

A personal selection of Wessex, British Isles and world history.

“Though you sit in warm mansion, secure from the tempest, Nor feel the keen storm, as it drifts on the moor,
Yet shut not your door ‘gainst the wandering stranger, But learn from your blessings to pity the poor.”

The Sunday Magazine, 1865

This month J&T 186 looks at how clever Victorian coves tackled poverty and squalor in the capital of the empire. We also look at a very progressive and successful ancient civilisation who thrived in the Bronze Age.

THE POOR YOU WILL ALWAYS HAVE WITH YOU¹

Our view of Victorian London society owes a lot to Charles Dickens’ novels. However, I now have a copy of *London Labour and the London Poor* by Dickens’ friend, Henry Mayhew, originally published as a book in 1851. Also, I have recently discovered on-line, the maps of *London Poverty* produced by Charles Booth as part of his *Inquiry into Life and Labour in London* (1886-1903). The maps are colour coded into six social classes: Lower Class, vicious and semi-criminal; Very Poor, casual, chronic want; Poor, 18s to 21s a week for a moderate family; Mixed, some comfortable but others poor; Fairly comfortable, good ordinary earnings; Middle-class, well-todo; Upper middle and Upper classes, wealthy. An example is shown on page 2. Below, the notorious Seven Dials district (WC2)

