

# Jewel Theatre Audience Guide Addendum: Victorian Era Timeline



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The timeline that begins on page two of this document, when combined with the biography of Queen Victoria, provides a general overview of the people and events that were shaping England and the world during the Victorian Era, the time of the play.

## VICTORIAN ERA OVERVIEW

“Facts on Victorian England Culture” by Sabine McKellen (<https://www.theclassroom.com/victorian-england-culture-22777.html>) is reprinted below to give more information about the social, cultural, moral and ethical mores of the time, and as a segue to the chronology that follows:

The Victorian era began with coronation of Queen Victoria in 1837 and lasted until her death in 1901. The Victorian period began as the Georgian era and the Industrial Revolution came to end. England saw many wars during the Georgian era, but the Victorian era offered important political, economic and cultural transformations to England. The period that saw the expanding of both the British Empire and the middle class responded to rapid cultural changes with rigid societal expectations.

### **Expansion of British Influence**

The Victorian era is named in honor of Queen Victoria, who took the throne in 1837 and oversaw nearly 63 years of expansion of the British Empire. The United Kingdom physically extended its borders, at one point claiming nearly a quarter of the world through colonization and becoming a top political power. It also set the tone for fashion, social order and general culture throughout Europe and the United States.

### **Emphasis on Modesty and Restraint**

Queen Victoria’s predecessor, King William IV, had lived a life of public excess. He openly fathered children with women he never married and became known as the rogue king. Victoria modeled her lifestyle -- and attempted to give the British people an example -- from the other extreme. Clothing and behavior, in both public and private, were modest. Discussing physical love in the public sphere was frowned upon, and any discussion of sex was limited. Social historians like Sally Mitchell note that most middle- and upper-class newlyweds approached marriage in a state of almost absolute ignorance about sex.

### **Division of Classes**

While the industrial revolution allowed some economic upward mobility, the division of “old money” and “new money” became pronounced. Mitchell writes that one’s net worth meant little compared to one’s land holdings and family history. This was true in all classes: An office clerk’s profession was deemed more respectable and middle class than that of a skilled laborer

who might actually be paid more. Despite the deepening division between classes, the middle class grew at exponential rate. As demand for products grew, the middle class grew to accommodate the need for more laborers. In addition to laborers, the number of servants increased as well. By 1900, nearly one-third of women aged 20 or younger were in service.

### **Importance of Proper Etiquette**

Because most Victorians prized propriety, one's reputation was of huge importance. Ensuring an individual stayed in society's good graces dictated an extremely detailed code of everyday manners and etiquette. This is best exemplified by the popular Victorian-era tome "Our Department: Or, the Manners, Conduct and Dress of the Most Refined Society," a more than 400-page instructional book written by John H. Young and published in 1882. Young authored the book largely on the premise that, as he wrote, manners represented the core ideals of Christianity and would promote goodwill and peace within humanity at large.

### **Scrutiny of Courtship and Romance**

By necessity, young working-class Victorians were held to less strict rules for socializing, but their middle- and upper-class counterparts experienced romance under the watchful eyes of family and chaperones, says Jennifer Phegley in her book, "Courtship and Marriage in Victorian England." Young women in this sphere were rarely left alone with boys and men to whom they weren't related. And, at the first feelings of romantic interest, Victorian men had to follow the deeply ingrained belief that marriage must soon follow, so if they were unready or financially unable to pursue a legal union, it was considered in poor taste to pursue any kind of courtship. "Dating" usually consisted of supervised visits at a young woman's home or walks in large groups.

## **VICTORIAN ERA TIMELINE**

### **20 June 1837**

Victoria comes to the throne after the death of William IV

Victoria became queen at the age of 18 after the death of her uncle, William IV. She reigned for more than 60 years, longer than any other British monarch. Her reign was a period of significant social, economic and technological change, which saw the expansion of Britain's industrial power and of the British empire.

### **1838**

Charles Dickens' *Oliver Twist* is published

Charles Dickens was one of the greatest Victorian novelists. *Oliver Twist* was, like many of Dickens' other novels, originally published in serial form and brought to public attention contemporary social evils. Dickens' other works included *The Pickwick Papers*, *A Christmas Carol*, *David Copperfield* and *Great Expectations*. The queen was a fan of the author.

