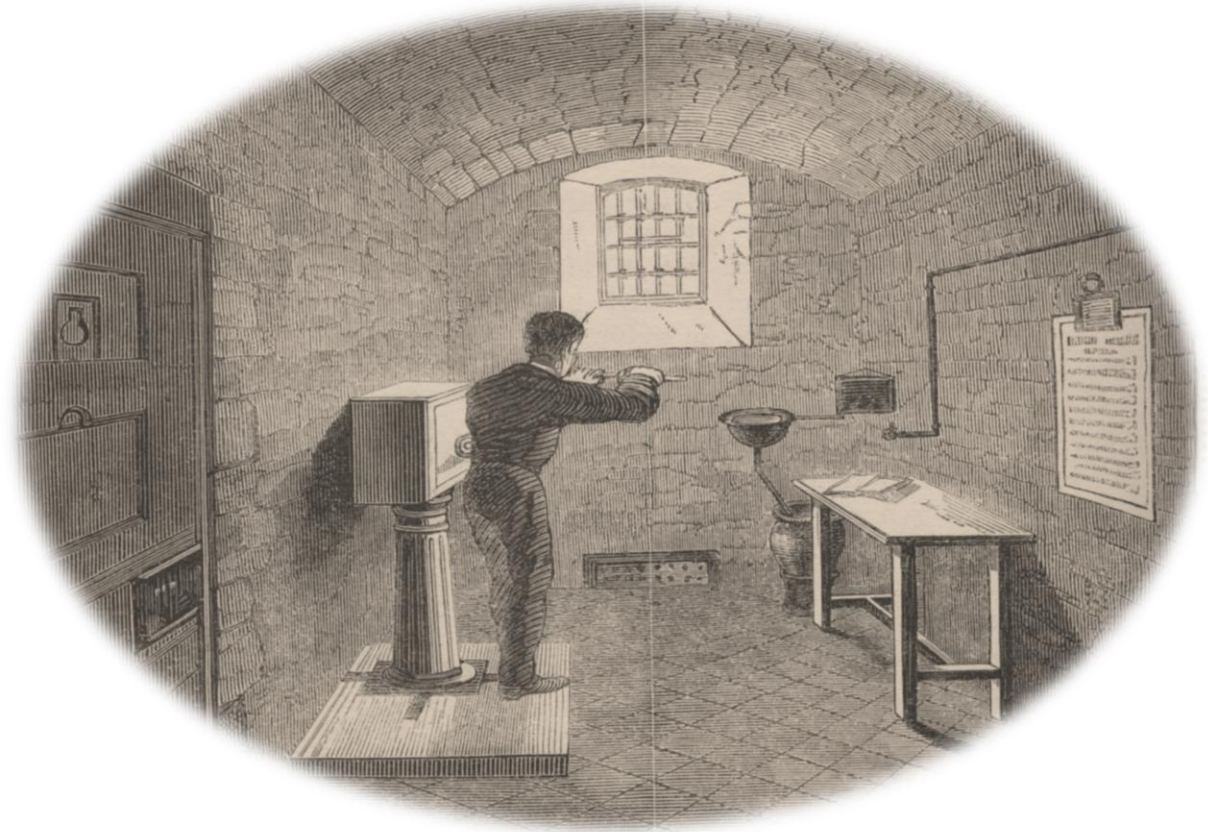
AMONG THE LAWBREAKERS, A HIERARCHY EXISTED. THOSE AT THE BOTTOM STOLE FOODSTUFFS... SNEAK THIEVES WERE HIGHER ON THE CHAIN, BUT BELOW THE SHOPLIFTER.



AT THE TOP WERE THE PICKPOCKETS AND HOUSEBREAKERS... MOST WERE ARRESTED AND SENT TO PRISON BUT WOULD BE RELEASED A WHILE LATER, ONLY TO BE ARRESTED AGAIN.



PRISONS DID NOT SEPARATE THE POPULATIONS BY AGE, AND AS A RESULT, YOUNGER INMATES LEARNED NEW TRICKS FROM OLDER ONES.



**AS CHILDREN CONTINUED IN THEIR CRIMINAL
EDUCATION AND CAREER, JUDGES OFTEN
SENTENCED THOSE WHO HAD BEEN ARRESTED
NUMEROUS TIMES WITH INCREASINGLY SERIOUS
OFFENSES TO TRANSPORTATION TO AUSTRALIA.**



**EIGHTEEN FIFTY-FOUR PROVIDED AN ALTERNATIVE
TO IMPRISONMENT FOR JUVENILES: THE
REFORMATORY SCHOOL.**



MAGISTRATES COULD GRANT A PARDON TO CRIMINAL OFFENDERS UNDER THE AGE OF 16 IF THEY AGREED TO SPEND TWO TO FIVE YEARS AT A CERTIFIED REFORMATORY SCHOOL AFTER SPENDING 15 DAYS IN PRISON.





