

Victorian era photography - 1

Source: A London Album 1840-1915



Portable wet-plate dark tent, c1860.

Wet-plate photography introduced in 1851 used coated glass plates that were developed whilst still wet. A complicated process but the resultant glass negative produced excellent quality prints. Victorians were great amateur scientists and loved dabbling with chemicals. In many ways the more involved the procedure, the more delighted they were.

1. London coaching inns.

There were once many coaching inns in British cities. In London most had been built after the Great Fire, replacing inns that had been built as far back as the mediaeval period. Before railway travel became commonplace coaches often took a number of days to complete long distance journeys, requiring changes of horses and places of rest for the passengers. Inns consisted of courtyards behind a conventional façade surrounded by galleries leading to guests' rooms.



Sir Paul Pindar Tavern 1877

Built in 1559 during the reign of James I, it was demolished to make way for London's Liverpool Street Station



The George Inn, Southwark, 1889

The George was one of the twenty two inns located near the Borough High Street in the days when London Bridge was so crowded it was difficult for large coaches to cross. First mentioned in 1554, it was rebuilt after the Southwark fire of 1676.



The Talbot (originally the Tabard). Borough High Street 1865

2. Making a living.



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*Top left. **Pea-shellers**, Covent Garden Market 1900.*

*Bottom left. **Sunday bird fair**, Bethnal Green, 1900. Caged birds, sourced from Indonesia, India, Australia and Britain were very popular with Victorians.*

*Right. **Covent Garden Porter**.*



The end of the line for the self-employed was the peddling of a few items which might have little value or profit in themselves, but which might bring a few extra coppers in charity. Matches, bootlaces, pipe-cleaners and newspapers were often sold by men and boys. Women and girls might sell apples or flowers.



The face of destitution. A mother and child in a London doorway, c1877.

“God has appointed from the very first, that there should be different grades of human society, high and low, rich and poor, and it is not for the rich to boast or the poor to complain.” *Vicar of a Kentish village, 1871.*