### **8 May 1838**

People's Charter advocates social and political reform

The People's Charter advocated democratic reform on the basis of six points: one man, one vote; equal electoral districts; payment of members of parliament; elections by secret ballot; removal of property qualifications for MPs; and parliaments elected every year. "Chartism" gained substantial support among working people during the next decade and presented three national petitions to parliament in 1839, 1842 and 1849. It was the most significant radical pressure group of the 19th century.

### **1 August 1838**

Slavery is abolished in the British empire

In 1834, slaves in the British empire started a period of "apprenticeship", during which they were obliged to work without pay for their former owners. Abolitionists campaigned against the system and in the Caribbean, there were widespread protests. When the apprenticeship period ended in 1838, over 700,000 slaves were freed in the British Caribbean. Plantation owners received about £20 million in government compensation for the loss of their slaves, valued at \$2,865,455,314 today. The former slaves received nothing.

### **17 September 1838**

London-Birmingham line opens, and the railway boom starts

This line, which connected London to the Midlands for the first time, had been planned since 1833, with sections opened in 1837. The completion of the Kilsby Tunnel enabled the full 112-mile line, designed by the engineer Robert Stephenson, to be opened. London-Birmingham was the first railway line into the capital city, with passengers disembarking in the newly-designed Euston station. The line precipitated the first of the great railway booms.

### **1839**

The UK Government begins to provide money for elementary schools.

### **7 May 1839**

Prime Minister Viscount Melbourne resigns and sparks a political crisis

When the Whig prime minister, Viscount Melbourne, resigned over a constitutional matter concerning government in Jamaica, Victoria asked Sir Robert Peel, as leader of the Tory opposition, to form a government. Peel refused to do so, apparently because the queen refused to dismiss her pro-Whig ladies of the bedchamber. Melbourne resumed office. Peel was probably waiting for an opportunity to take office in more favorable circumstances, as he did in 1841.

#### **10 January 1840**

A uniform postage rate of one penny is introduced

Britain's postal system was expensive, complex and open to abuse. As a response to widespread discontent, a committee of inquiry was set up in 1835. In 1837, Rowland Hill proposed a uniform post rate of one penny, irrespective of distance. His proposals were implemented three years later. In the decade after the implementation of the "penny post", the volume of letters sent in Britain increased five-fold to almost 350 million a year.

#### **10 February 1840**

Victoria weds Albert

The sumptuous wedding of Queen Victoria and Albert of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha took place at St James's Palace. The queen chose to forgo her crimson velvet robes of state, and instead opted for a dress of pure white. This not only enhanced the bride's purity and innocence, values that would come to signify the ethics of the Victorian Age, but also made her more visible to the thousands of people who turned out to watch the procession. By wearing white, she established a tradition that would be observed the world over.

#### **June 1840**

Vaccination for the poor is introduced

Parliament enabled local poor law authorities to provide vaccination at the expense of ratepayers. Battles over the ethical and practical issues involved lasted for the remainder of Victoria's reign. Some authorities were reluctant to pay, even after infant vaccination was made compulsory in 1853. Further tightening of the regulations in 1867 and 1873 saw a number of anti-vaccination campaigns. In 1898, parents were allowed a certificate of exemption for their children on grounds of conscience.

#### **August 1841**

Sir Robert Peel forms a Conservative government

The Whig government under Viscount Melbourne faced increasing financial and public order difficulties, and Sir Robert Peel forced a general election after defeating the Whigs on a no-confidence motion in the House of Commons. The Conservatives won a Commons majority of more than 70. This was the first election in modern

times when one political party with a parliamentary majority was defeated by another which gained a workable majority of its own.

## **1842**

London Police establish a detective department

## **June 1842**

Income tax is introduced for the first time during peacetime  
Income tax was levied for the first time during peace by Sir Robert Peel's Conservative government at a rate of 7d (three pence) in the pound. The tax threshold was an income of £150 per year, thus exempting virtually all the working classes. The tax was not extended to famine-torn Ireland until 1853. Direct taxation was unpopular in Victorian Britain. Many 19th-century finance ministers toyed with the idea of abolishing income tax, but it proved too convenient and too lucrative to lose.