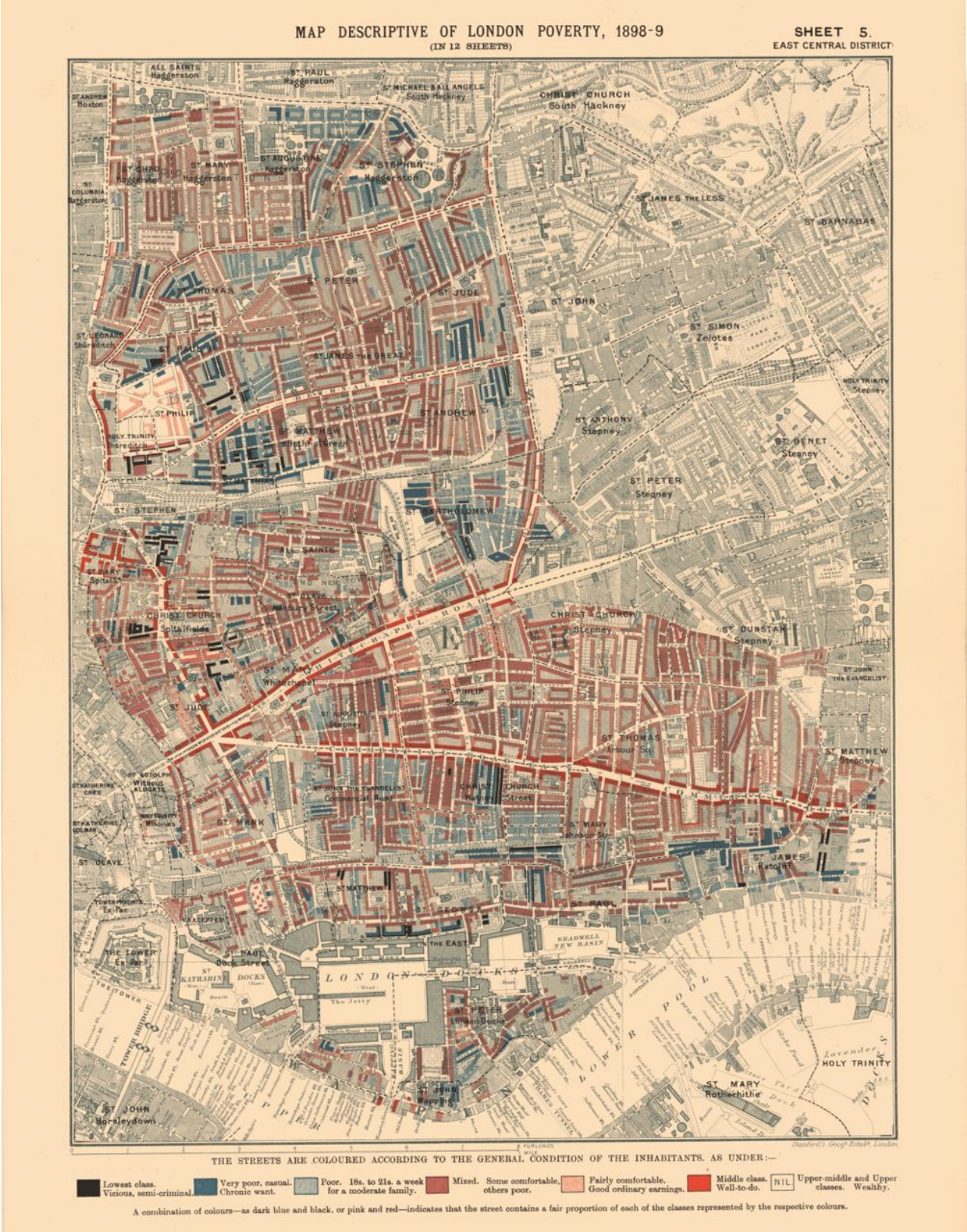


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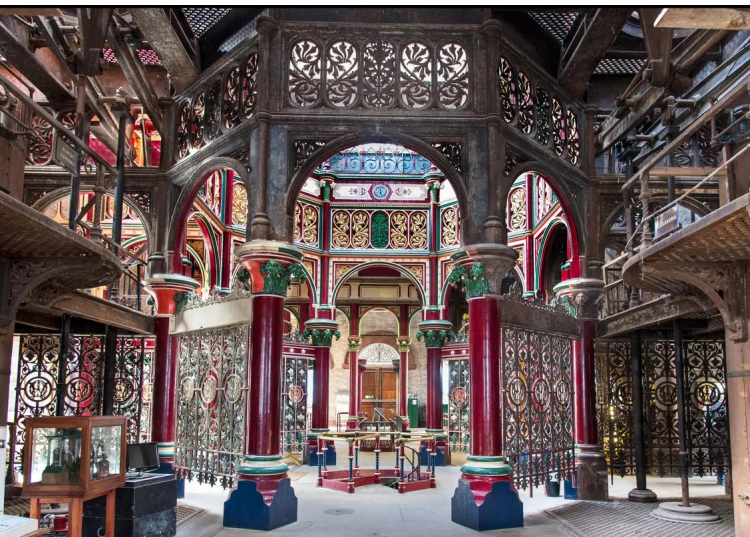


These three heroes were not the only ones interested in trying to do something for the disadvantaged. Seeböhm Rowntree, Quaker and businessman, surveyed the city of York in 1899 and showed that low wages were the main cause of destitution. William Booth, the founder of the Salvation Army (Soup, Soap and Salvation), published the shocking *In Darkest England and the the Way Out* in 1890 and also





established shelters and food programs. A number of government actions resulted from the social pressure that built up. Public Health Acts in 1848 and 1875 appointed Medical Officers of Health and improved both sewers and drinking water. Joseph Bazalgette's extraordinary sewer program transformed Victorian London, dramatically reducing deaths from cholera, and remarkably, the system is still in use today.



For those who enjoy a good lineage, Sir Peter Lytton Bazalgette, the prolific TV producer, is Joseph's great-great-grandson and has even made a film about his illustrious ancestor. And in a pleasing modern twist, my own grandson Archer goes to school with Hollis Bazalgette, Joseph's great-great-great-grandson, proving that some connections continue to flow neatly through the generations. Joseph's cathedral-like Crossness pumping station is shown (left).

The Factory Act of 1833 banned children under 9 from working in textile mills and introduced Factory Inspectors. A second act in 1847 restricted the working day for women and

children to 10 hours. The Mines and Collieries Act of 1842 prohibited children under 10 from working in the mines. Philanthropists such as the Earl of Shaftesbury, started Ragged Schools for children in the worst slums whilst the Education Act of 1870 laid the groundwork for elementary schools. This was followed by more acts in 1880 and 1891 which made school compulsory for children up to 10 and eventually abolished elementary school fees.