THESE SCHOOLS, PRIMARILY RUN BY PRIVATE CHARITIES OR RELIGIOUS GROUPS, PROVIDED EDUCATION, TRADE SKILLS, AND, DEPENDING ON THE INSTITUTION, SPORTS OR OTHER RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES.





**APPROXIMATELY 1000 JUVENILES WERE SENTENCED
TO REFORMATORIES EACH YEAR DURING THE
SECOND HALF OF THE 1800s.**



**AN ADDITIONAL 9000 PER YEAR WERE
ADMITTED TO INDUSTRIAL SCHOOLS.**



CREATED BY REFORMERS THROUGH THE INDUSTRIAL SCHOOLS ACT OF 1857, THESE CHILDREN WERE ADMITTED TO SUCH INSTITUTIONS WITHOUT THE TWO-WEEK IMPRISONMENT REQUIREMENT.



THE SCHOOLS FOCUSED ON YOUNGER CHILDREN NOT SENTENCED FOR CRIMINAL OFFENSES BUT AT RISK FOR SUCH ACTIVITY IN THE FUTURE... BY 1875, ENGLAND AND WALES HAD 54 REFORMATORY SCHOOLS AND 82 INDUSTRIAL SCHOOLS.



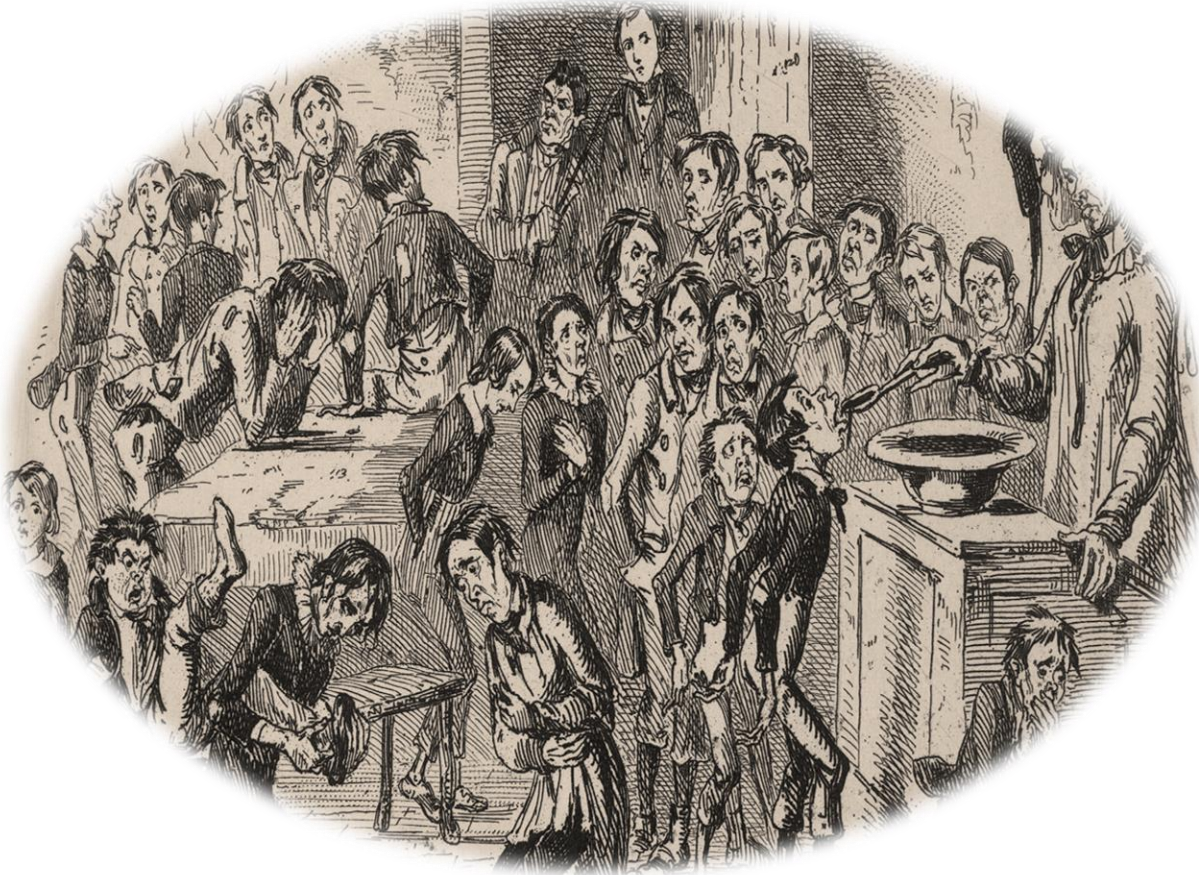
THE SCHOOLS WERE ALSO REQUIRED TO FOLLOW THOSE LEAVING THE PROGRAMS FOR UP TO THREE YEARS.