## **1843**

First telegraph line comes into service

## **18 May 1843**

Church of Scotland splits over separation of church and state

More than 450 ministers of the Church of Scotland walked out of the church's general assembly in Edinburgh to form the new Free Church of Scotland. Sometimes known as "the disruption", the split concerned the relationship between church and state in Scotland. Those leaving the church, led by the evangelical Thomas Chalmers, believed that a religious organisation should have a clearly religious head and should reject lay patronage.

## **1844**

Factory Act limits the working day to 12 hours for children under 18

## **September 1845**

Irish potato famine begins

In September 1845, the potato crop which had previously provided approximately 60% of the nation's food needs, began to rot all over Ireland. The potato blight struck again the following year. What began as a natural catastrophe was exacerbated by the actions and inactions of the British government. It is estimated that about a million people died during the four-year famine, and that between 1845 and 1855 another

million emigrated, most to Britain and North America. The population would drop from 8.2 million in 1841 to 6.5 million in 1851.

### **30 June 1846**

Prime Minister Sir Robert Peel resigns after the Corn Laws are repealed

Sir Robert Peel's famous reforming Conservative government came to an end shortly after legislation to repeal the Corn Laws was passed. This measure removed protective duties which had helped to keep the price of bread high. He championed it despite opposition from most of his own party, and the motion was carried by Whig votes. Peel never took office again and was remembered as the prime minister who gave the working classes cheaper bread.

### **5 April 1847**

World's first municipal park opens in Birkenhead, Merseyside

Birkenhead, on the opposite bank of the Mersey Estuary from Liverpool, was the venue for the world's first man-made park, complete with lakes, hillocks and meadows. It was designed by Joseph Paxton, who also designed the Crystal Palace for the Great Exhibition of 1851. Many such parks followed as Victorians sought to provide open spaces in or near the centre of urban areas.

### **13 May 1848**

Irish nationalist John Mitchel is arrested for treason

John Mitchel came to prominence during the Irish potato famine. In March 1848 he founded a journal, *United Irishman*, which called for Irish independence and gave practical tips on how to attack British troops. Charged under the Treason Felony Act, he was sentenced to 14 years transportation. This episode helped set Irish resistance to British occupation on a more violent path.

### **July 1848**

Public Health Act aims to reduce death rates, spurred by cholera epidemic

Following pressure from the administrator Edwin Chadwick and the findings of the Health of Towns Commission, parliament passed legislation to improve urban conditions and reduce death rates. Local boards of health were established in places where the population's death rate exceeded 23 per 1,000. The act was seen as an unwelcome intrusion by central government and proved very unpopular. The central Board of Health was wound up in 1858.

### **1849**

Important artists establish the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood

The Pre-Raphaelites were a group of English artists who rejected what they considered as the effete symbolism and lack of reality of paintings dating from the 16th-century European Renaissance. They aimed to revert to what they saw as the directness and sincerity of medieval painting. The most important artists of the movement were Holman Hunt, Dante Gabriel Rossetti and John Everett Millais. They were championed by the art critic and writer John Ruskin.

### **5 March 1850**

Robert Stephenson's Britannia Tubular Bridge is opened

The Tubular Bridge provided a rail link from the mainland of north Wales, near Bangor, across to Anglesey and on to Holyhead for ferries to Ireland. Its designer, Robert Stephenson, constructed two main spans with rectangular iron tubes 460 feet long. The bridge itself was 1,511 feet overall and novel in construction, since the box sections were constructed on shore and then floated into the straits to be lifted into place.

### **March 1851**

Census reveals the extent of Welsh support for the Nonconformist church

In addition to the population census of England and Wales, a census was taken of places of worship. This revealed that around 80% of Welsh worshipers went to Nonconformist chapels and only 20% to the established church. Awareness of this numerical superiority greatly encouraged the demand for the disestablishment of the Church of England in Wales. Partly due to the opposition of the Conservative party and the House of Lords, this did not take place until 1914.

### **1 May 1851**

The Great Exhibition opens at the Crystal Palace in Hyde Park, London

This event was the brainchild of Victoria's husband, Prince Albert, and was designed to provide a showcase for the world's most advanced inventions, manufactures and works of art. It was housed in the massive 19-acre Crystal Palace, designed by Joseph Paxton. The event attracted almost six million visitors during the five summer months it was open. Many ordinary people travelled to London for the first time on cheap-rate excursion trains.