The Artisans' and Labourers' Dwellings Act of 1834 resulted in the demolition of slum housing and replaced them with better quality dwellings. Some industrialists such as George Cadbury built model towns like Bourneville. Even Prince Albert designed simple quality housing (right) - there is one still left in Kennington Park and another in Hertford. The Peabody Trust, set up in 1862 by a London based American banker, is a housing association which now has over 100,000 homes. Their first venture, at Spitalfields, is shown below. From the 'sublime to the gorbliney', Samuel Gurney and Edward Thomas Wakefield set up the Metropolitan Drinking Fountain and Cattle Trough Association in 1859.



The Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834 brought in the workhouses which were a mixed blessing though they did provide basic relief and medical help. Many charities were set up at this time but the most successful was Dr Barnardo's. Thomas Barnardo (1845 - 1905) was an Irish philanthropist whose East End Mission has grown into the UK's biggest charity. His work as a doctor in London brought home the fact that one in five children died before their fifth birthday.



The tipping point came when a cholera epidemic in the East End resulted in 3,000 dead and therefore many orphaned children. The photo right shows Bernardo's children in 1906. I was a cub with the 6th Shoreham Sea Scouts in the 1950s and several of my fellows were Barnardo Boys, so I have always had an admiration for the organisation.

As Dr Barnardo's still helps hundreds of thousands of children today, perhaps we could do with more wealthy individuals 'stepping up to the plate'! The article title is a Biblical quote and comes from Matthew 26:11.



EX LIBRIS

A new arrival is *Phoenicians, Lebanon's Epic Heritage* by Sanford Holst (Santorini Books 2021). I realised I knew very little about the ancient Phoenicians and Sandford being a US academic, I thought it would be a clear explanation; I was not disappointed.

First, these great seafarers did not call themselves Phoenicians, this was a nickname given them by the Greeks which referred to their monopoly of the expensive purple dye used for royalty and produced from crushed murex shells. They were not really one country but a confederation of Levantine city states, starting with Byblos and initially expanding to Tyre and Sidon. As they were trapped between the coastal mountains and the Mediterranean they took to fishing rather than farming. As their boat skills matured they became traders and eventually owned dozens of ports and islands from which they could trade. These eventually covered the whole mediterranean and the coast on the outside of the Straits of Gibraltar. Many of them formed the basis of modern towns and cities. They even traded with what was to become England (tin for bronze). They also had a monopoly of the wonderful Cedars of Lebanon that was ideal for ship construction and in demand for palaces and tombs by such wealthy monarchs as the Pharaohs and King Solomon. The island city of Tyre imagined, right.



Egypt was their biggest customer and one pharaoh decided that he wanted more control. He put administrators on their ships and told them to see if it was possible to sail around Africa. This they did - some 2,000 years before Vasco da Gama - but deliberately panned out the journey so that the pharaoh lost interest.

Perhaps the Phoenicians most interesting trait was their Seven Principles.

1. Peaceful resolution of differences - they did not have an army
2. International Trade - at which they excelled
3. Religious tolerance
4. Creating partnerships with their client countries
5. Respect for women - they worshipped the Earth Mother
6. Equality - they spread their wealth to all classes
7. Privacy - they knew that ostentation would result in jealousy.

Oh and by the way they invented the Alphabet!!!!!! The Greeks adopted it and added vowels. They also learned to navigate by the polestar so that their shipping did not have to hug the coast. Oh and they had a king but really only to deal with other kings; they were elected.



Of course life never runs smoothly. Some of the better-off families wanted to build grand houses and have an army (think Hannibal). As this was frowned on by most of their fellow citizens they decamped to North Africa and founded Carthage which sure enough became a great and wealthy city. Unfortunately, the ‘new kid on the block’ (the Romans) were envious, resulting in the Punic Wars and the eventual destruction of Carthage. Carthage imagined left, showing the trading and naval harbours.