WHILE SOME APPEARED TO HAVE ACHIEVED A
PROPER TRADE FOLLOWING RELEASE, OTHER
ATTENDEES REPORTED HARSH TREATMENT.



CORPORAL PUNISHMENT WAS PROHIBITED IN NEW SCHOOLS CREATED AFTER 1876, BUT EXISTING SCHOOLS COULD CONTINUE THE USE OF CANING AND OTHER DISCIPLINARY ACTIONS.



**THE LAST MENTION OF THE BAKER STREET
IRREGULARS IN THE CANON IDENTIFIED A NEW
LEADER FOR THE GROUP.**



SIX YEARS AFTER THE SIGN OF THE FOUR, IN "THE CROOKED MAN," SIMPSON WAS THE HEAD IRREGULAR, WITH NO MENTION OF WIGGINS' FATE... GIVEN THE VARIOUS OPTIONS A MAGISTRATE OR JUDGE HAD BEFORE HIM, ONE CAN SPECULATE WIGGINS MIGHT HAVE SPENT TIME IN A REFORM OR INDUSTRIAL SCHOOL.



HE MOST PROBABLY WAS ARRESTED AND RELEASED SEVERAL TIMES, AND GIVEN HIS LEADERSHIP SKILLS, MIGHT EVEN HAVE BEEN SELECTED FOR TRANSPORTATION TO AUSTRALIA OR ANOTHER BRITISH COLONY.



*SOME OF THE BOYS SENT TO AUSTRALIA, CANADA,
OR SOUTH AFRICA CREATED GOOD LIVES FOR
THEMSELVES IN THESE NEW COUNTRIES.*



WIGGINS MIGHT HAVE BEEN AMONG THOSE WHO FORGED A PRODUCTIVE LIFE AFTER LEAVING THE IRREGULARS, PERHAPS WITH EVEN A LITTLE HELP FROM HIS MENTOR, SHERLOCK HOLMES.



SO, WE HAVE COMPLETED TOPIC # 125 IN OUR SERIES...

IN TOPIC # 126, WE WILL BE LOOKING AT WHAT ROLE CHEMISTRY PLAYED
IN THE VICTORIAN PERIOD AND MY WORK.



ORIGINAL SOURCE MATERIAL FOR FOR THIS TOPIC:

- [HTTPS://LEFTFOOTFORWARD.ORG/2016/03/HOMELESSNESS-HAS-RETURNED-TO-1900S-LEVELS/](https://leftfootforward.org/2016/03/homelessness-has-returned-to-1900s-levels/)
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- [HTTPS://WWW.WORDSENSE.EU/STREET_ARAB/](https://www.wordsense.eu/street_arab/)
- J.J. TOBIAS, CRIME AND POLICE IN ENGLAND 1700-1900. NEW YORK: ST. MARTIN PRESS, 1979.
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- [HTTPS://THECONVERSATION.COM/VICTORIAN-CHILD-REFORMATORIES-WERE-MORE-SUCCESSFUL-THAN-TODAYS-YOUTH-JUSTICE-SYSTEM-85634](https://theconversation.com/victorian-child-reformatories-were-more-successful-than-todays-youth-justice-system-85634)
- [HTTPS://ORA.OX.AC.UK/CATALOG/UUID:A551DD78-6EBC-4B0D-A2FE-693E74D5E19C/DOWNLOAD_FILE?FILE_FORMAT=APPLICATION%2FPDF&SAFE_FILENAME=602354922.PDF](https://ora.ox.ac.uk/catalog/uuid:a551dd78-6ebc-4b0d-a2fe-693e74d5e19c/download_file?file_format=application%2fpdf&safe_filename=602354922.pdf)
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"THE LIFE AND TIMES IN VICTORIAN LONDON"

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