### **1853**

Queen Victoria uses chloroform during the birth of her eighth child, and its use as an anesthetic is ensured.



**28 March 1854**

Britain and France declare war on Russia and the Crimean War begins

The Crimean War was fought between the Russians and an alliance of the British, French and Turks who feared Russian expansion in the Balkans. Notable battles included those at Sebasol, Balaclava (which saw the infamous Charge of the Light Brigade) and Inkerman. Russia was forced to sue for peace, and the war was ended by the Treaty of Paris in March 1856. British troops casualties were as much from poor equipment and medical care as from fighting the Russians.

**1855**

Florence Nightingale introduces hygienic standards into military hospitals.

Jews are permitted to hold e seats in Parliament.

**10 May 1857**

Members of the Bengal army mutiny in India

Following a series of insensitive British demands, members of the Bengal army mutinied in Meerut and marched towards Delhi, which they took two days later. It was re-taken in September. Lucknow was twice besieged before being finally relieved in November. British authority was not fully restored until July 1858 and the events of the mutiny were characterized by great brutality on both sides. The mutiny led to the end of East India Company rule in India and its replacement by direct British rule.

**1858**

Medical Act is established, requiring qualified physicians to be registered.

Lionel de Rothschild becomes the first Jew to be seated in Parliament.

**30 January 1858**

Britain's first permanent symphony orchestra is founded

Charles Hallé, the pianist and conductor, founded the orchestra which still bears his name. Based in Manchester, the orchestra gave its first concert in the city's Free Trade Hall. This development indicated the growing importance attached to providing elevating cultural activities for the citizens of Britain's towns and cities.

**2 May 1859**

Devon and Cornwall are linked by a revolutionary new bridge

Isambard Kingdom Brunel's Saltash railway bridge across the River Tamar was a suspension bridge comprising two huge wrought iron trusses in the form of a parabola. This bridge afforded much speedier transport to England's most remote western county. An unbroken line from London to Penzance was completed in 1867. Opened only four months before Brunel's death, the Saltash became the only suspension bridge to carry main-line trains.

**24 November 1859**

Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of Species through Natural Selection* is published

Charles Darwin's masterwork, which argued that all species evolved on the basis of natural selection, resulted from more than 20 years' research following a five-year journey around Cape Horn in HMS *Beagle*. The book created an immediate stir, since Darwin's theory appeared to contradict the bible's creation story and call into question ideas of divine providence. Despite the influence of Darwin's work, very few Victorian scientists took up an atheistic position as a result of reading it.

**1860**

Nightingale Training School for Nurses is established.

**1861**

Louis Pasteur proposes germ theory of disease

**8 February 1861**

Post Office savings scheme for ordinary people is launched

In the debate that led to the introduction of the Post Office Savings Bank, the chancellor of the exchequer, William Gladstone, stated that the Post Office, which contained almost 3,000 money-order offices, would offer a convenient way of encouraging small sums to accumulate in secure accounts. This initiative accorded with the Liberals' policy of encouraging habits of thrift and industry among what Gladstone called "the humbler classes throughout the country".

**14 December 1861**

Victoria's husband, Prince Albert, dies aged 42 of typhoid

Albert's premature death from typhoid plunged Victoria into a long period of mourning and withdrawal from public life, during which a republican movement gained popularity. Albert had been both a restraining and a guiding force on his headstrong wife and, although never popular with the British public partly on account of his German origins, he was an able and energetic man who played an important part in the scientific and intellectual life of his adopted country.

### **13 February 1862**

Education funding becomes linked to pupils' results

Since 1833, the state had funded education for the poor in schools run by churches. Expenditure increased rapidly, especially after the first education inspectors were appointed in 1839 and a pupil-teacher scheme of training was implemented from 1847. By the early 1860s, an economy-minded Liberal government wanted the state to get value for money. Grant payments were linked to pupils' success in basic tests in reading, writing and arithmetic. The system was dubbed "payment by results".

### **1863**

The London Underground begins regular passenger service

### **1866**

Women form committee to seek voting rights. They present a petition to Parliament signed by 4,999 women.