One fascinating story is that the arrival of large and aggressive empires made their home cities unsafe for a time so they looked around for another site. They eventually hit on Crete as being strategically a good centre. They approached the king of Crete and proposed a deal. If he would marry one of their royalty the next generation would become part Cretan and part Phoenician. The Cretans would provide the land and farming and the Phoenicians their trading empire, technology and skills.

It was agreed and so the Minoan civilisation was born. This lasted until the explosion of the Santorini volcano around 1600 BC which caused a 50 foot tsunami that destroyed the Cretan coastal towns.

Another story is that when the pharaohs wanted to build pyramids they did not have the technical skills. The Phoenicians noticed that Malta had a long tradition of stone working and brought some artisans to Egypt. The next time they visited Malta there was no-one there and it was suspected that the Egyptians had transported the whole people to work on the pyramids.

POST SCRIPT³

In 1885, W T Stead, crusading editor of the Pall Mall gazette, sought to expose child prostitution in London. He arranged to purchase thirteen year old Eliza Armstrong, the daughter of a chimney sweep, for £5. The girl was then given to the care of the Salvation Army and taken to France on holiday. Lloyd’s News ran the story of her mother who was searching for the girl. Stead was accused of kidnapping and both he and William Booth of the Salvation Army were prosecuted. Stead served three months in prison before carrying on campaigning in print. He died on the Titanic and was last seen reading quietly in the first-class smoking room as the ship went down.



The Times of 18 July 1797 reported that a butcher had exposed his wife for sale in Smithfield Market, with a halter around her neck and one about her waist, tying her to some railings. A hog driver was the purchaser who paid over three guineas and a crown. Although against the law, such sales were often pre-arranged with the buyer being the wife’s lover. The Lord Chief Justice however considered this a criminal conspiracy.



In 1899 Surrey Assizes dealt with a case of a Lady Harberton who had been barred from a pub for wearing baggy trousers, known as *ration bloomers*. They had been championed by US social reformer Amelia Jenks Bloomer (left) whose eponymous outfit was rapidly taken up by lady cyclists. The proprietor of the pub in question, the Hautboy Hotel in Ockham was prosecuted for refusing a guest entry until it transpired that Lady Harberton had been offered a table in the parlour but refused it as it smelled abominable and contained four men who might have been working men!!!!

In 1759 portrait painter Robert Edge Pine wished to capture the likeness of George II and hit on the idea of hiding in a cupboard at the top of Kensington Palace’s grand staircase. Sure enough the king stood quietly in thought whilst



Pine got to work with his pencil. Lord Baltimore the Governor of Maryland bought the subsequent work of art which was to be presented to the loyal settlers. However, the ship carrying the painting was attacked by pirates and the picture stolen. A few years later the Navy captured the pirate vessel and rescued the painting. It was acquired by Sir John Griffin Griffin* for 50 guineas and hung in his ancestral home at Audley End (Saffron Walden). The painting shown is a copy belonging to the Royal Collection and hanging in Kensington Palace.⁴

AND FINALLY⁵

Did you know that our old friend Peter Mark Roget (1779 - 1869) published his Thesaurus of English Words and Phrases in 1852? He was also Secretary of the Royal Society for 22 years and co-founder of London University.

* So good they named him twice!



1. The image of Seven Dials is from Thomas Miller's Picturesque Sketches of London (1852), courtesy of London Historian's Blog. Booth's poverty maps are from the London School of Economics and Political Science courtesy of Wikipedia. Crossness pumping station credit is to Peter Scrimshaw and comes courtesy of Secret London. Prince Albert's cottage is from the Oxford Science Archive and is courtesy of Science Photo Library. Peabody Trust engraving is from the Illustrated London News and is courtesy of London Guided Walks. Dr Barnardo's celebration is courtesy of barnardos.org.uk.
2. Illustration of Tyre comes from Nick Nutter (nuttersworld.com). Carthage illustration is from Vocal Media's History page.