Transatlantic telephone cable begins operation.

### **16 March 1867**

Joseph Lister writes on antiseptics in *The Lancet*

Joseph Lister, while Regius Professor of Clinical Surgery at Glasgow University, began experiments designed to reduce high hospital mortality rates from septic inflammation. Working on French biologist Louis Pasteur's germ theory, he used carbolic acid as an antiseptic barrier on patients, reducing mortality on a male accident ward from 45% to 15%. Despite initial skepticism, Lister's methods were refined and then widely adopted. He is regarded as the founder of modern surgical practice.

### **15 August 1867**

Second Reform Act doubles the electorate

This Reform Act was passed by a minority Conservative government led by Frederick, Earl of Derby. Its orchestrator was Benjamin Disraeli, who permitted larger extensions to the franchise than the Liberals would have countenanced. By reducing property qualifications for male voters, it virtually doubled the electorate, enabling one-third of adult males in Britain and one-sixth in Ireland to vote in parliamentary elections. In a few urban constituencies, working men were an electoral majority. A separate act for Scotland was passed in 1868.

John Stuart Mill's amendment to substitute "person" for "man" and thus enfranchisement for women is defeated.

### **9 December 1868**

William Gladstone becomes prime minister for the first time

William Gladstone headed a Liberal government after defeating Benjamin Disraeli's Conservative government in a general election. Gladstone's ministry survived until 1874 and is credited with passing many reforms, especially relating to administration, the army and public health. Gladstone was to form three further administrations, resigning as prime minister for the last time in March 1894.

### **1869**

Imprisonment for debt is abolished.

### **26 July 1869**

William Gladstone disestablishes the Church of Ireland

The established Church of Ireland was Anglican, although only about 3% of the Irish population belonged to it - the vast majority being Roman Catholic. William Gladstone's legislation put church property into the hands of commissioners, who could use it for "social schemes", including poverty relief and the expansion of higher education. Irish bishops no longer sat in the House of Lords. The act was designed to reduce tensions and increasing lawlessness in Ireland.

### **17 November 1869**

Suez Canal opens, linking the Mediterranean and the Red Sea

Britain had opposed the building of the Suez Canal by an international company, but changed its position in 1875 when Benjamin Disraeli's Conservative government bought 40% of the Canal Company's shares. The canal then became of vital strategic interest, particularly as a route to India and the Far East, and was protected by British troops from 1883.

### **17 February 1870**

New law introduces secular school boards

This bill, introduced by the Liberal member of parliament WE Forster, was to extend opportunities for education available to the children of the poor. The act permitted new school boards to be set up where existing education provision in "voluntary schools", controlled by the churches, was inadequate. A substantial growth in school building resulted, particularly in urban areas. The act did not make schooling compulsory.

**1 August 1870**

Irish Land Act gives rights to tenants

Ireland's Landlord and Tenant Act, passed by William Gladstone's government, attempted to address a key grievance. The act provided for compensation to tenants evicted by landlords and it gave legal protection to customary tenant right. Tenants were also allowed to purchase their holdings if they could afford the cost.

**9 August 1870**

Women obtain limited rights to retain their property after marriage

This act changed the previous legal situation, in which all property automatically transferred to the control of a husband on marriage. It granted some limited separate protection to a married woman's property and also permitted women to retain up to £200 of their own wages or earnings. Similar changes did not take effect in Scotland until 1877.

**1871**

Trade unions are legalized

**1872**

Women are admitted unofficially to sit for Cambridge University examinations. Women are not awarded Cambridge degrees until 1947.

**18 July 1872**

Voting by secret ballot is introduced

William Gladstone's Liberal government introduced voting by secret ballot five years after the Second Reform Act had substantially increased the size of the electorate. This realized one of the key points of the reforming Chartist petition of 1838. Voting in secret was not uncontroversial. The proposal was fiercely contested by the House of Lords, which considered it "cowardly" and "unmanly". It was first employed at a by-election in Pontefract in August of the same year.

**1876**

Women win the right to become registered physicians

**1 May 1876**

Victoria is declared empress of India

India came under direct British government control in 1858, when the remaining authority of the East India Company was dissolved. The Conservative prime minister, Benjamin Disraeli, suggested to the queen that she should be proclaimed empress. His motive seems mainly to have been flattery. Despite objections from the Liberal opposition, who were not consulted, the title was endorsed, and Victoria used it officially from 1877.

### **1878**

Electric lights are installed on some London streets.

The University of London opens all degrees, including medicine, to women.

### **13 July 1878**

Congress of Berlin aims to settle European problems

Britain, represented by Conservative Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli and Robert Cecil, Marquis of Salisbury, signed a European treaty which attempted to settle problems between states in the Balkans and, in particular, to reduce perceived threats to European stability from Russian expansion. Cyprus was leased to Britain from Turkey, strengthening its position in the Mediterranean. Disraeli declared that he had brought back “peace with honor”.

### **1879**

London’s first telephone exchange opens.

### **28 December 1879**

Tay Bridge collapses in gale force winds

During a Force 11 gale on the River Tay, the two-year-old, two-mile railway bridge collapsed, and 75 train passengers plunged to their deaths. It was the biggest structural engineering disaster in Britain. The subsequent enquiry apportioned most of the blame to the bridge's builder, Sir Thomas Bouch, for failing to take sufficient account of the effects of wind force. The bridge was rebuilt and opened to rail traffic in July 1887.

### **1880**

Stores begins to sell canned fruits and meat.

### **2 August 1880**

Education becomes compulsory for children under ten

Although WE Forster's act of 1870 had greatly expanded education opportunities, and an act passed in Benjamin Disraeli's government of 1876 had set up school attendance committees, significant gaps remained. AJ Mundella introduced a bill on

behalf of William Gladstone's Liberal government which made school attendance compulsory from ages five to 10. State expenditure on education, about £1.25 million a year in 1870 (equivalent today to \$ 192,326,132), rose to £4 million (\$615,428,870 today) , and would reach £12 million (\$1,906,592,712 today) by the end of Victoria's reign.

#### **24 August 1880**

National Eisteddfod Association holds its first meeting

The eisteddfod, as a competition of Welsh bards and minstrels, had a long history dating back to at least the 10th century. In modern times, it developed as a celebration of Welsh culture and identity from the 18th century. After the formation of the National Eisteddfod Association, a national gathering was held annually, alternating between the north and the south of Wales.

#### **17 January 1881**

Sir William Armstrong's home becomes the first to use electric light

The mansion created at Cragside in Rothbury (Northumberland) by the Scottish architect Richard Norman Shaw was designed to incorporate every modern convenience. Built for the engineering magnate Sir William Armstrong, it was called “the palace of a modern magician”. Swan's new electric lamps were powered by water from a local stream through a dynamo-electric generator.

#### **16 August 1881**

Second Land Act reforms Irish property law

The second Land Act created a Land Commission for Ireland which could decide the level of “fair rents”. The act also granted free sale of land and security of tenure. William Gladstone's Liberal government hoped, optimistically, that this legislation would take the sting out of violent agitation in Ireland.

#### **6 May 1882**

Two British government officials are murdered in Dublin

The recently appointed chief secretary of Ireland, Lord Frederick Cavendish, and his under-secretary TH Burke were stabbed to death in Phoenix Park, Dublin. The perpetrators were members of the “Invincibles”, an extremist branch of the Fenian revolutionary organisation. The murders outraged the public in Britain and, much against his will, provoked Prime Minister William Gladstone into maintaining harsh coercive policies in Ireland.

**1 January 1883**

Final version of Married Women's Property Act protects women's property rights

The 1870 Married Women's Property Act had been widely criticized for failing to provide sufficient safeguards for married women. A further act provided something approaching equality for women since it allowed women to acquire and retain any property deemed separate from that of their husband's. They also received the same legal protection as husbands if they needed to defend their right to property.

**December 1884**

Third Reform Act is short of creating a male democracy

The third Reform Act created a uniform franchise qualification based on the Reform Acts of 1867 and 1868. As a consequence roughly two-thirds of adult males in England and Wales, three-fifths in Scotland and half in Ireland were entitled to vote in parliamentary elections. Large numbers of adult males, such as servants, most members of the armed forces and children living in their parents' houses remained disenfranchised. This act, therefore, sped some way short of creating a male democracy.

**1885**

Football league is formed to control professional soccer matches

**17 December 1885**

Rumors emerge that William Gladstone supports Home Rule for Ireland

Acting on information supplied by his son Herbert, newspapers carried reports that Prime Minister William Gladstone would support Home Rule for Ireland. Although Gladstone did not confirm the reports, his Liberal government, which returned to office in February 1886, drew up proposals for Home Rule. These provoked cabinet resignations, a split in the Liberal party and a Conservative election victory in July.

**1886**

Safety bicycles go on sale

**1888**

County councils are established, with women granted the right to vote in county council elections.

Jack the Ripper murders five women in London.



## **1889**

Major labor reforms occur

London dock strike is a success, trade unionism spreads, and employment for children under 10 becomes unlawful.

### **1 April 1889**

New local government authorities take up their duties

Under the Local Government Act passed by the Conservatives the previous year, responsibility for poor law relief, roads, bridges and asylum was transferred to newly-created county councils. London had its own county council, while boroughs with populations over 50,000 became “county boroughs” with the same powers as county councils. Scotland had its own Local Government Act passed on 26 August 1889 and coming into effect in 1890. This established a similar system of county and town councils.

## **1890**

The first moving picture shows appear.

## **1893**

Elementary education in state schools becomes free.

### **March 1894**

Parish councils are created

The Local Government Act required all parishes with a population over 300 to elect parish councils; smaller parishes could apply to their county council to have similar status. Women could vote in parish council elections. Under the act, almost 700 urban sanitary districts were reorganized as urban districts and a similar number of rural districts were established. In Scotland, a separate local government act of 1894 replaced existing parochial boards with elected parish councils.

### **2 August 1894**

Death duties are introduced

Death duties, the predecessor of the present inheritance tax, were proposed by the Liberal chancellor of the exchequer, Sir William Harcourt. They replaced earlier taxes on estates. They also equalized liability between real (estate) and personal property. Duties were paid at a variable rate depending on size. They became an important revenue-raiser but were fiercely resented by many landowners, already feeling the pinch as a result of depressed agricultural prices.

## **1897**

The queen's Diamond Jubilee is celebrated

### **2 July 1897**

Guglielmo Marconi is awarded a patent for radio communication

The Italian-born physicist Guglielmo Marconi conducted a number of communication experiments in southern Britain in 1896-1897, and the award of a patent followed his first communication across water from Lavernock Point, South Wales, to Flat Holm Island in the Bristol Channel. He established the first transatlantic signal in December 1901. His work inaugurated the Wireless Age.

### **October 1897**

Women's suffrage campaign gains momentum

The first organised activity in support of votes for women dates from the 1860s, but pressure grew rapidly in the late 1880s. A turning point was the merger of the National Central Society for Women's Suffrage and the Central Committee for Women's Suffrage into the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies. The NUWSS coordinated a range of regional activities. Its president, Millicent Fawcett, opposed violence and promoted her organisation as law-abiding and above party politics.

### **10 October 1899**

Second Boer War begins in South Africa

After the First Boer War in 1880-1881, the Boers (farmers of European descent) of the Transvaal forced the British government to recognise their independence. But the Boers refused to recognise the rights of the British (many prospecting for gold) in the Transvaal, leading to the Second Boer War. Although the Boers had initial military successes, the war ended in May 1902 with a Boer surrender. It was costly and unpopular war and Britain received much international criticism for its use of concentration camps.

### **22 January 1901**

Victoria dies and is succeeded by her son, Edward VII

Victoria died at Osborne House on the Isle of Wight at the age of 81. As queen-empress she had ruled over almost a quarter of the world's population. Although willful and narrow-minded in some respects, she established firm precedents for a hard-working constitutional monarch, operating as a head of state above the fray of party politics. Her death, coming so soon after the end of the 19th century, was truly the end of an era.

*The chronology above combines information from the BBC History article “Victorian Britain”*

[http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/timeline/victorianbritain\\_timeline\\_noflash.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/timeline/victorianbritain_timeline_noflash.shtml)

*and the book, Daily Life in Victorian England, 2nd Edition by Sally Mitchell, 2009, Greenwood Press, Connecticut, supplemented by the sources in the Resources section starting on page 19 of this document.*

## RESOURCES

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